

Committee Report

Item 6C

Reference: DC/19/05093

Case Officer: Jasmine Whyard

Ward: Orwell.

Ward Member/s: Cllr Jane Gould.

RECOMMENDATION – OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION (INCLUDING ACCESS) IS GRANTED SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.

Description of Development

Outline planning application (some matters reserved - access to be considered) - Commercial development for flexible employment use [to enable changes in accordance with Part 3 Class V of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)] within use classes B1c (Business- light Industry appropriate in a residential area), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended.

Location

Land to The North and East Of, Bobbits Lane, Wherstead, Suffolk

Expiry Date: 04/08/2020

Application Type: OUT - Outline Planning Application

Development Type: Major Large Scale – Manufacturing/ Industrial/ storage/ warehousing

Applicant: Pigeon (Wherstead) Ltd c/o Pigeon Investment Management Ltd

Agent: Mr Matthew Wyatt

Parish: Wherstead

Site Area: 8.04

Details of Previous Committee / Resolutions and any member site visit: None

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

PART ONE – REASON FOR REFERENCE TO COMMITTEE

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

The Head of Economy considers the application is of a scale which exceeds the threshold for delegated authority as it is for 'the erection of any industrial building/s with a gross floor space exceeding 3,750sqm'.

PART TWO – POLICIES AND CONSULTATION SUMMARY

Summary of Policies

The Development Plan

The following policies are considered the most pertinent to the determination of this proposal. The policies are all contained within the adopted development plan for the Babergh District which is comprised of: Babergh Core Strategy (2014) and Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006), specifically the live list of 'saved policies' (2016). All Policies, save for CS2, are afforded full weight in the determination process as they are considered wholly consistent with the aims of the NPPF under paragraph 213 of the NPPF.

- Babergh Core Strategy (2014)

CS01 - Applying the presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development in Babergh

CS02- Settlement Pattern Policy

CS03 - Strategy for Growth and Development

CS07- Babergh Ipswich Fringe

CS09- Wherstead Park Strategic Employment Site Allocation

CS15 - Implementing Sustainable Development

CS17- The Rural Economy

CS21 - Infrastructure Provision

- 'Saved policies' (2016) of Babergh Local Plan Alteration No.2 (2006)

CN01 - Design Standards

CN04 - Design & Crime Prevention

CR07 - Landscaping Schemes

CR08 - Hedgerows

EM08 - Warehousing & Distribution

EN22- Light Pollution – Outdoor Lighting

TP08 - Proposed Park and Ride-Wherstead

TP15 - Parking Standards - New Development

TP16 - Green Travel Plans

Emerging Joint Local Plan Policies

SP03- Settlement Hierarchy

SP05- Employment Land

SP08- Infrastructure Provision

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 contains the Government's planning policies for England and sets out how these are expected to be applied. Planning law continues

to require that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The policies contained within the NPPF are a material consideration and should be taken into account for decision-taking purposes.

Particularly relevant elements of the NPPF include:

Section 2: Achieving Sustainable Development

Section 4: Decision Making

Section 6: Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

Section 9: Promoting Sustainable Transport

Section 12: Achieving Well-Designed Places

Section 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Other Considerations

- Suffolk's Local Transport Plan (2011-2031)
- Suffolk County Council- Suffolk's Guidance for Parking (2014 updated 2019)

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides guidance and advice on procedure rather than explicit policy; however, it has been taken into account in reaching the recommendation made on this application.

Neighbourhood Plan Status

This application site is not within a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

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

Town/Parish Council

- **Wherstead Parish Council:**

Response dated 5th December 2019: Object based on the following:

- Loss of grade 2 agricultural land
- Surplus of employment land already
- Height of buildings

- Increased traffic
- Unallocated site
- Transport Statement disputed
- Cumulative impact around Wherstead
- Concerns over anti-social behaviour
- Concerns over foul water drainage capacity
- Concerns over possibility of 24/7 employment operations on site
- Only two bus services available close to the site

Response dated 10th June 2020: No objection, but express concerns require addressing prior to any approval:

- Illegal motor cycling along Bobbits Lane, fencing should be placed along the edge of the carriageway
- Speed limit on unadopted road into site should be 20mph not 30mph
- Bus stop layby created alongside repositioning of bus stop to ease congestion
- Access on north roundabout not part of this application should not be included in this application
- HGVs may have to straddle both lanes
- All splitter islands/ verges should be planted
- Weight limit of 7.5 tonnes should be extended along The Street
- Lighting should be addressed
- Design out crime measures should be implemented
- Support speed limit reduction

- **Pinewood Parish Council:**

Response dated 17th December 2019: object based on the following:

- Strain on local infrastructure and highway network
- Cumulative impact from already approved development
- Traffic increasing through Pinewood
- Dispute submitted transport statement Babergh DC should verify these figures
- Worsen illegal motor biking along Bobbits Lane
- Loss of grade 2 agricultural land

Response dated 11th June 2020: object based on the following:

- Strain on local infrastructure and highway network
- Cumulative impact from already approved development
- Traffic increasing through Pinewood
- Dispute submitted transport statement Babergh DC should verify these figures
- Worsen illegal motor biking along Bobbits Lane
- Loss of grade 2 agricultural land

National Consultee

- **Highways England:** No objection, subject to conditions on access and highways improvements being completed prior to use.

- **Environment Agency:** No objection, subject to conditions relating to land contamination and surface water management.
- **Natural England:** No objection.
- **Historic England:** No comment.

County Council Responses

- **Archaeology:** No objection, subject to conditions for the submission of a written scheme of investigation and site and post investigation assessments and informative.
- **Highways and Travel Plan:** Object on the basis that a Traffic Road Order (TRO) to reduce speed limit has not been ratified prior to decision.
- **Floods and Water:** No objection, subject to conditions for surface water drainage to be submitted at reserved matters and submission of SUDs details.
- **Fire and Rescue:** No objection subject to condition for the provision of fire hydrants on site.
- **Development Contributions:** No comment.

Internal Consultee Responses

- **Environmental Health- Sustainability:** No objection, subject to condition for the provision of a scheme outlining sustainability measures.
- **Environmental Health- Air Quality:** No objection, development does not trigger an air quality assessment.
- **Environmental Health- Noise, Odour, Light and Smoke:** No objection, raise several concerns which can only be addressed in detail at reserved matters. Recommend conditions on noise levels, control over fumes, smells, odours and dust, external lighting scheme, no burning of waste on site, hours of operation and delivery times to be agreed.
- **Environmental Health- Land Contamination:** No objection.
- **Communities:** No comment.
- **Public Realm:** No comment.
- **Planning Policy:** We are only commenting on the land use principle of development in responding to this application. The site is located on an area of land not identified for development within the adopted Babergh Core Strategy (2014) and the adopted Babergh Local Plan (2006). We object to the proposed development under planning application DC/19/05093 as this would undermine the district wide approach to employment provision

without demonstrable benefits. There are allocated greenfield employment sites nearby along the A14 corridor in Babergh District which have the benefit of planning permission and are yet to come forward for development. It is important that we safeguard existing employment sites within Babergh District whilst acknowledging the National Planning Policy Framework's approach to building a strong and competitive economy. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that in supporting economic growth and productivity, we need to take into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. This proposal does not demonstrate how it supports local business needs in the context of employment development in the wider area. If this proposal were to be approved any application will need to ensure the appropriate highway improvements are secured including improvements to A14 junction 56 at Wherstead, in liaison with Suffolk County Council as highway authority and Highways England and as detailed in the Highways England response as well as detailed travel planning in accordance with Suffolk County Council's advice.

- **Economic Development:** Support the application. The Employment Land Assessment clearly identifies a need for additional employment land and industrial accommodation within the Babergh district and especially alongside the strategically important A14 corridor to support growth within the logistics, transportation and other key local sectors. There is a lack of commercial property available to the industrial market to allow sufficient churn for local businesses looking to expand or to attract inward investment. This development would provide new, higher quality commercial B class floorspace of a size required to support economic growth and meet future demand linked to the Port of Felixstowe. Its location, to the west of the Orwell Bridge and on Junction 56 of the A14 makes it attractive to port-centric operations. The junction improvements to both sides of junction 56 and the construction of a new access road into the site that would be required by planning application DC/19/02798 also support development to this site. The site will potentially create 300 jobs in a sustainable location on the Ipswich Fringe.
- **Heritage:** No comment.
- **Arboricultural Officer:** No objection, subject to condition or the implementation of recommended tree protection measures.

Other Consultees

- **Place Services Landscape:** No objection subject to conditions relating to submission of a landscaping scheme and landscape management plan. Recommendations are made relating to the provision of tree planting within parking area and innovative SUDs solutions which should be considered in the landscaping aspect of any subsequent reserved matters application.
- **AONB Planning Officer:** No comment.
- **Place Services Ecology:** No objection, subject to conditions for securing biodiversity enhancement measures, skylark mitigation strategy, Construction Environmental Management Plan, Landscape and Ecological Management Plan and wildlife sensitive lighting design scheme.

- **Stour and Orwell Society:** Object, raise concerns relating to cumulative impact around Wherstead, full LVIA should be produced, LVIA and Heritage review should be undertaken in Wherstead, unnecessary commercial space in this location.
- **Ipswich Borough Council:** object based on speculative development, intrusion into countryside and infringement towards Ipswich, unallocated, importance of ecological and green corridors, unsustainable travel plan, highly visible development. In the event of approval, requests contributions made to junction improvements, pedestrian access and waste recycling, water main and electricity impact on Ipswich residents should be taken into account.
- **Anglian Water:** No objection, subject to informative.
- **East Suffolk Drainage Board:** No objection, however separate permission is required under the Land Drainage Act 1991, it is strongly advised that this permission to be sought by the applicant prior to determination of this application to ensure any planning permission is later implementable.

B: Representations

At the time of writing this report at least 5 letters/emails/online comments have been received. It is the officer opinion that this represents 5 objections. A verbal update shall be provided as necessary.

Views are summarised below:

Objections

- Increased traffic pressure (3)
- Grade 2 farmland lost (3)
- Noise, light and air pollution (3)
- Cumulative impact of all 4 commercial applications in Wherstead by way of increasing traffic which detrimentally affects cycling
- No meaningful attempts to make sustainable travel possible
- Surplus employment land
- Drainage capacity
- Only 2 bus services not 4 stated within submission
- Anti-social behaviour
- Dangerous road network existing and will get worse with development
- Shared use path network should be integrated
- Danger of informal crossings
- Increased congestion
- HGVs cannot reach Felixstowe easily
- Issues with the Orwell Bridge
- Greenfield site
- Unnecessary

(Note: All individual representations are counted and considered. Repeated and/or additional communication from a single individual will be counted as one representation.)

PLANNING HISTORY

In 1991 there was a large-scale development refused on the site under B/90/00602, however this is not deemed relevant given the time that has passed and the vast changes in planning policy that have occurred since.

There have been no recent development applications on site.

REF: DC/19/02798	Planning Application. Development of roadside services, including 1no. petrol filling station (Sui Generis) 1no. drive through restaurant (Class A3 / A5) associated infrastructure and landscaping works.	DECISION: PCO
REF: B/0486/80/FUL	Extraction of Sand and Gravel.	DECISION: GRA 06.05.1980
REF: B//85/00904	TO CARRY OUT THE EXTRACTION OF SAND AND GRAVEL PERMITTED BY PERMISSION B/486/80 WITHOUT COMPLIANCE WITH CONDITION NO. 1 (DESTINATION OF MATERIALS)	DECISION: REF 16.12.1985
REF: B//85/00915	IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING ACCESS TO BOBBITSHOLE LANE	DECISION: REF 27.01.1986
REF: B/90/00602	OUTLINE - ERECTION OF HOTEL/CONFERENCE CENTRE, APPROX 6936m2 FLOOR SPACE FOR LEISURE FACILITIES, GARDEN CENTRE, RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT, NURSING HOME, AND THE LAYING OUT OF APPROX 111 ACRES OF COUNTRY PARK, ASSOCIATED DRAINAGE WORKS INCLUDING FOUL PUMPING STATIONS AND OFF SITE SEWERS AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW ACCESS TO THE STRAND AND NEW ROUNDABOUT AT JUNCTION OF A137 & SLIPROAD TO A45	DECISION: REF 29.07.1991

PART THREE – ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATION

1.0 The Site and Surroundings

- 1.1. The site extends 8.04 hectares and is located wholly within the parish of Wherstead, within the Ipswich Fringe area. The site's southern boundary runs parallel to the associated application site (DC/19/02798) for the petrol filling station and drive-thru restaurant. The site is located just off of the A14 northwards of Junction 56. The site's eastern boundary runs adjacent to the A137.
- 1.2. Junction 56 is currently served by teardrop-shaped roundabouts either side of the A14, which form part of the application site, the northern teardrop-shaped roundabout is closest to the proposed employment land.
- 1.3. The site splits across two fields, both of which are defined as having an agricultural use. In response to Wherstead and Pinewood Parish Council's comments, the site is grade 3 and not grade 2 agricultural land, grade 3 being identified as good to moderate quality. There is further agricultural land located north and a sandpit culvert located west beyond a wooded area.
- 1.4. The application site gradually falls in level towards the northern portion. The site is more visible along the A137 upon the approach when travelling southbound than northbound.
- 1.5. The site is not within or adjacent to a conservation area and there are no designated heritage assets within the application site. There are several listed buildings concentrated along The Street and Vicarage Lane, located approximately 450 metres south of the site, south of the A14. They are all Grade II listed buildings and include: No.1-2 Blacksmiths Cottage, No.1-2 School House, Birchtree Cottage, Garden Cottage, No.1-2 Corner Cottage, Wherstead Park and Park Farm House.
- 1.6. The site is not located within any designated landscape area including any Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Air Quality Management Area, Local Green Space, or Area of Visual/Recreational Amenity. However, it is important to note that the site is located 200 metres west of the Suffolk Coasts and Heath AONB, from which it is separated by the A137/ A14. To the north west of the site, approximately 740 metres away, are the Bobbits Lane and Millennium Wood Local Nature Reserves.
- 1.7. The heavily wooded area west, adjacent to the site, forms a natural boundary, this woodland is not protected by any designation or tree protection orders. As the site extends northwards there is an increase in the density of hedgerow and trees along the eastern boundary of the site, none of which are protected.
- 1.8. The site wholly falls within Flood Zone 1, where there is a very low probability (less than 1 in 1000 annually) of river or sea (fluvial) flooding. The existing nature of the land also means that presently the site is considered to be a low risk of surface water (pluvial) flooding.
- 1.9. There is a Public Right of Way (Bobbits Lane Bridleway) located approximately 100 metres south of the site. Bobbits Lane Bridleway starts within Pinewood, accessed

from Ellenbrook Road, and finishes by the A137. Another bridleway is located east of the site and runs along Bourne Hill, south of the Suffolk Leisure Park, on the opposite side of the A137 to the site.

- 1.10. The nearest dwellings are located 450 metres away, along The Street, on the southern side of the teardrop-shaped roundabouts at Junction 56, these dwellings are sporadically located along the Street and into Vicarage Lane. The nearest higher concentration of dwellings is located along Bourne Hill around 630 metres away from the site.
- 1.11. The Suffolk Leisure Park, Blue Cross Rehoming Centre and Best Behaviour Dog Training are located directly east and south east of the site, on the opposite side of the A137.
- 1.12. The majority of the main field is proposed to be developed under this application, a smaller southern portion is proposed for development under associated application DC/19/02798 for a petrol filling station and drive-thru restaurant.

2.0. The Proposal

- 2.1. This application seeks to gain outline planning permission, with access as a matter to be considered, for development of employment land providing commercial space with flexible employment use between use classes B1c (business- light industrial suitable in residential areas), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution). Application DC/19/02798 is also presented to members for consideration at this committee as it shares the same access and includes the same upgrades to Junction 56. A further application DC/19/05624 is located in close proximity, but to the southern side of the A14. Whilst DC/19/05624, it is not associated with this scheme, it is presented at this committee for the purposes of understanding cumulative impacts and use of Junction 56.
- 2.2. The 'flexible use' of the site is sought under the General Permitted Development Order (2015) (as amended) Schedule 2, Part 3, Class V. This permits that where Class V forms part of the development description and permission be granted, the change of use of a building/ land to one of the use classes listed on the permission is permitted without the requirement for further planning permission for the change of use. The permitted uses do however remain subject to compliance with any conditions imposed on a permission.
- 2.3. The site is split across two fields, the proposed commercial buildings (maximum combined floor space of 17,020sqm, not including mezzanine office space) are concentrated in the northern portion of the southern field. The attenuation basin is the only form of development located in the northern field.
- 2.4. This application proposes the same highways improvement works as those under application DC/19/02798. These works consist of improvements to Junction 56 through replacing both teardrop-shaped roundabouts with standard larger roundabouts, provision of new and widened cycleways and footways, new toucan crossing on the A137 and bus stops. The highway works would be carried out under a Section 278 (S278) agreement of The Highways Act 1980, which is granted outside of the planning process by SCC Highways or Highways England, enabling developers to carry out works on the highway

to the satisfaction of the highway authority to ensure they are adoptable. This will be discussed further under Section 4 of this report.

- 2.5. The application is for outline permission with only access considered. The remaining matters of design, layout and landscaping would be considered later during reserved matters if the outline is approved.

3.0. The Principle of Development

- 3.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, then that determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2. Core Strategy policy CS1 and paragraph 11 of the NPPF state that the decision-making process should be done in accordance with the most relevant policies of the Local Development Plan where they are considered up to date in relation to their consistency with the NPPF. All policies identified in this report, except CS2, hold full weight in the determination process as they are considered compliant with the aims of the NPPF as distinguished under paragraph 213 of that document. Policy CS2 is afforded limited weight given its prescriptive blanket approach to development, it nonetheless provides direction and distinguishes the most suitable areas for development.
- 3.3. Core Strategy policies CS2 and CS7 distinguish settlements across Babergh, specifically in identifying areas suitable for growth, including employment growth. Whilst the southern part of Wherstead could be considered a hinterland village, by way of its detachment from Ipswich in location and functionality, the northern area of the built-up area boundary of Wherstead, north of the A14, is 50 metres from the edge of Ipswich Borough. Under policy CS2, the site would strictly be considered in the countryside, however, as Figure 1 (Page 12) shows, in wider context the site is adjacent to the northern portion of Wherstead and is considered to form part of the Babergh Ipswich Fringe. Furthermore, whilst policy CS7 allocates a different area for development within the Babergh Ipswich Fringe, Wherstead's close functional and locational relationship with Ipswich means it is grouped within the wider Babergh Ipswich Fringe area on proposal maps. Whilst Policy CS2 is afforded limited weight, it identifies the Babergh Ipswich Fringe as a town/ urban area, which is highly sustainable, and an area where, sequentially, development should be directed towards in the first instance. Through this understanding of the site in the Babergh Ipswich Fringe, Core Strategy policy CS11, for considering development in core and hinterland villages is therefore not triggered. Moreover Paragraph 84 of the NPPF acknowledges that within rural districts employment related development may be necessary outside of existing settlements. This policy approach of identifying Babergh Ipswich Fringe at the top of the settlement hierarchy, as the most sustainable location, is proposed to continue under the emerging Joint Local Plan policy SP03.



Figure 1: Aerial view of the site within the wider area

3.4. As seen on Figure 2 (Page 13), there are also areas within close proximity to the site, which either have planning applications currently under consideration or are allocated within the existing Local Plan and emerging Joint Local Plan. Alongside Wherstead Park as the allocated employment area under Core Strategy policy CS9, as discussed further at point 3.9, there are several other sites that are worth noting as outlined below.

The sites with planning permission recently granted in close proximity to the site principally include:

- **DC/18/00706**- Outline permission for 75 dwellings at Klondyke Field adjacent to Bourne Hill, the reserved matters for this outline permission is currently under consideration under DC/20/00701.
- **DC/18/002200**- Full permission for the erection of 7 commercial buildings (use classes B1, B2 and B8) and agricultural building at Park Farm Barns along Vicarage Lane.

The sites with planning applications submitted currently under consideration principally include:

- **DC/19/02798**- Full planning permission sought for roadside service station adjacent to the site at Land North and East of Bobbits Lane.
- **DC/19/05624**- Outline planning permission sought for B1/B2 and A1/A3 employment space at Land West of Vicarage Lane.



Figure 2: Map showing existing and proposed employment sites

- 3.5. Under Local Plan policy TP08, previously allocated to reflect the SCC Transport Plan of the time, the site is allocated as a park and ride facility, thus establishing the principle of development on site and loss of agricultural land. The majority of the site falls within the boundaries of this allocation, with only a small portion to the north outside of it. Whilst the proposed development is not a park and ride facility, this is neither opposed by Babergh District Council, Suffolk County Council nor Ipswich Borough Council, and is not identified as a requirement in the current SCC Transport Plan. The principle of development within this location has been established subject to adequate landscaping and safe access. Therefore, in addition to landscaping and access, the considerations for this application are centred around the land use of the site and highways alterations. Whilst the emerging Joint Local Plan is currently afforded limited weight, it no longer includes this allocation, reiterating that there is no continued identified need for a park and ride facility, nonetheless the principle of development of the site has been accepted under the existing adopted Local Plan.
- 3.6. The application seeks to establish the principle of providing employment space with flexible use classes B1(c), B2 and B8 on the site. Local Plan policy EM08 identifies that B8 uses (storage and distribution) are best located towards trunk roads and ports and therefore are not always suitable within existing employment areas as they take up significant land and generate significant HGV movements. In applying the core aim of this

policy, B8 uses are therefore considered acceptable along the A14 corridor and the site is therefore in a highly sustainable and suitable location for such use.

- 3.7. The site is easily accessible, located just off of Junction 56 of the A14 corridor. Under the economic aims of Core Strategy policy CS3, the emerging Joint Local Plan, The Councils' Open for Business Strategy (2018) and paragraph 82 of the NPPF, the A14 corridor is identified as a strategic location and an 'economic artery' of the district where employment growth should be directed. Whilst the Council's Planning Policy Team have identified a surplus of existing allocated employment land, the Council's most recent evidence base (Growth on Space Supply and Demand Analysis- October 2019) identifies a deficit, especially as employment growth is market driven and allocations do not always come to fruition. Moreover, emerging Joint Local Plan policy SP05, states that along the strategic transport corridors (A12, A14 and A140) development of net additional employment sites shall be supported in principle, subject to: adequate highway access, parking, sensitive design and layout and high-quality design. Whilst the emerging Joint Local Plan currently holds limited weight it identifies a direction of travel.
- 3.8. The most updated economic assessments within the district, commissioned to provide evidence informing the emerging Joint Local Plan, are comprised of the Draft Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (2019) and Ipswich Economic Area Sector Needs Assessment (2017). The draft SHELAA identified the application site within a wider area, totalling 15.87 hectares, as being potentially suitable for employment use. The application site is located within the Ipswich Economic Area and as such is identified as being a good industrial location, suitable for the use classes proposed by this development. Within the Ipswich Economic Area, it is identified that local commercial property agents are often unable to satisfy occupier requirements for industrial space across the Economic Area, the proposed buildings would provide a range of floor space sizes to cater for a range of business needs.
- 3.9. Furthermore, the closest existing (policies EM05 and CS9) and emerging (policy SP05) allocated site is Wherstead Park, located 310 metres south east of the site. Wherstead Park has been identified as having several constraints to development, including infrastructure issues around access and Junction 56. The proposed highways improvements under this application seek to provide a direct access route into Wherstead Park, potentially unlocking development within an allocated site. Whilst unlocking development should not be seen as a reason to approve this application, it nonetheless demonstrates the wider benefits that significant junction improvements delivered under this application, would bring in the form of improved access, connectivity, congestion and highway safety around the area.
- 3.10. Core Strategy policy CS17, relates to the rural economy, it states 'rural business parks and workshops, rural and community business 'hubs' that share facilities and other innovative rural enterprises, and innovative business practices such as co-operatives or microbusinesses based on shared facilities / services is supported'. In considering this application for B1(c), B2 and B8 uses it is useful to explore surrounding businesses in the

locality as shown in Figure 2 (Page 13). Furthermore, the Council's Economic Development Team have been awarded grants to set up Food Enterprise Zones (FEZ), as part of this the Orwell Food Enterprise Zone was established, which is located within and surrounding Wherstead, immediately south and east of the site. The FEZ gives food and drink related businesses such as food production, packing, logistics and marketing the opportunity to expand and grow at a fast rate. In considering surrounding existing and proposed employment sites, this proposed employment site would therefore contribute to a larger employment area and provide commercial space which could support and complement the FEZ. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that the proximity of the site to other existing and proposed commercial premises could create a 'clustering effect. This would enable businesses to plug into and feed off of knowledge, services and facilities of one another, creating a strong and resilient employment area, as encouraged by Paragraph 82 of the NPPF.

- 3.11. Whilst representations made earlier in the determination process correctly identified that the development was wholly speculative, there are now two occupiers lined up for the site. Both occupiers have been identified as new, rather than relocating, employers to the district, representing inward investment into the area. Under the Council's Open for Business Strategy (2018) it is stated 'we need to influence the creation of site ready, fully-serviced employment land allocations through the planning application processes and our influence with strategic partners and developers, as this would provide greater surety for sites being delivered and operational in a shorter period of time.' This site is considered readily available and importantly deliverable, both the upgrades to the roundabouts and commercial buildings would be delivered by the applicant, and a timetable for bringing forward the development was submitted to the LPA detailing aims that both highways works and developments would be constructed between 2021 and 2022.
- 3.12. Under Core Strategy policies CS15 and CS21 and paragraph 8 of the NPPF, development should be assessed against its sustainability in relation to the 3 core objectives: social, environmental and economic.

Underpinned by criteria iii), iv) and v) of CS15, economically, outside of the immediate short-term construction period, the site has the potential to reduce existing high levels of out-commuting within the locality by providing a diverse range of job opportunities from the flexible use classes of the commercial buildings. The Council's Open for Business Strategy (2018) aims to create 10,000 jobs by 2036, this proposal would contribute to fulfilling this aim through the creation of approximately 300 jobs. There are several existing business premises in close proximity to the site as shown in Figure 2 (Page 13), including the East of England Co-op Headquarters and several other smaller businesses, south of the site along Vicarage Lane, which could further benefit from increased connectivity as well as the possible 'clustering effect' as explained at point 3.10.

In accordance with point iv) of CS15, socially, the proposal would provide local job opportunities within walking distance of many dwellings. Under policy CS21, commercial development is required to be supported by, and make adequate provision for, appropriate infrastructure, services and facilities to ensure the development is sustainable and of a high quality. The proposed highways improvements would provide much needed infrastructure, easing existing high levels of congestion by increasing capacity and

accessibility in and out of Wherstead and Ipswich, especially beneficial for commuters during peak hours of the day.

Environmentally in accordance with criteria i), iv), vii), viii), x), xi), xii) xviii), xix) of CS15 a sustainability statement was submitted which includes measures for energy efficiency, reducing water usage, green transport, minimising impact on and enhancing biodiversity on site and incorporating sustainable design and construction. A full and detailed sustainability strategy and travel plan would be conditioned to ensure the development actively reduces environmental impact and includes sustainable measures both during the construction period and for the lifetime of the development, in accordance with criteria xiii), xiv) and xv). Ecology reports made recommendations for mitigation and enhancement measures for biodiversity, which would be secured via conditions. Details of SUDs and surface water drainage are proposed to be submitted via condition.

- 3.13. In consideration of Core Strategy policies CS3, CS7, CS9, CS15, CS17 and CS21, Local Plan policies TP08 and EM08 and paragraphs 8 and 82 of the NPPF, the existing allocation on site and proposed flexible end use, in a strategic location along the A14 corridor, means the principle of development is acceptable.

4.0. Site Access, Parking, Connectivity and Highway Safety Considerations

- 4.1. The site would be accessed directly from an upgraded and enlarged north roundabout at Junction 56 and would share the same access point as the associated application for the petrol filling station and drive thru (DC/19/02798). The main access would then split into separate entrances, one serving the roadside services and another serving the employment site.
- 4.2. The submitted indicative layout shows 145 parking spaces on site, as this is only indicative this is not confirmed and would be determined during the reserved matters application. However, this layout demonstrates that there is space on site to ensure adequate parking provision is accommodated at the reserved matters stage.
- 4.3. In summary the proposed S278 works to be carried out by the applicant are comprised of:
- Replacing both single lane teardrop-shaped roundabouts either side of the A14 with double lane standard roundabouts
 - Widening the approach roads to the roundabouts
 - Upgrading and widening the footpaths and cycleways approaching the bridge over the A14 to a width of 3m
 - Upgrade of Bobbits Lane Bridleway (PROW)
 - Provision of a new toucan crossing on the A137 Provision of an additional lane to the northbound A137 between the junction and toucan crossing
 - Reduction in the speed limit along part of the A137 from 60mph to 40mph
- 4.4. The Bobbits Lane Bridleway currently runs south of the site extending between Pinewood and Junction 56, another Bridleway is then accessed east of the site along Bourne Hill. There are also existing bus services (routes 94 and 615) with bus stops along Junction 56 which would be improved. Bobbits Lane Bridleway (unmade track) between the site and the Pinewood estate would be upgraded. The proposed toucan crossing and Bridleway

upgrades would better link Bobbits Lane and Bourne Hill for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders who currently face dangerous crossings over the A137. The application also includes the widening and upgrading of the approach footpaths and cycleways either side of the bridge over the A14 to a width of 3m improving connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists between Ipswich and the Shotley Peninsula.

- 4.5. Suffolk Transport Plan (2011) identifies key highways issues within the district, it states that, 'severance issues exist within Babergh due to the proximity of heavily trafficked roads to local communities, with the A12, A1071 and A137 particularly impacting on communities by the difficulty with which they can be crossed to reach services'. The proposed Junction 56 infrastructure improvements would ease congestion, increase capacity and connectivity, whilst encouraging greener forms of travel within the immediate locality. The scale of these improvements exceeds what is typically required of a development of this size. These works are wholly supported by Core Strategy policy CS21 providing significant public benefit. This approach to the provision of infrastructure is proposed to continue under the emerging Joint Local Plan policy SP08.
- 4.6. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2019) prepared for the emerging Joint Local Plan identifies the need to upgrade Junction 56 of the A14 as 'critical'. Junction 56 already operates at capacity, with long queue lengths experienced north bound in the morning peak and southbound in the afternoon peak. This is largely a function of the design of both roundabouts, which are of single lane width, with narrow approaches and irregular shape, and which restrict the free flow of traffic at peak times. The proposed upgrades include wider approach roads and doubling the lane width to two lanes, which will significantly improve capacity and flow of traffic during peak times. Furthermore, the Delivery Plan identifies that the SCC Highway Authority has submitted a package of potential options to Highways England as part of a Road Investment Strategy, this includes allocating £6.7 million to Junction 56 improvements. This application's improvements would not only accommodate the traffic generated by the development but would further ease congestion around the immediate locality. Greener travel options also feature within the Delivery Plan, which further identifies that Wherstead to Ipswich cycle improvements would help maximise sustainable transport options, cycleway improvements are also included under this application. Not only will these improvements be wholly funded as part of this development, but they will also be delivered by the applicant. This means that the process of securing and constructing the improvements is more efficient than awaiting grants or contribution monies and delivery by SCC Highways.
- 4.7. With regard to cumulative impact, the highway modelling for the junction improvements under this application have considered traffic generated from both DC/19/02798 and this application, existing conditions and an appropriate buffer for future background traffic increases within the locality. The increased traffic around the locality resulting from already approved residential and commercial developments will be further alleviated by an increased capacity and functionality at Junction 56. As the application along Vicarage Lane (DC/19/05624) for employment space was submitted after this application and has a different applicant, the traffic generated by this application has not been modelled under this application.

- 4.8. Highways England has analysed the impact of altering Junction 56 on traffic along the A14, specifically the possibility of traffic backing up along the slip roads. They raised no objection, subject to conditions on constructing the access and fully constructing the highways improvements prior to use, these conditions are in line with those proposed by SCC Highways.
- 4.9. The proposal includes a “toucan crossing” element which cannot be delivered until such time as the current 60 mph speed limit is appropriately reduced to 40mph along the highway. In order to manage road speed, a TRO will be required, and the Highway Authority has accordingly objected on the basis that this is not in place. The making of such an Order would be subject to Highways Act processes and cannot be pre-determined under the planning process. On the balance of probability our officers consider that such a TRO would be likely to be ratified and that this would not, in due course, be a bar to the delivery of the development. Mindful that there is a reasonable prospect that this formal hurdle may be overcome it is appropriate to consider the imposition of a negatively worded planning condition to ensure that no work is undertaken until such time as that TRO is in place. This “Grampian” style approach to a condition on the permission is considered appropriate to enable the determination of the application and the resolution of this outstanding obstacle which can be pursued at commercial risk. This pragmatic way forward would assist with supporting the local economy at a time when this is a matter of considerable weight. On this basis a pragmatic approach would be consistent with Core Strategy policies CS2, points iv and xviii of CS15 and CS21 and Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.
- 4.10. Furthermore, in Wherstead Parish Council’s most recent comments it is indicated they support a reduction in speed limit along the highway. It is thus reasonable to consider that the TRO would be supported and thus ratified, further justifying the use of a Grampian condition.
- 4.11. Alongside a Grampian condition, other conditions have been recommended by the Highway Authority which are proposed to be included on a permission: details for reserved matters, access laid out, construction management plan, highways works complete prior to use, improvements to bridleway, improvements to bus stops, no gates along access road, external lighting and provision of a travel plan.
- 4.12. In summary the proposed S278 works are of critical importance to the wider locality and would not just serve the proposed developments but also carry a wider public benefit. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Core Strategy policies CS2, CS15 and CS21 and paragraphs 109, 110 and 111 of the NPPF.

5.0. Design and Layout

- 5.1. Whilst layout is not a matter for consideration, several indicative layout plans were submitted with the application. During the course of the application, the applicant has advanced discussions with end occupiers. A revised indicative layout has subsequently been submitted which demonstrates how the site is expected to come forward. This amended plan is considered broadly acceptable and a condition is proposed to ensure that the layout on a reserved matters application is in general conformity with this plan,

with a total floor space of 17,020sqm. The extent of the proposed built form detailed on this plan is considered acceptable and can be accommodated on site without appearing contrived or cramped. Whilst it is only indicative the proposed layout is comprised of 5 buildings with a range of floor spaces: 6530sqm, 4660sqm, 2590sqm, 1890sqm and 1350sqm.

- 5.2. Furthermore, whilst complete details are not confirmed of the design, the overall built form would potentially improve what has previously been accepted in principle through the park and ride allocation, which would heavily feature car parking consisting of monotonous hard standing.
- 5.3. There are no details regarding building heights, materials or overall appearance as these are not matters for consideration at this stage, these would therefore be submitted and considered in a subsequent reserved matters application.

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

- 6.1. Under Local Plan policy CR07, Core Strategy policy CS15 criterion i) and paragraph 170 of the NPPF, adverse landscape impact should be minimised and mitigated where possible. Whilst the site is not within any sensitive landscape or character area, it is in a visible location along a hillside and close to, but outside of, the AONB, therefore, a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment was submitted to appraise potential issues relating to visual amenity, specific views and the character that could arise from the development. Whilst this cannot be wholly comprehensive given this is an outline application and no details are yet confirmed on the overall built form on the site, the conclusions that are drawn nonetheless distinguish the overall landscape impact of developing the site. It is concluded that the application site is broadly isolated and contributes minimally to the prevailing character of the area, as existing woodland separates the site from the surrounding area, the development would appear contained. Furthermore, the site sits alongside the main A137, to the north of the A14 close to Ipswich and opposite existing development, therefore the impacts arising from this proposal are concentrated primarily within the early years of the development prior to established landscaping around the site. The landscape impact is therefore minimal and would improve with time.
- 6.2. As previously stated, the loss of agricultural land on the majority of the site has been accepted under policy TP08 for development of a park and ride facility, as part of this policy the acceptability of development is contingent upon planting along the A137. Significant planting is proposed alongside this development concentrated along the eastern boundary of the site along the A137 to accord with this aspect of the policy.
- 6.3. Whilst landscaping is not a matter for consideration under this application, a landscaping master plan was submitted to indicate possible landscaping on site in a future application. Place Services Landscaping raised no objection but recommended several amendments to enhance landscaping within the site which would be addressed within any subsequent reserved matters application.
- 6.4. The Council's Arboricultural Officer assessed the Arboricultural impact Assessment submitted and raised no objection to the development on existing trees adjacent to the

site as long as the recommendations made within the assessment are conditioned to be implemented. Therefore, the adjacent woodland would be protected from any adverse indirect impact from the development.

- 6.5. Under policy CS15 criterion vii) seeks to ensure development enhances and does not adversely affect biodiversity. Place Services Ecology are satisfied that the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures, comprised of mitigation for nesting birds, dormice, skylark plots, bat corridors and appropriate lighting are sufficient and should be secured via condition.

7.0. Land Contamination, Flood Risk, Drainage and Waste

- 7.1. Criteria x), xi) and xii) of policy CS15 and paragraph 163 of the NPPF encourages the use of SUDs and seeks to ensure development is appropriately located to ensure there is no existing or increased flood risk. The site is not located within a vulnerable flood zone, meaning the risk of fluvial flooding is minimal. The Flood Risk Assessment submitted shows there is a low risk of flooding from all sources. The proposed layout makes it unfeasible to incorporate open SUDs within the main site, an attenuation basin is therefore proposed in the northern field to attenuate any surface water run-off. The paving within the car park area will be permeable.
- 7.2. The Local Lead Flood Authority raised no objection subject to conditions. These conditions are for surface water drainage and SUDs details.
- 7.3. Concerns were raised through representations of the increased pressure and strained capacity of Anglian Water sewers. Foul drainage is proposed to be discharged to Chantry Water Recycling Centre. Anglian Water have stated that this centre will have capacity for these flows.
- 7.4. The recommendations in the event of approval from Ipswich Borough Council included consideration of waste recycling, water and electricity impact on Ipswich. Waste and water fall under the remit of the County Council, Anglian Water and the applicant. All the relevant consultees have responded with no objection from this perspective. In regard to electricity supply on site this is wholly outside of planning and is therefore not discussed in any further detail.
- 7.5. The Environment Agency raised no objection from the perspective of surface water management, subject to condition to avoid infiltration of surface water into the ground in areas where leachable metals are detected.
- 7.6. Criterion vii) of policy CS15 and paragraph 170 e) and f) of the NPPF seeks to ensure contamination on site is identified and appropriately addressed. The Council's Environmental Health Team raised no objection from the perspective of land contamination having reviewed the submitted Phase 1 and Phase 2 Geoenvironmental Reports. The Environment Agency raised no objection given the low contamination risk identified but recommended conditions if unexpected ground conditions are encountered.

8.0. Heritage Issues

- 8.1. The nearest listed buildings are located 450 metres from the site to the south of the A14 and therefore the Heritage Team did not wish to provide comments on this application from the perspective of the impact on the setting and significance of listed buildings.
- 8.2. SCC Archaeology initially raised concerns about the site as it is an area of very high archaeological potential, they required further analysis through the submission of an archaeological evaluation of the site. An archaeological evaluation, including trial trenching, was undertaken and did not identify any archaeological features. For the precautionary purposes, further archaeological investigative works are recommended and secured via condition.

9.0. Impact on Residential Amenity

- 9.1. Policy EN22 and paragraphs 127 f) and 170 e) of the NPPF require that development should not result in detrimental levels of light, noise and air pollution, which adversely affect the environment and residential amenity.
- 9.2. The details of all external lighting on site will be submitted concurrently with a reserved matters application for the purposes of ensuring the lighting is sensitive for wildlife and does not detrimentally affect residential amenity or result in light spillage into the AONB.
- 9.3. Whilst there are no dwellings located within close proximity to the site, the Council's Environmental Health Team recognise that some industrial processes that could be permitted on site may require more control measures than others, several conditions are recommended to ensure there is no adverse impact on the locality and residential amenity.

PART FOUR – CONCLUSION

10.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 10.1. The proposed employment land would be located on an immediately available and deliverable site, the strategic location along the A14 corridor and flexible uses would make the site specifically attractive and sustainable for future occupiers. The site would provide significant employment benefits, creating approximately 300 jobs in a sustainable location, which should be given great weight in the decision making process as a public benefit, with the potential to help reduce out-commuting and increase local jobs opportunities, all of which are identified as economic aims within the Babergh Core Strategy (2014) and within the economic impetus of the NPPF.
- 10.2. The proposed highway improvement works would bring further public benefit to the immediate locality and wider road users, increasing road capacity, highway safety, easing congestion and increasing connectivity. The increased connectivity would include opportunities for greener travel options through linking cycleways, footways, upgrading bus stops and crossings across the junction.

10.3. The principle of development has been accepted under Local Plan policy TP08, the proposed commercial B1(c), B2 and B8 uses of site, whilst contrary to TP08, are considered to be strongly in accordance with Local Plan policy EM08 and Core Strategy policies CS2, CS3, CS7, CS9, CS15, CS17 and CS21 and specifically paragraphs 8, 82 and 84 of the NPPF. The site's sustainable location on the Babergh Ipswich Fringe, proposed highway improvement works, to both accommodate and increase connectivity of the locality enabling greener travel, and the significant economic benefits generated by the employment use, are considered wholly compliant with the impetus of the Local Development Plan and NPPF.

10.4. Members are therefore presented with a positive recommendation to grant the application subject to conditions as outlined below.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application is GRANTED outline planning permission (access to be considered) for commercial development for flexible employment use within use classes B1c (Business- light Industry appropriate in a residential area), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) as amended and includes the following conditions-

Standard

- Time limit for submission of reserved matters
- Commencement time limit following reserved matters
- Development in accordance with approved plans

Highways

- Reserved matters details
- No development shall commence until the TRO is ratified
- Access road constructed prior to commencement of development
- Construction management plan
- Highways works completed prior to first use
- Bridleway improvements
- Bus stop improvements
- No obstruction of access
- External lighting
- Travel plan

Design

- Development shall be in general conformity with indicative layout

Sustainability

- Sustainability strategy for construction phase and the finished development

Archaeological

- Written scheme of investigation
- Site and post investigation assessment

Landscaping

- Hard and soft landscape scheme with reserved matters
- Timescale for landscaping planting and retention
- Landscape management plan for five years
- Arboricultural mitigation measures

Ecology

- Skylark mitigation strategy implemented as submitted and retained for ten years
- Construction environmental management plan
- Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy submitted with reserved matters
- Landscape and ecological management plan submitted with reserved matters
- Wildlife sensitive lighting scheme

Environmental

- External lighting scheme submitted with reserved matters
- Written scheme of investigation prior to commencement
- Site and post site investigation prior to first building occupation
- Unexpected land contamination
- No burning on site
- Measures to control noise, smells, odour and fumes
- Noise levels from development

Fire and Rescue

- Fire hydrants

Floods and Drainage

- Surface water drainage scheme with reserved matters
- SUDs
- No surface water drainage into ground

The following informatives are also recommended to be attached to any permission granted:-

- SCC Floods and Water recommended informatives
- Highways England recommended informatives
- SCC Highways recommended informatives

- SCC Archaeology recommended informative
- East Suffolk Drainage Board recommended informative
- Environment Agency recommended informatives
- Environmental Health Noise, Odour, Light and Smoke recommended informative
- Environmental Health Land Contamination recommended informative
- Anglian Water recommended informative.