
PRESS STATEMENT



15 December 2021

Merlin calls for planning reform as the Supreme Court rejects a bid to quash LEGOLAND® Windsor's permission

Merlin Entertainments, Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, has welcomed the refusal of an application to see approved development plans for the **LEGOLAND Windsor Resort** considered by the Supreme Court.

This decision means that the options for challenging this planning permission – issued by the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (RBWM) in April 2019 – are finally exhausted. **Merlin can now proceed to implement the plans which it first applied for in June 2017.**

This includes a Holiday Village with lodges in a woodland setting, providing additional on-site accommodation for guests. This will result in more families staying overnight in the Royal Borough, having the time to visit Windsor and support the wider local economy.

Over the past 30 months, Merlin has been unable to proceed with its multimillion investment in the Windsor attraction – as activists sought to overturn the local planning authority's decision in the High Court, the Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of England and Wales. Each application made by the activists was unanimously quashed by the Courts.

A Merlin spokesperson said: *"We welcome the decision issued this week. This is not before time. It has been hugely frustrating that our approved plans to boost Windsor's economy have been held up by a third party who did not even object to the development proposals in the first place.*

In 2018, democratically elected councillors gave their overwhelming support to our vision to transform LEGOLAND Windsor over the ensuing decade. The Secretary of State also gave these plans the green light in 2019. It therefore can't be right that decisions made by local and national politicians to enable economic growth can be disrupted and delayed by activists, to this extent, through repeated legal challenges with little to no risk of costs sanctions.

If the Government is serious about making the UK a more attractive place to invest, it needs to make sure that our planning system is fit-for-purpose.

Following this week's outcome we will be writing to the new Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, urging him – and his ministerial colleagues – to introduce fundamental changes to prevent a repeat of what we have faced over the past 30 months. Such changes have to happen if the UK is to compete globally."

Ends

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Notes to Editors

Timeline

1. In June 2017, following extensive pre-application consultation, LEGOLAND Windsor submitted a hybrid planning application to RBWM (the local planning authority) for its Long-Term Plan.
2. In May 2018, RBWM's Development Management Panel resolved – by 11 votes to 2 – to grant planning permission for this scheme.
3. In January 2019, the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government decided not to call the application in for his own determination, being satisfied that it should be decided locally (by RBWM).
4. In April 2019, RBWM issued planning permission.
5. In May 2019, the Berkshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) lodged an application for a Judicial Review claim with the High Court, seeking to quash RBWM's decision. RBWM (as the defendant) and Merlin / Legoland (as the interested parties) both resolved to defend the decision. CPRE had not objected to the application or made any prior attempt to engage in consultation with Merlin / Legoland over the development proposals.
6. In December 2019 (following a hearing in October 2019), Justice Lang handed down a judgment dismissing CPRE's claim for Judicial Review.
7. In January 2020, CPRE lodged an application to appeal the High Court decision to the Court of Appeal.
8. In April 2021 (following a hearing in March 2021), Justices King, Coulson and Carr handed down a unanimous judgment dismissing this appeal.
9. In May 2021, CPRE lodged an application for permission to appeal the Court of Appeal decision to the Supreme Court. This application was refused by Justices Lord Reed, Lord Leggatt and Lord Stephens. A copy of the decision is available on request. There is now no further basis for appeal by CPRE (or any other third party).

About Merlin Entertainments

Merlin Entertainments is a global leader in location-based, family entertainment. As Europe's Number 1 and the world's second-largest visitor attraction operator, Merlin operates 137 attractions, 24 hotels and 6 holiday villages in 24 countries and across 4 continents. Merlin's purpose is to deliver memorable experiences to its millions of guests around the world, through its iconic brands and multiple attraction formats, and the commitment and passion of its employees. See www.merlinentertainments.biz for more information and follow on Twitter [@MerlinEntsNews](https://twitter.com/MerlinEntsNews).