

MAJOR SCIENTOLOGY PLANS OPPOSED

WHEN THE EAST GRINSTEAD URBAN COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE MET ON TUESDAY THEY UNANIMOUSLY REFUSED AN APPLICATION OF THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY OF CALIFORNIA FOR A MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AT SAINT HILL MANOR, EAST GRINSTEAD. THEY HAD PLACED BEFORE THEM A PETITION SIGNED BY OVER 460 PEOPLE, AND OTHER STRONG OBJECTIONS TO THE PROPOSALS.

In a letter enclosed with the application it stated that a proposed extension would cover approximately 9,000 square feet in area. The Planning Committee was informed by the County Planning Officer that the proposed development would, if permitted, involve a substantial departure from the provisions of the County Development Plan, and he was not prepared to issue a 'Notification.'

The reasons of refusal which were recommended by the Urban Council Surveyor were:

(1) The necessity for the proposed teaching block is not apparent, but if the need for further extensions can be established, then it should be provided within the Manor House by the appropriation of the living accommodation, without the introduction of further buildings within the grounds in accordance with

the Council's submission to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, in respect of the appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the erection of a post-graduate training school and administrative office at Saint Hill Manor.

(2) The site is outside the Development Area as indicated on the East Grinstead Town Map and is within an Area

where it is intended that the existing uses of land shall remain for the most part undisturbed and where it is proposed that only buildings essential to Agriculture or Forestry shall ordinarily be permitted.

(3) The intrusion of these further buildings with their associated uses and major intensification of the scale of activities in this quiet predominantly rural area would, if permitted, have a widespread impact on the nearby properties and surrounding areas and be against the interests of, and detrimental to, the visual amenities and general characteristics of the locality.

(4) The proposal would constitute an undesirable addition to scattered development in a rural area unrelated to the needs of agriculture or forestry and would, if permitted, create additional hazards to traffic using the adjoining road.

says "The existing public address system used at Saint Hill for lectures is clearly audible on the property of both our clients—an extension of the system to the new buildings and the user of the buildings for the purposes referred to would be detrimental to our clients' property and our clients' enjoyment."

EAST GRINSTEAD OBSERVER

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 1968

In a letter accompanying the application it was stated that the existing second stage extension would cover an area of approximately 9,000 square feet, it would be single storey and contain additional study rooms similar to those existing, plus an examination room, and entrance hall with reception and interview areas, all directly related to educational usages.

Future development plans include further study spaces, rooms necessary to the running of the College and a lecture room.

The letter added that the Church had had a fully contoured land survey prepared, and were proposing landscape work to restore the original beauty of the surroundings and to create gardens around the buildings. It was not proposed that any roof line should rise above the existing single storey building.

The Kent River Authority was approached on the proposals and they had no observations to make on the proposed development from the land drainage aspect. A new sewage treatment plant was under construction. It had been hoped this work would now be completed, but site difficulties had caused delays and it was not now expected to be completed for several months.

The Authority added that they have no cause for complaint as long as the discharge of effluent from the sewage treatment plant to the stream complied with the conditions of the statutory consent already given.

The petition stated that the signatories opposed 'any further development at Saint Hill Manor, East Grinstead, in an area which should be maintained for its rural character and scenic beauty, and call upon the Minister to bring a halt to further commercial development in an area outside the limits of the business area of the Town Map where development is normally restricted to buildings essential to agriculture.'

'CREATE HAZARDS'

It continues; 'Such commercial development would erode rural amenities, create hazards on roads not built for the resulting increased traffic, and set an undesirable precedent for any other development proposed in the area.'

The clerk's report goes on to present extracts from letters received from residents and representations from professional persons acting on behalf of clients in this matter.

Members were informed by the clerk, Mr. H. C. Jones, that in acknowledging the letter, he had informed the architect that applications have been considered 'purely on their planning merits,' and that at meetings which have previously been held with persons representing development proposals at Saint Hill, this principle has always been upheld.

A farmer writes; 'I have the strongest possible objection to any suggested extension of building development at Saint Hill. Certain building developments have already taken place recently, although it is within an agricultural area. As it is, the roads leading to Saint Hill, from both directions are very full of traffic, for which these roads are not suitable, and this constitutes considerable danger both to pedestrians and other road users.'

Another objector considers that all isolated development at Saint Hill as 'detrimental to the interests of the countryside in this area.'

Numerous objections have been lodged on the grounds of traffic hazards. One states that since the setting up of this organisation at the Manor, hazards have increased greatly, particularly during rush hours. It adds 'Surely any increase of this traffic should not be allowed while the West Hoathly road, where it cuts through the rocks, is too narrow in parts to allow two large vehicles to pass safely and has no footpath.'

Noise is another objection which has been put forward. It

'The development, if permitted, would presumably considerably increase the number of "Students" attending Saint Hill several times daily,' is another view put forward which adds; 'The increased number of "Students" would place a further burden on housing in the neighbourhood of the town.'

Other objections state: It is undesirable in the general interests of the neighbourhood; 'Drainage facilities are inadequate and unsuitable'; 'The area is one of outstanding natural beauty. The development would detract from this'; 'The effect on Weirwood Reservoir - further development in this area would be contrary to good planning'; 'The development would not appear to be essential such as a school or hospital for the benefit of residents of the town or even the country.'

'A BUSINESS'

Alleging that development originally allowed at Saint Hill was carried out before planning permission was obtained, one objector writes: 'A pistol was put at the head of the Planning Committee by this means and only the casting vote of the chairman of the committee avoided the need for an enforcement order. This was the thin end of the wedge.' Further on it adds; 'That Scientology is a business is beyond doubt as it proudly regards itself as East Grinstead's biggest business.'

A letter was also received from the applicant's architect. In it he refers to a member of the Planning Committee who, at a meeting, on January 2, said he would like a Public Inquiry into Scientology, and that he would like to know what is being done in Government circles before the council passed any planning application. The letter states, 'I would be obliged if you could draw the attention of the committee members to the fact that the Planning Committee is there to consider planning matters only. If any member feels prejudiced against an application for any reason then he should withdraw, and not use his position on the Committee for personal pronouncements.'

NOT THE APPLICANT

It adds, 'My client wishes me to re-state that this application is being made by the Church of Scientology of California through its executive council and duly appointed Board of Directors. Mr. Hubbard resigned all board positions in 1966 along with his title of executive director. It is regretted that a personal attack on the Founder is being made, but Mr. Hubbard is not the applicant.'

THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 1968

SCIENTOLOGY APPEAL

MAY LAST

TWO DAYS

THE APPEAL BY THE CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY AGAINST EAST GRINSTEAD URBAN COUNCIL'S REFUSAL TO GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION FOR LARGE-SCALE DEVELOPMENT AT THEIR HEADQUARTERS AT SAINT HILL MAY LAST TWO DAYS.

A petition signed by over 460 people objecting to the development, in addition to individual objections, was sent to the Urban Council at the time they discussed the application and notices of the local inquiry have been sent to them.

The inquiry, which will be conducted by an Inspector of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, opens at the Large Parish Hall, East Grinstead, on Wednesday, May 29, at 10.30 a.m. The local authority will be represented by counsel.

It was on February 6 that the Planning Committee of the Urban Council considered the application from the Church of Scientology, California, who wished to extend existing buildings by the erection of single-storey buildings at Saint Hill Manor comprising approximately some 25,500 square feet.

The Planning Committee refused the application on the following grounds:—

(1) The necessity for the proposed teaching block is not apparent, but if the need for further extension can be established then it should be provided within the Manor House by the appropriation of the living accommodation without the introduction of further buildings within the grounds in accordance with the council's submission to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government in respect of the appeal against the refusal of planning permission to Application No. J/62/5880 for the erection of a post-graduate training school and administrative office at Saint Hill Manor.

(2) The site is outside the

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Scientology appeal may last two days

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Development Area as indicated on the East Grinstead Town Map and is within an area where it is intended that the existing uses of land shall remain for the most part undisturbed and where it is proposed that only buildings essential to Agriculture or Forestry shall ordinarily be permitted.

(3) The intrusion of these further buildings with their associated uses and major intensification of the scale of activities in this quiet predominately rural area would, if permitted, have a widespread impact on the nearby properties and surrounding areas, and be against the interests of, and detrimental to, the visual amenities and general characteristics of the locality.

(4) The proposal would constitute an undesirable addition to scattered development in a rural area unrelated to the needs of agriculture or forestry and would, if permitted, create additional hazards to traffic using the adjoining road.

The grounds of the appeal by the Church of Scientology are as follows:—

(1) There is no justification for the refusal of planning permission in this case as planning permission was confirmed by the competent authority successively on the 4th November, 1964, and on the 21st April, 1965, in respect of the greater part, if not the whole, of the proposed development. Without prejudice to the foregoing in the opinion of the appellants.

(2) The proposed development is in logical sequence to the existing use of the whole property recognised by the competent authorities.

(3) The proposed development is consistent with the terms of the Minister's previous decision on appeal affecting the property, dated the 12th September, 1963. (Ministry ref. APP/1068/A/67563).

(4) In view of the past planning history of the property and successive planning decisions by the competent authorities hitherto the first and second reasons for the refusal of planning permission in this case have no material significance.

(5) There is no reason to expect that the proposed

development, if permitted, would

- (a) Result in a major intensification of the present scale of activities within the curtilage of the property.
- (b) Have a detrimental impact upon nearby properties and surrounding areas.
- (c) Detrimentally affect the visual amenities and general characteristics of the locality.

The third reason for the refusal of planning permission is, therefore, entirely without substance.

(6) The proposed development would be so closely related, physically, to the existing buildings within the curtilage and their permitted uses that the first argument in the fourth reason for the refusal of planning permission is absurd on the face of it. There is nothing to show that traffic generated by the use of the proposed buildings would create additional hazards to traffic on adjoining highways. Any person desirous of mak-

ing representations may attend the inquiry and give their views either personally or through a representative or submit them in writing. If written submissions are made express permission should be given for the views to be disclosed to the Ministry Inspector at the inquiry.