

Committee Report

Item 7A

Reference: DC/19/03851
Case Officer: Mark Russell

Ward: Elmswell & Woolpit.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Helen Geake. Cllr Sarah Mansel.

RECOMMENDATION – GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION WITH CONDITIONS

Description of Development

Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved - access and landscaping to be considered) for development comprising of a mixture of B1/B2/B8 uses.

Location

Land At Lawn Farm, Warren Lane, Woolpit, Suffolk

Expiry Date: 13/11/2019

Application Type: OUT - Outline Planning Application

Development Type: Major Small Scale - Offices/R&D/Light In

Applicant: C/O Agent

Agent: Miss Chloe Parmenter

Parish: Woolpit

Site Area: 5.59ha

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit:

This item was before Members on 22nd January. It was deferred “to enable officers to review the application and access arrangements to ensure a lawful and robust decision can be made by members”.

NOTE – this matter is covered at paragraph 5 below.

At the same meeting, Members approved an amended landscaping scheme to application DC/18/01279 (below) in order to facilitate expansion on the site.

Planning Application DC/18/01279 on the neighbouring parts of the site was considered by Members and granted permission in 2018.

Has a Committee Call In request been received from a Council Member (Appendix 1): No

Has the application been subject to Pre-Application Advice: Yes (DC/19/00919)

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to committee for the following reason/s:

It is for industrial buildings in excess of 3,750 sqm.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework
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
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
E09 - Location of new businesses
E10 - New Industrial and commercial development in the countryside
E12 - General principles for location, design and layout

Neighbourhood Plan Status

This application site is / is not within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

The Neighbourhood Plan is currently at:-

Stage 1: Designated neighbourhood area
Stage 2: Preparing a draft neighbourhood plan
Stage 3: Pre-submission publicity and consultation
Stage 4: Submission of a neighbourhood plan
Stage 5: Independent Examination
Stage 6: Referendum
Stage 7: Adoption by LPA
Accordingly, the Neighbourhood Plan has Little / Limited / Significant weight,

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

Cllr Helen Geake - Elmswell & Woolpit

No response received.

Cllr Sarah Mansel - Elmswell & Woolpit

No response received.

Bury Group - Patch 1A - Ramblers Group Footpath

No response received.

Town/Parish Council (Appendix 3)

Woolpit Parish Council

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.

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

Elmswell Parish Council has consistently objected to development on this site. To allow further expansion would be inconsistent with the case as made previously against ad hoc intrusions into the countryside such as this.

Further, the emerging Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan is encouraging employment sites within the village, avoiding the inevitable conflicts of a site which is ill served by the highway network with its reliance on

single-track country lane access from Elmswell. There is no mention of the inevitable traffic problems which would ensue at Warren Lane or of mitigation to allow safe vehicular passage and encourage walking and cycling by the future workforce resident in Elmswell.

Councillors urge rejection of this Proposal.

Haughley Parish

Haughley Parish Council OBEJECTS to this application. For the following reasons:

1. The industrial site will be immediately adjacent to the grade 2 listed properties of Lawn Farmhouse and Lawn Cottage. This does not comply with the policies within the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) paragraphs 184, 193 & 194, Mid Suffolk Core Strategy CS2 (Development in the Countryside), Stowmarket Area Action Plan Policy 9.5 (Historic Environment) and Mid Suffolk Saved Policies HB1 (Protection of Historic Buildings) and H7 (Restricting housing development unrelated to the needs of the countryside).
2. The development would cause additional traffic movements along an already busy road (Stowmarket Road) that leads through Haughley New Street into Haughley. Although a substantial proportion of trips associated with the development made will use the A14 but many of these trips will be made using this unsuitable local road.
3. There is no evidence that employment land is needed in this area. The Draft Local Plan states that there is sufficient land already allocated on MSDC to provide for industrial needs.
4. Suffolk is a rural county. This proposed development will add to the urbanization of the farmland along the A14 corridor. A development of this scale should be confined to areas nearer to main towns.

Wetherden Parish Council

No comments.

National Consultee (Appendix 4)

Natural England

No comments.

Highways England

No objection.

Anglian Water

We note that the developer is proposing to discharge foul water via package treatment plant and surface water via sustainable drainage system, this is outside of Anglian Water's jurisdiction to comment.

We recommend that you seek advice from Environment Agency, Local Lead Flood Authority and Internal Drainage Board.

As your query is below this threshold we will not be providing comments. However, if there are specific issues you would like us to respond to, please contact us outlining the details.

County Council Responses (Appendix 5)

SCC - Travel Plan Co-ordinator

No comments.

SCC - Flood & Water Management

Recommends approval, subject to conditions to be dealt with at the Reserved Matters stage.

SCC - Fire & Rescue

Sets out standards regarding access and fire fighting facilities and water supplies. Requires consideration to be given regarding the provision of an automatic fire sprinkler system and a condition implemented for fire hydrant provision.

SCC - Archaeological Service

This site received trenched archaeological evaluation in 2018. The areas in this application did not have any significant archaeology. I do not recommend the need for any archaeological conditions.

SCC - Highways

No objection.

SCC - Development Contributions Manager

No comments.

Internal Consultee Responses (Appendix 6)

MSDC - Planning Policy - Contrary To Dev Plan/Departures

No comments.

Economic Development & Tourism

The need for premises is multi-faceted. There is an overall need for employment land that is as yet unmet within the District. The need for planning purposes is expressed in the Lichfields Sector Need Assessment 2018 which identifies a minimum land need of 9.4ha. However, the need figure is established using trend data obtained throughout the lengthy global recession of 2008>, and does not reflect the growth opportunities, infrastructure investment, uncertainty over Brexit and other factors that stimulate the business community. Accordingly, the need figure should be considered a minimum/starting point rather than a limit, which would allow for flexibility to enable businesses to function whatever the conditions, without the constraints of a land quantum ceiling.

Alternative site options do not exist in the vicinity – Gateway14/Stowmarket East (Stowmarket) are not serviced or marketed and as such are not a realistically deliverable alternative to this at this time. There are no other options for development of employment along the A14 in this area, and so the proposal should be considered favourably.

As well as the qualitative need, there is an underlying quality need that is not being addressed in the Districts. Most premises are ageing and do not meet modern needs of occupiers. There has been a long period of little development, and the supply of energy efficient, attractive modern premises is very low across the area. Within the generally short supply of existing premises (as opposed to land availability), modern, energy efficient buildings are rarely found, and so the development of the same is a welcome addition to the district's portfolio of employment premises.

Accordingly the Economic Development Team supports the proposal.

Public Realm

No comments.

Environmental Health - Air Quality

No objection.

Environmental Health - Noise/Odour/Light/Smoke

As the Class of use encompasses B1 and B2 I will require to see a noise impact assessment in order to evaluate any adverse noise impact that the proposed development may have on the occupiers of the existing residential properties in Warren Lane. The assessment shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the methodology within BS 4142 : 2014. I would request that we be consulted again upon its receipt. In addition to the assessment of noise from delivery vehicles and associated unloading/loading activities including from fork- lift trucks and reversing alarms etc, this should take into account any noise generating plant and equipment likely to be in use in connection with the activities within the classes of use sought.

I would also expect a full construction method statement to be submitted for consultation and comment.

For any proposed lighting during the construction and subsequent use of the site, a lighting assessment will be required in order to evaluate any adverse impact on current occupiers of nearby existing residential premises.

Note – These three matters will be dealt with by condition.

Environmental Health - Sustainability Issues

The application has indicated some measures that relate to CS03, sustainability and electric charging points (I assume they mean electric vehicle charging points) and these are most welcome, they are vague at this time which is a reflection of the outline status. Therefore we request the following condition is included so that sustainability is definitely incorporated into the finished properties.

Before any development is commenced a Sustainability & Energy Strategy must be provided detailing how the development will minimise the environmental impact during construction and occupation (as per policy CS3 SO8 and NPPF para 35) including details on environmentally friendly materials, construction techniques minimisation of carbon emissions and running costs and reduced use of potable water (suggested maximum of 105ltr per person per day). Details as to the provision for electric vehicles should also be included. This document shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority before construction commences.

Communities (Major Development)

No response received.

Ecology - Place Services

No objection subject to conditions requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and a wildlife sensitive lighting design scheme as detailed in letter dated 16th October 2019.

Landscapes – Place Services

“The impact of the proposals can be mitigated with the appropriate level of landscape mitigation and choice of materials and colours for the proposed buildings and boundary treatment. As it stands, we advise the following recommendations are taken into consideration before the application is progressed:”

(Additional viewpoint on the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, section through East-West showing estimated building heights, advanced planting, etc..)

OFFICER COMMENT – The building heights are not known at this stage and these matters should properly be dealt with at Reserved Matters.

The consultation response concludes:

“In the event that approval of this outline application is forthcoming then we would also advise the following reserved matters conditions are considered:” (Advanced planting, landscape management, landscaping scheme).

Heritage Team

The Heritage Team considers that the proposal would cause;

- a low to medium level of less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset because development on the Parcel B would considerably erode a key characteristic of the setting of Lawn Farm. It also has the potential to introduce overly prominent buildings within a close proximity to Lawn Farm, that would overshadow the listed building and likely further increase lighting and noise pollution within its setting.
- a very low to low level of less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset because development on Parcel B would likely introduce further large-scale development within the setting of Lawn Cottage, that would further erode its rural setting.

B: Representations

At the time of writing this report no letters/emails/online comments have been received.

PLANNING HISTORY

REF: DC/18/01279	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.	DECISION: GTD 24.08.2018
REF: DC/19/03500	Application under Section 73 of the Town & Country Planning Act, Permission: DC/18/01279 without compliance with condition 7 (Landscaping Scheme) to relocate a landscape bund	DECISION: PCO

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1.0 The Site and Surroundings

- 1.1. The site comprises two parcels of land currently laid to field. There are to the east and west of Lawn Farm Business Park. The wider area is described in the accompanying committee report for DC/19/03500.

2.0 The Proposal

- 2.1. The proposal is in Outline form with all matters bar access and landscaping left to a future Reserved Matters application. The permission sought is employment use (B1/2/8).
- 2.2. The Site Area – 5.59 ha in total, with the western parcel measuring 3.18ha and the eastern 2.41ha.

3.0 The Principle Of Development

- 3.1. The entire Lawn Farm site is now allocated for employment use in the Babergh and Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Document (July 2019), although this does carry limited weight.
- 3.2. The principle of development is already established on the larger site under permission DC/18/01279 and that development is part-built. The current application seeks to extend the coverage of employment towards Lawn Farm to the east and the A14 to the west.
- 3.3. Mid-Suffolk's Core Strategy Policy CS1 defines Woolpit as a "Key Service Centre".
- 3.4. 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.
- 3.5. 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.
- 3.6. 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 Nearby Services and Connections Assessment Of Proposal

- 4.1. The site is well-connected to the A14 and nearby is the Stag Café. Other services are further away (1 kilometre or more) in the main village of Woolpit.

5.0 Site Access, Parking And Highway Safety Considerations

5.1. Whilst "Access" is cited as one of the matters being sought permission for here, this access is in fact existing and within the applicant's ownership.

5.2 The following explains these issues further:

- No change is being sought to the accesses already approved by the hybrid consent (DC/18/01279);
- The site has one primary access (off the Old A14), which has been implemented via the hybrid consent, one emergency access from the Old A14 (already consented) and one cycle/footpath link onto Warren Lane (consented not yet constructed);
- To confirm, this Outline application will use the approved road network and main access to the main road in the north (Old A14) – with no additional accesses proposed as part of this application;
- The consented accesses are deemed to be appropriate to accommodate the proposed development;
- Internal road layout within each parcel will be subject to a separate Reserved Matters application.
- The applicant is seeking is Outline consent for the principle of development, to enable Woolpit Business Parks to speak with prospective tenants with confidence that the site has Outline consent.

5.3 The following points are also of relevance:

- A construction phase management plan (by condition) will be submitted and implemented throughout the construction phase;
- A workplace Travel Plan can be submitted with a future Reserved Matters application, which will encourage employees to car share and make use of more sustainable transport options for their journeys;
- Due to the nature of current and future occupiers, a number of vehicles are tracked, tenants will be encouraged to use this information to manage routes taken by employees as set out in the Workplace Travel plan;
- The above has worked well on the existing business park.

5.2 Neither the Highway Authority, nor Highways England has raised any concerns. .

6.0 Design And Layout [Impact On Street Scene]

6.1. Apart from the access and landscaping, the submitted application has no further details to consider at this point.

7.0 Landscape Impact, Trees, Ecology, Biodiversity And Protected Species

7.1. The landscaping proposed here is that which has been discussed under the preceding s.73 application DC/19/03500. The main features are:

- The relocated landscape buffer along the western edge of Parcel A, enhancing the separation between the site and the A14;
- A 10m buffer along the boundary of Parcel B which will enhance separation between the site and the existing scaffolding company to the east, as well as providing screening between the site and the listed buildings at Lawn Farm.

7.2 It is accepted that there may be more exposure of buildings to the A14 as a result of these changes, but these will be filtered views and only notable in the middle part of the site.

7.3 There are no issues of ecological concern, with the consultant requesting an ecological management programme by condition.

8.0 Land Contamination, Flood Risk, Drainage and Waste

8.1. The Lead Local Floods Authority has not objected.

9.0 Heritage Issues [Including The Impact On The Character And Appearance Of The Conservation Area And On The Setting Of Neighbouring Listed Buildings]

9.1. Our Heritage Officer has identified a low to medium level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the neighbouring listed Lawn Farm. This requires assessment in the balance of other considerations.

10.0 Impact On Residential Amenity

10.1. The dwelling Lawn Farm is to the east of the application site. It is masked to an extent by outbuildings and also separated by a paddock and the proposed planting belt.

10.2 Environmental Health have, however, requested various measures including a noise survey. These will be dealt with by condition and by details at Reserved Matters. The Reserved Matters application will cover matters such as orientation and specific user type (e.g. B1 instead of B2, if Environmental Control deems this necessary).

10.3 It is worth further noting that a recent appeal (ref: APP/W3520/W/19/3236169) on neighbouring land (next to Lawn Farm itself) for residential purposes has just been dismissed. This would have seen residences close to the boundary of the Business Park.

The Inspector noted: “The proposal would prejudice the approved employment development and its continued use.”

11.0 Planning Obligations / CIL

11.1. n/a

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

12.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 12.1 Members gave Full approval for two warehousing units and Outline for one in the summer of 2018. One of the units has already been built out and the applicant wishes to further expand the site.
- 12.2 Babergh and Mid Suffolk's "Open for Business" Strategy has, as a key objective, the delivery of 10,000 new jobs by 2036. Facilitating the proposed development on the neighbouring parcel of land would constitute an important contribution towards this.
- 12.3 Mid-Suffolk's Core Strategy Policy CS1 defines Woolpit as a "Key Service Centre". The NPPF and saved Policy E02 of the Mid-Suffolk Local Plan support the creation of jobs and this proposal would help to facilitate the 6.5ha of employment space which is currently being sought under application DC/19/03851.
- 12.4 Our Economic Development Team has confirmed that there is a demand for extra employment land in this location.
- 12.5 The applicant has indicated that it has several interested parties and has a record of delivery on the site, with the first unit completed and end-users ready for the second and also the subsequent unit (which has Outline permission).

"As a result of the success of Lawn Farm's consented scheme, Woolpit Business Parks have received a number of enquiries from potential end-users for this outline planning application. This has included enquiries from light industrial / storage and distribution companies, both from within and outside of Mid Suffolk. Companies enquiring from within the District have advised Woolpit Business Parks that they do not consider there to be any suitable employment land available in the timescales necessary to meet their specific requirements. Enquiries have also been received from companies outside of the District, including from Cambridge, Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich, who are looking to relocate to an accessible location, ideally along a strategic road network. Woolpit Business Parks have advised all those that have enquired that they are seeking planning permission and will be in touch."

- 12.6 This position is given further credence by two recent events:
 - i) The Reserved Matters application for the Outline element of hybrid permission DC/18/01279 has just been lodged. Bacton Transport is the intended occupier.
 - ii) The conveyancing and legal arrangements for ADANAC are nearing completion for work to commence on that site.

This indicates a strong take up of sites on the Woolpit Business Park.

- 12.7 Objections have been received from Woolpit Parish Council in addition to those of Haughley and Elmswell. Much of this centres on the principle of urbanisation in a rural area.
- 12.8 This concern is understood; however some expansion of employment does need to take place on greenfield sites and this is the A14 which is seen as a growth area. In this instance, permission already exists (and is partly built out) on neighbouring pockets of the larger site. The emerging Joint Local Plan has allocated the larger site as being for employment. Whilst this carries limited weight at the moment, this does indicate a "direction of travel" that the Council is likely to pursue.

- 12.9 Whilst the request from Woolpit Parish Council for a footbridge over the A14, as well as an HGV ban on Warren Lane and Wood Road are understood, these were not requested by the Highway Authority and for that reason are not considered to be justified.
- 12.10 Whilst the Heritage Officer has described a low to medium level of less than substantial harm to the nearby listed Lawn Farm, the benefits of job creation outweigh this harm.
- 12.11 In addition, the economic objectives are held to outweigh any concerns about the change in landscape aspect, which in any event, will be partially compensated.
- 12.12 Approval of this application is, therefore, recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application is GRANTED planning permission and includes the following conditions:-

- Standard time limit for submission of /Reserved Matters
- Approved Plans (Plans submitted that form this application)
- Phasing Condition
- Highway Conditions
- Noise assessment
- Drainage Condition
- Planting/Landscaping Conditions
- Provision of parking/cycle parking
- Sustainability measures
- Ecology Condition
- Fire hydrants
- Lighting Condition
- * Travel Plan
- Construction Method Statement.

(3) And the following informative notes as summarised and those as may be deemed necessary:

- Pro-active working statement