

Committee Report

Item No: 3

Reference: DC/18/01279

Case Officer: Mark Russell

Ward: Woolpit

Ward Member: Cllr Jane Storey

RECOMMENDATION – GRANT OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION WITH CONDITIONS

Description of Development

Hybrid Application. (1) Erection of 2No warehouses, 2No offices, creation of car parking and storage yards, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage system, infrastructure and highway improvements. (2) Outline Planning Application. (Access and Landscaping to be considered) for erection of 1No warehouse, erection of an office and associated car parking and storage yard.

Location

Land At Lawn Farm, Warren Lane, Woolpit

Parish: Woolpit

Expiry Date: 26/06/18

Application Type: Full planning application

Development Type: Commercial

Applicant: Woolpit Business Parks Ltd.

Agent: Mr James Bailey

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason:

- It is a 'Major' application for the erection of industrial building/s with a gross floor space exceeding 3,750sqm

Councillor Storey also called the application to Committee for the following reasons:

“This industrial site will be immediately adjacent to the grade 2 listed properties of Lawn Farmhouse and Lawn Cottage and will be severely detrimental to their setting.

The core planning principle at NPPF paragraph 17 requires that Planning should be plan-led with the aim of empowering local people to shape their surroundings by objectively identifying business needs against tests of area roles and character. This principle is ignored should the Application succeed.

Local Plan policy E10 - There is no evidence that employment land is needed in this area. The Draft Local Plan states that there is sufficient land already allocated in MSDC to provide for industrial needs.

This development is close to Haughley Woods and will be very conspicuous from Woolpit and the A14. Development should not take place in this high area.!

This application is referred to planning committee for consideration because both Woolpit Parish Council and the neighbouring Elmswell Parish Council both object to the application and on that basis it is considered CONTROVERSIAL.

The local parish council, Woolpit, and the neighbouring parish council, Elmswell, have both raised significant objections to this application.”

Details of Previous Committee/Resolutions and Member Site Visit

None.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

Relevant policies in the Core Strategy Focused Review 2012 and Mid-Suffolk Local Plan 1998:

FC01 - Presumption In Favour of Sustainable Development
FC01_1 - Mid Suffolk Approach to Delivering Sustainable Development
CS02 - Development in the Countryside & Countryside Villages
CS03 - Reduce Contributions to Climate Change
CS04 - Adapting to Climate Change
CS05 - Mid Suffolk's Environment
GP01 - Design and layout of development
HB01 - Protection of historic buildings
HB14 - Ensuring archaeological remains are not destroyed
H15 - Development to reflect local characteristics
H16 - Protecting existing residential amenity
T09 - Parking Standards
T10 - Highway Considerations in Development
RT12 - Footpaths and bridleways
CL08 - Protecting wildlife habitats

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Supplementary Planning Documents
Suffolk Adopted Parking Standards (2015)

Consultations and Representations

During the course of the application consultation and representations from third parties have been received. These are summarised below.

A: Summary of Consultations

Parish Councils

Woolpit Parish Council objected as follows:

“WPC objects to this application on the following grounds: This industrial site will be immediately adjacent to the grade 2 listed properties of Lawn Farmhouse and Lawn Cottage and will be severely detrimental to their setting. There is no evidence that employment land is needed in this area. The Draft Local Plan states

that there is sufficient land already allocated in MSDC to provide for industrial needs. Initially some 300 people will be employed on this site and this will rise to some 600 when all the land available is developed. It will not be possible to control their travel routes to and from work and many will pass through the already narrow congested Heath Road by the School and Health Centre, particularly when heading towards Bury on the A14. Suffolk is a rural county. This proposal will add to the urbanization of farmland alongside the A14 and contribute to the feel of driving through a ribbon of development. Industrial development should be confined to the designated areas near the major towns. Woolpit is the fourth largest centre of commercial development in Mid Suffolk and its proximity to the A14 encourages workers to travel large distances to work. Additional employment areas should be located on already existing sustainable sites near centres of population with public transport and lower travel-to-work distances. Parcel C is level with Haughley Woods and will be very conspicuous from Woolpit and the A14. Development should not take place in this high area. If the application is approved the following requirements should be incorporated: 1. in order to encourage sustainable travel to work, a footbridge should be provided over the A14 to give pedestrian/cycling access to the site from Old Stowmarket Road or from Warren Lane south. 2. An HGV ban should be placed on Warren Lane and Wood Road together with the imposition of other measures to discourage workers private vehicles using these roads.”

Elmswell Parish Council objected as follows:

“A major imposition in the countryside such as is proposed and anticipated here cannot be determined without a strategic overview encompassing the many aspects of infrastructure, residential amenity, countryside, wildlife and landscape issues which will be inevitably affected. Such a determination is beyond the process at this level of consideration. The approaches recently made in principal regarding proposals for a major development at Haughley Park must be assessed in parallel with this application, with particular regard for the highway network and, specifically, routing from A14. The core planning principle at NPPF paragraph 17 requires that Planning should be plan-led with the aim of empowering local people to shape their surroundings by objectively identifying business needs against tests of area roles and character. This principle is ignored should the Application succeed. The proposals are, furthermore, in clear contradiction of Local Plan policy E10 which states that industrial and commercial development in the countryside will not be permitted unless an overriding need can be demonstrated and set against the impacts, including traffic generation. Such need and the broad infrastructure implications cannot properly be evaluated without a deep and comprehensive examination of the area and of the other extant proposals for development in the immediate area of the application site.”

Wetherden Parish Council also commented:

The main concerns expressed are those of access and speed. Access back on the A14 from the proposed site is a major consideration, with traffic coming off the slip road at 6070mph and traffic egressing the site. The amount of traffic will be hugely increased and thought needs to be given to speeds at those access points. We also have huge concerns about pedestrians and cyclists at this point, particularly those accessing the site and leaving it at the end of the day. We would like to see safer cycling and pedestrian access, and speed limits for vehicles, as well as enforcements of the current weight restrictions on Warren Lane and through Wetherden village.

Environment Agency

No comments

SCC Highways Authority

No objection subject to conditions relating to:

Visibility Splays

Details of Access

Details of discharge of surface water to the Highway

BMSDC Heritage

A low level of less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset because the development is of a considerable scale so would have some adverse impact upon the setting of the designated heritage assets.

The impact of the application on the designated heritage assets should be taken into consideration when weighing up with the public benefits of the proposal, as per the requirements of para.134 of the NPPF and the policies in the Local Plan.

Natural England

No comments

County Archaeological Service

Stated “this site has never been the subject of systematic archaeological investigation and there is high potential for previously unidentified archaeological remains to be present” and initially advised that a full archaeological dig should take place prior to determination.

However, after discussion with the applicant it further advised: *“Whilst we would strongly advise that a trial trenched archaeological evaluation is undertaken at this pre-determination stage, as there is a risk that significant finds will be identified which require preservation in situ, and thus require revisions to the layout of the site which would have both financial and time costs, if the developer is happy to recognise and accept this risk, we would not advise refusal of planning permission if the required archaeological assessment is not undertaken prior to the determination of this application.”*

It then proposed two conditions covering a programme of archaeological work and a site investigation and post investigation assessment.

County Fire and Rescue Service

No objection – advised that access to buildings for fire appliances should meet with Building Regulations conditions and that fire hydrants should be installed and that a sprinkler system be installed.

Economic Development

Supported the scheme.

Landscapes

With regards landscaping within the blue line on the south/western side, we accept that the suggested additional planting will not be viable to allow future development on this area. Recommendations to strengthen the site boundary planting and planting within the development layout is considered key to manage the impact of the proposal (Warren Lane, southern site boundary, planting along the Old A14, landscaping along footpath route to the west, planting within the internal road network. We would like to push for those as much as we can. The applicant will be able to prepare a revised landscape strategy based on our comments and I will be happy to provide further comments as this is progressed. Bearing in mind this is a full application, the landscape strategy will need to provide more detailed information at this stage or as part of a condition if the hybrid application is approved.

Place Services - Ecology

Sufficient ecological information available for determination, no objections. Recommended conditions relating to biodiversity, farmland bird mitigation, landscape and ecological management and lighting.

BMSDC Air Quality

No objection.

BMSDC Land Contamination

Originally raised an objection due to insufficient information. Further information was then submitted and a response is awaited.

BMSDC Environmental Health-Noise/Odour/Light/Smoke

Originally raised an objection due to insufficient information. Further information was then submitted and the issue of light was satisfied, a response is awaited regarding noise issues.

Travel Plan Officer

In the absence of the need to secure the Travel Plan that will provide a reduction in vehicular trips through a planning condition or Section 106 obligation; there should be a commitment instead to provide suitable provision for electric vehicle charging in accordance with paragraph 35 of the NPPF. To secure the electric vehicle charging facilities the following condition should be used (condition at the end of this report):

Public Rights of Way

Public Footpath 2 is recorded through the proposed development area.

Whilst we do not have any objections to this proposal, informative notes apply.

Highways England

No objection.

Anglian Water

No objections, noting that the Elmswell Water Recycling Centre had capacity for foul drainage, but requested a drainage strategy, in consultation with Anglian Water (AW), to determine mitigation measures due to an unacceptable risk of flooding downstream.

It also noted that the discharge of trade effluent from trade premises to a public sewer vested in Anglian Water requires AW's consent.

SCC Flood and Water

Having initially raised a holding objection, floods then changed its recommendation to one of support following the provision of additional information. This was subject to conditions relating to the surface water disposal strategy and the submitted Flood Risk Assessment being adhered to and further details about a Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) and Construction Surface Water Management Plan being submitted.

B: Representations

A resident from Drinkstone Road, Woolpit, objected on the following grounds:

The proposal will urbanize countryside which is currently farmland of a highly visible nature.

The proposal is not in keeping with and will be detrimental to the character of neighbouring Grade 2 listed dwellings.

The additional traffic associated with the development would be detrimental to the character of the area and to the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other road users.

It is part of a larger proposal which we understand will provide employment for at least 600 people. As a rural setting the road infrastructure is inadequate for the inevitable increase in private, commercial and industrial traffic. It is not possible to prevent or regulate additional traffic from driving into neighboring villages. There is already congestion in Woolpit as a result of the narrow roads and this is exacerbated by

commercial traffic (ref the photographs taken recently. Many people describe the level of congestion already experienced, the photographs provide irrefutable evidence of it.)

It is not possible to control people's preferred route to work and it is likely that local villages will experience greater levels of traffic.

GPS often directs traffic through the narrow roads in the middle of Woolpit and there have been high profile cases of commercial vehicles damaging heritage buildings in the village.

Given the above considerations we respectfully ask that this application is refused.

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1.0 The Site and Surroundings

- 1.1 The application site comprises 8ha of Grade 3 agricultural land. It is located near to (but separated from, by a narrow field within the applicant's ownership) the A14 to the west, the old A14 to the north, Warren Lane to the east, and further fields (also in the applicant's ownership) to the south.
- 1.2 The part of the site to be developed is an inverted "L" shape, with a missing section in the south-eastern corner containing the Grade II farmhouse Lawn Farm and a remaining section of field surrounding it.
- 1.3 The site is not in, nor does it adjoin, nor is it near to any Conservation Area. The site is not in an area of special character designation such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area. Nor is the site adjoining, or in proximity to, any designated landscape areas of special significance.

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1. The application is submitted in "hybrid" form, comprising two distinct elements. Namely:
 - FULL permission for the erection of 2 No warehouses and 2 No offices (together with the creation of the requisite car parking, storage yards, landscaping, SUDS, infrastructure and highway improvements);
 - OUTLINE permission (looking here at Access and Landscaping, with all other matters reserved) for the erection of a warehouse and office (with associated car parking and storage yard).
- 2.2 A layout drawing has been submitted, showing where the buildings and other items would be placed and indicating a hatched area in the north-eastern corner where the Outline building would be located (subject to a subsequent Reserved Matters application).
- 2.4 The new-build amounts to in excess of 7ha and comprises two main groups as follows:
 - i) The first buildings – comprising a north-south running warehouse of 2,376 m² and detached office of 360m², with associated infrastructure, towards the north-western edge of the site. This is referred to by the applicant as "Parcel A".

- ii) A second building, with a general north-south orientation, but angled slightly north-west/south-east on the south-western corner. This comprises a warehouse of 3,840m² in the main part of the building, with an office off-shoot of 528m². Referred to as “Parcel B”.

2.5 The buildings are proposed to be industrial in design; comprising brick, acrylic blue render, insulated metal panelling, corrugated steel and roof panelling. One of the buildings is to have louvre profile cladding.

2.6 Other items include secure cycle parking, service yards and a break out area for staff.

2.7 Also to the far north-western corner is a proposed attenuation pond.

2.8 The drawing also indicates a further area of land (within the applicant’s ownership) measuring 18ha, for possible future expansion. This, however, is not the subject of the application at hand.

3.0 The Principle of Development

3.1 A pre-application took place in February where highway and other matters were discussed and the proposal was supported in principle by your Officers because of the economic and employment benefits.

3.1 Mid-Suffolk’s Core Strategy Policy CS1 defines Woolpit as a “Key Service Centre”.

3.2 NPPF and saved Policy E02 of the Mid-Suffolk Local Plan support the creation of jobs and this proposal amounts to 7,120m² gross floor area of employment space.

3.3 The NPPF requires that development be sustainable and that adverse impacts do not outweigh the benefits to be acceptable in principle. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF sets out three dimensions for sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

3.4 The proposed scheme represents sustainable development, responding positively to the three dimensions above, in accordance with the NPPF. The economic and social benefits are clear, bringing employment to the locality. Environmentally, the sustainable benefits are perhaps less clear, with an undoubted increase in human activity and loss of countryside; however, the landscape and ecological enhancements mean the balance of all of these considerations is favourable. The principle of developing the site for employment purposes is, therefore, acceptable.

4.0 Site Access, Parking and Highway Safety Considerations

4.1 Objections have been raised by several parties in terms of the traffic which would be generated by this scheme. It is worth stating that neither Suffolk County Council as the Highway Authority, nor Highways England as the Trunk Road Authority has objected. The applicant submitted a Transport Assessment which showed that the local road network had the capacity to cope with the projected extra traffic (anticipating an extra 193 AM peak hour arrivals and 154 PM departures).

4.2 Access is sought from the old A14. This access is existing and would be improved to comply with the required standards – namely splays of 2.4 x 215 metres.

4.3 Paragraph 32 of the NPPF confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. This is interpreted as referring to matters of highway capacity and congestion, as opposed to matters of highway safety.

- 4.4 A resident and the parish councils are of the view that this proposal together with other approved schemes in the area will create unacceptable traffic congestion in the village. However, in the absence of any evidence to support this concern, and an absence of objection from the Highways Authority on this point, it is not considered that traffic congestion represents a defensible reason to refuse the application, particularly in light of the 'severe' threshold set out at paragraph 32 of the NPPF.
- 4.5 Parking and turning provision for 126 vehicles be provided in accordance with the Suffolk Guidance for Parking 2015 (SGP). There is ample scope within the site to ensure that the layout will allow vehicles to manoeuvre within the site and re-enter the highway in a forward gear.
- 4.6 The proposed scheme accords with local Policies T9, T10 and Paragraph 32 of the NPPF.

5.0 Design and Layout

- 5.1 Policy CS5 requires development to be of a high quality design that respects the local distinctiveness and the built heritage of Mid Suffolk, enhancing the character and appearance of the district; whilst Policy GP1 of the Local Plan states that proposals comprising poor design and layout will be refused.
- 5.2 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, stating that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.
- 5.3 The proposed buildings, whilst having industrial references, also offer a sympathetic palette of materials. It is worth noting that the development would be reasonably well-screened from most aspects.
- 5.4 It is concluded that the indicative design and layout of the scheme reflects the local character of Claydon and is one that is supported by officers.

6.0 Landscape Impact, Trees, Ecology, Biodiversity and Protected Species

- 6.1 Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy seeks to protect and conserve landscape qualities taking into account the natural environment and the historical dimension of the landscape as a whole rather than concentrating solely on selected areas, protecting the District's most important components and encouraging development that is consistent with conserving its overall character.
- 6.2 Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils.
- 6.3 The site is not in an area of special character designation such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area. The eastern edge of the site, which borders the proposed Outline part of the application is designated as a Special Landscape Area.
- 6.4 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) supports the application and has been reviewed by Council's Landscape Consultant. The Consultant makes a number of recommendations which request more information via condition.
- 6.5 Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy requires development to protect, manage and enhance Mid Suffolk's biodiversity.
- 6.6 Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (Implemented 1st April 2010) requires all 'competent authorities' (public bodies) to 'have regard to the Habitats

Directive in the exercise of its functions.’ For a Local Planning Authority to comply with regulation 9(5) it must ‘engage’ with the provisions of the Habitats Directive.

- 6.7 Paragraph 118 of the NPPF requires planning authorities, when determining planning applications, to seek the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity by ensuring significant harm resulting from a development is avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), or where not possible to be adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, and if this cannot be secured then planning permission should be refused.
- 6.8 An Ecology Report supports the application. The Council’s Ecology Consultant and Natural England have agreed with its findings and recommended mitigation. Enhancements include native tree planting, bird and bat boxes and hedgehog-friendly fencing.
- 6.9 The application is supported by a Tree Survey which has been reviewed by Council’s Arboricultural Officer. The Arboricultural Officer does not raise an objection. There will be no loss of significant trees and significant landscape planting will offer enhanced local arboricultural values.

7.0 Land Contamination

- 7.1 The application is supported by a contamination assessment and a response is awaited from Environmental Health following the submission of further information.

8.0 Heritage Issues

- 8.1 Policy HB1 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the character and appearance of buildings of architectural or historic interest, particularly protecting the settings of Listed Buildings. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Listed Building or its setting.
- 8.2 Paragraph 129 of the NPPF identifies that the impact of a proposal on the significance of a heritage asset should be taken into account, in order to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 8.3 The site is not in, adjoining or near any Conservation Area. The nearest designated heritage asset, the grade II listed Lawn Farm House is to the east of the Full application buildings (south of the Outline part of the site) and its wider setting would be affected. The Council’s Heritage Team raises no objection to the scheme.
- 8.4 The County Archaeological Service (CAS)’s favoured position is that an up-front evaluation be carried out. Officers acknowledge that this is consistent with the approach advocated by paragraph 128 of the NPPF. However, the applicant will be asked to carry out the upfront field evaluation, should Planning permission be granted and will need to accept the risk that the layout may have to be altered, should finds so dictate. This is considered a reasonable approach given the costs associated with this type of evaluation.

9.0 Impact on Residential Amenity

- 9.1 Policy H16 of the Local Plan seeks to protect the existing amenity of residential areas.

- 9.2 The site is largely aloof from considerations of residential amenity, Lawn Cottage and Lawnswood are on Warren Lane, but are separated by some distance from the development (although the proposed future expansion may come nearer).
- 9.3 Construction hours can be managed by planning condition, to ensure the construction phase of development is carried out in a manner that safeguards neighbouring residents' amenity. Hours of use for the development can be similarly conditioned.

10.0 Flooding and Drainage

- 10.1 This was subject to conditions relating to the surface water disposal strategy and the submitted Flood Risk Assessment being adhered to and further details about a Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) and Construction Surface Water Management Plan being submitted.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

11.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 11.1 It is noted that the proposal at hand will change the character of the area by placing buildings on former farmland and
- 11.2 The economic and social gains will be significant, with the supply of jobs, some of which would be for local people. Environmental benefits include habitat creation through the introduction of green space and landscaping providing screening and visual amenity benefits.
- 11.3 The proposal constitutes sustainable development for which the NPPF carries a presumption in favour and therefore the outline application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

(2) That authority be delegated to Corporate Manager - Growth & Sustainable Planning to grant planning permission subject to resolving the outstanding issues relating to archaeology, subject to conditions including:

- Standard Time Limit Condition (Full)
 - Time Limit for submission of Reserved Matters (Outline)
 - Drawing Numbers
 - Landscaping
 - Visibility Splays
 - Details of Access
 - Details of discharge of surface water to the Highway
 - Archaeological Works
 - Archaeological Site Investigation
 - Landscaping
 - Ecological Mitigation
 - Contamination
 - Lighting
 - Electric Charging Points
 - Drainage Strategy
 - Compliance with Surface water disposal strategy/FRA
 - Further details on Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) and Construction Surface Water Management Plan.
 - Tree Protection Measures
-

Informatives: Footpaths;
Section 38 of the Highways Act 1980
Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980