

15 March 2021



Iver Parish Council

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Dear Sir or Madam,

The Ivers Neighbourhood Plan – informal consultation February 2021

Savills acts for Thorney Lane LLP, the owners of the Thorney Business Park.

In summary, the Thorney Lane LLP:

- supports the emergence of a Neighbourhood Plan in Iver and welcomes the informal consultation and opportunity to work with the Parish Council;
- objects to Policy IV12 because it limits the available area for redevelopment and therefore much reduces the potential benefits that would arise from such development;
- supports Policy IV9 (support for proposals that reduce HGV movements); and
- would like to work with the Parish Council to develop a policy to promote a new north side entrance to Iver station plus new station interchange with parking.

Background

Thorney Business Park comprises some 17 ha of employment development. Current uses include waste management, open storage, and various light and heavy industrial buildings and yards. Inevitably such uses generate significant traffic and HGV movements through Iver and its surroundings.

The potential for land use change to relieve HGV issues arising from the Thorney Business Park have been embedded in planning policy for some time. The 2011 Core Strategy discussed the issue (Policy 16) and it was carried forward to the draft South Bucks Local Plan.

For that reason, the Thorney Lane LLP has been in discussion with South Bucks (and then Buckinghamshire) Council, the local highways authority, the Parish Council and local residents. Proposals were put to public consultation in June 2018 and October 2020. A pre-application submission and EIA scoping opinion were submitted in 2020.

The general thrust of our proposals was a mixed use development including residential development, employment development, a new entrance to Iver station, station car parking and open space. The proposals include a link road between Thorney Lane South (effectively running along the railway line) and towards Mansion Lane. Whilst the Thorney Lane LLP owns sufficient land for a road to be built between Thorney Lane South and Mansion Lane, the preferred route for the link road would cross the grand union canal and joined Mansion Lane further north, thus avoiding the canal bridge. The Thorney Lane LLP has always been clear that it could not deliver that solution as it does not own sufficient land. However, mixed use redevelopment would

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make a significant contribution to the link road by constructing most of it and potentially (subject to viability) providing a financial contribution to the highway authority towards construction on land outside the ownership of the Thorney Lane LLP.

In those circumstances, HGV reduction through Iver village would occur in two ways. First, most of the HGVs originating from the Thorney Business Park would be displaced by the land use change. Second, the new link road would allow HGVs from other site to be routed around Iver village centre.

Whilst some of details of the public consultation were subject to local comment (retention of some employment uses and housing density in particular) it was felt that there was support in principle for land use change. The Thorney Lane LLP was committed to working with the Iver Parish Council and local people to find a form of development that would generally be supported locally.

However, as the South Bucks Local Plan has been withdrawn, the Thorney Lane LLP will now promote the development of the entire site (including Green Belt release) through the Buckinghamshire Local Plan. Whilst there is a strong case for a 'Very Special Circumstances' planning application, our preference is to work with the local plan process whilst this remains a timely option (although delays to the Local Plan could lead to a reassessment of that approach).

Policy IV12

Draft Policy IV12 broadly suggests that the existing developed area is 'swapped' for a similar area further east (adjacent to Thorney Lane South). The Thorney Lane LLP would object to such a policy. In the context of a national and local shortage of suitable land for development, the site has the advantage of being in an extremely sustainable location. It is adjacent to an Elizabeth Line station, which will provide fast and frequent connections in to London and the West. We are also in discussion with Buckinghamshire Council about a bus link to the new station building. Alongside local facilities at Richings Park and Iver, the site is one of the most sustainable locations in the County.

Development of the entire site (to the western extent of the Business Park) would provide more housing and affordable housing. Comprehensive development also has the best chance of providing the infrastructure improvements that are needed (i.e. link road and new station entrance) as, in short, additional development will provide extra revenue for these benefits. We believe that if Iver is to accommodate some housing growth, the Thorney Business Park is the best site in Iver to deliver such growth in a sustainable way and with minimal impact on existing homes. In our view it would be wrong to only develop only part of the site and therefore we propose to continue to promote the entire land between Thorney Lane South and the western edge of the Thorney Business Park. We would hope to convince the Parish Council of the benefits of such development as part of our land promotion.

We note that paragraph 3.13 commits to an early review of the plan to deal with the matter of housing growth and perhaps a larger development of the Thorney Business Park might be considered at that stage. However, we believe that the Thorney Business Park is the best option for sustainable development in Iver and Policy IV12 restricts that development and the benefits that might arise alongside it.

Shorter term proposals

In the meantime there are alternative options to consider that might come forward within a shorter timescale and be consistent with local plan and neighbourhood plan policy. These include:

- (i) land use change of the existing Thorney Business Park.
- (ii) provision of a new 'north side' station entrance to Iver station
- (iii) the provision of station parking and bus interchange in conjunction with (ii).

Given the ongoing issue with HGVs emanating from the Thorney Business Park, the Thorney Lane LLP is progressing opportunities for land use change in the existing planning policy context. This would involve replacing the existing variety of uses (that generate a high proportion of HGVs) with a single use that generates very few HGV movements. The proposal would comply with existing local planning policy as it is an employment land proposal on an employment site. At the moment, there is significant interest in a data centre use on the site.

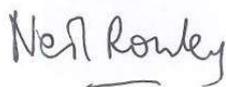
A data centre would bring the benefits of a high-tech, employment generating use with high quality design and landscaping. There would be good jobs for local people. But it would not generate significant HGV movements (outside of its construction). Data centre use would easily reduce HGV movements from the Thorney Business Park by 10% (in fact there would be a near 100% reduction outside the construction period). Therefore a data centre proposal would comply with Policy IV9D.

The Thorney Lane LLP is in advanced discussions with Network Rail about a north side access to Iver station. We hope to be able to share plans with the Parish Council shortly. This could be developed alongside a station car park, cycle parking, drop off and pick up area, station interchange and potentially bus stops (subject to Buckinghamshire Council agreement). We note the reference in the Neighbourhood Plan to the provision of Iver station car parking to relieve on-street parking in Richings Park (section 5.30ii) and cycle parking (5.30iii). We also note the suggestion of improved connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between principle destinations with segregation from road traffic (5.30v). A station interchange could come forward in the Green Belt under NPPF paragraph 146 c) which states that local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location need not be inappropriate within the Green Belt. We would welcome discussion with the Parish Council as to whether such a proposal might be supported and whether a Neighbourhood Plan policy could make reference to it.

Summary

The Thorney Lane LLP would be pleased to collaborate with the Parish Council on the above matters. We will be in touch shortly to propose a meeting to discuss the above.

Yours sincerely,



Neil Rowley
Director