

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

3rd December 2008

AUTHOR/S: Executive Director / Corporate Manager - Planning and Sustainable Communities

S/1598/08/F - SAWSTON

Redevelopment of Site to Provide 27 Units for B1 (c), B2, and B8 Uses, and the erection of 14m high Wind Turbine, at Former Marley Building Materials Ltd, Babraham Road, for Salmon Harvester Properties Ltd

Recommendation: Refusal

Date for Determination: 8 December 2008 (Major Application)

Major development

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because, in the event of further information been received which would result in a change to the officer recommendation, the revised recommendation would substantially conflict with the recommendation of the Parish Council.

Site and Proposal

1. The application relates to 2.92 ha of industrial land located at the northern fringe of the village adjacent to the Green Belt. The site was formerly associated with Marley Building Materials Ltd, which had a tall central building and gantry on the site, which has recently been demolished. The remainder of site is in use for vehicular access and turning, and external storage of materials. To the north east, the site is adjoined on a disused railway track with mature landscaped tree belts, to the north west by an area of mature woodland. To the south east, the site adjoins industrial buildings on the business park, and to the south west, the site adjoins dwellings in Fairfields and Broadmeadow, although there is a separation distance of 20 m. between the respective boundaries. A dwelling at North farm is located in the Green Belt 120 m to the north of the site.
2. The full application, dated 22nd of August 2008, proposes the removal of existing buildings on the site and the erection of 27 industrial units to be used flexibly between the uses B1(c) (light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and warehousing). The proposal also includes the erection of a 14 m high wind turbine, which has a helical blade design set on a vertical axis, as part of the renewable energy provision for the site. A 3m-high acoustic fence is proposed along the open side of the group formed by Blocks E, F and G in order to safeguard the amenity of residents of Broadmeadow from the noise of manoeuvring vehicles.
3. The unit sizes vary from 619 m² (Block A) to 1932 m² (Block H), measured internally. Overall, the proposal shows 13153 m² total floorspace, measured externally, to replace the previous provision of nearly 4000 m² in respect of the Marley operation. A total of 266 car parking spaces are proposed, including 32 spaces for disabled parking. 158 cycle parking stands are also to be provided.



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Scale 1/5000 Date 17/11/2008

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4. The heights of buildings vary from 10.6 m in Block H, adjacent to dwellings in Fairfields, down to 8.2 m in Blocks F and G. The design of the buildings is of a metal clad enclosure, topped with a curved metal clad roof. The buildings will be provided with contrasting colours of flat profile metal cladding. The frontage of the buildings is shown to include canopies over the entrance doors, supported from a series of inclined posts arising from ground level to eaves. An existing 8m-high conifer screen hedge on the south western boundary is to be retained.
5. The application has been supported by a number of reports; Planning Statement; Design and Access Statement; Habitat and Protected Species and Assessment; Flood Risk Assessment; Utility Services Report; Archaeological Assessment; landscaping details; Lighting Proposals; Noise Assessment; Site Waste Management Plan; Transport Assessment; Tree Survey; Sustainability Statement and Health Impact Assessment; Building Services Renewables Report; Travel Plan; Ground Remediation Strategy and Geo- Environmental Assessment Statement.

Planning History

6. There are a number of consents relating to the former buildings and uses on the site, the most significant of which are:
SC/63/472- Building contractors yard, approved 28.10.1963
SC/65/193- Erection of building to house tile manufacturing plant, approved 10.5.1965
S/1784/87/F - An appeal for redevelopment of the site including expansion into the Green Belt was dismissed 22.7.1988 because of the harm that would have been caused to the Green Belt.
The most recent consent was **S/0775/04/F** for the erection of a cement silo, approved 2.9.2004.
7. A screening opinion was issued on 7 July 2008 in respect of the Environmental Impact Regulations 1999, to the effect that a Environmental Impact Assessment was not required for this development.

Planning Policy

8. **East of England Plan (2008)**
Policy SS1 (Achieving Sustainable Development)
Policy SS2 (Overall Spatial Strategy)
Policy E1 (Job Growth)
Policy E2 (Provision of Land for Employment)
Policy ENV7 (Quality in the Built Environment)
Policy CSR2 (Employment-Generating Development)
Policy CSR3 (Green Belt)
9. **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003**
P2/5 (Distribution, Warehousing and Manufacturing)
10. **South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy (2007)**
ST/4 (Rural Centres)
ST/8 (Employment Provision)
11. **South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)**
DP/1 (Sustainable Development)

DP/2 (Design of New Development)
DP/3 (Development Criteria)
DP/4 (Infrastructure and New Developments)
DP/6 (Construction Methods)
ET/1 (Limitations on the Occupancy of New Premises in South Cambridgeshire)
ET/4 (New Employment Development in Villages)
ET/5 (Development for the Expansion of Firms)
GB/3 (Mitigating the Impact of Development Adjoining the Green Belt)
SF/6 (Public Art and New Development)
NE/1 (Energy Efficiency)
NE/3 (Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development)
NE/6 (Biodiversity)
NE/7 (Sites of Biodiversity or Geological Importance)
NE/9 (Water and Drainage Infrastructure)
NE/11 (Flood Risk)
NE/12 (Water Conservation)
NE/14 (Lighting Proposals)
NE/15 (Noise Pollution)
CH/2 (Archaeological Sites)
TR/1 (Planning for More Sustainable Travel)
TR/2 (Car and Cycle Parking Standards)
TR/3 (Mitigating Travel Impact)

Consultations

12. **Sawston Parish Council** (16 October 08) - Recommends refusal: against 24-hour operational hours and increased traffic on Babraham Road.
13. **Sawston Parish Council** (29 October 08) - Recommends refusal, commenting, 'Parish Council do not support until more information provided; noise levels, maintenance and visual impact in highly residential area considered.'
14. **Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services)** The H&ES Corporate Manager does not object in principle to the development, but has a serious concern regarding the intensity of the proposals and adverse noise impact on residential use associated with an unrestricted 24-hour use, and total flexibility in the planning class uses for each block. Air quality is also an unresolved issue. The H&ES Corporate Manager comments that:
 - a. Demolition/construction phase -- recommended conditions;
 - b. operational/plant noise -- further clarification required; concerned about 24-hour operation;
 - c. site lighting -- recommended condition;
 - d. air quality -- a detailed air quality assessment is required;
 - e. contaminated land -- recommended conditions.
15. **Council's Landscape Design Officer:** no objection in principle as the existing planting outside the sites will help to integrate the development into the landscape.
16. **County Archaeologist:** the site lies in an area of moderate archaeological potential – recommended condition.
17. **Local Highway Authority:** no objection -- recommended conditions. Recommended that the applicant adhere to the existing advisory lorry route.

18. **Environment Agency:** The submitted flood risk assessment satisfactorily demonstrates that the principle of industrial development is acceptable at this location. The EA recommends conditions to be attached to any planning permission issued.
19. **Disability Forum:** disabled spaces for units 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 30, 15, 60, 70, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, should be sited closer to the respective entrance doors. Lifts should be installed prior to first occupation.
20. The comments of the Ecology Officer are awaited.

Representations

21. One adjoining resident (no address supplied) is concerned about the wind turbine, which should be sited as far away from the residential area as possible.

Further representations from the agent

22. In response to the concerns raised by Sawston Parish Council, the agent has stated: 'We note that the Parish Council are against 24 hour operations at the site. As you will be aware, there were no restrictions upon the hours of operation of the previous tile manufacturing use at the site. There has therefore been a history of unrestricted operational hours at the site. Furthermore, the issue of 24 hour operation was discussed with officers prior to submission of the application and at no time was any concern expressed by officers that 24 hour operation would be unacceptable. You will appreciate that there will be a mix of employment uses and that many occupants may not choose to take up an option to work 24 hours. However, our client must provide this flexibility for occupants in the event that should they need it.'
23. In response to the Parish Council's comments in respect of increased traffic on Babraham Road, we would highlight the fact that a Transport Assessment was prepared and submitted as part of the planning application. This identified no unacceptable impacts upon the local highway network. Importantly, having considered the planning application, the Local Highway Authority has raised no objection to the planning application on the grounds of traffic generation.
24. We also note the Parish Council's comments in respect of noise. This issue has been considered as part of the planning application and is acceptable with regard to South Cambridgeshire District Council's Noise Standards, Health Organisation Standards and British Standard 8233.
25. You will appreciate that the potential for noise has been a consideration from the outset of the scheme's conception. The approach taken positions the largest units (25-27) adjacent the south western boundary in protecting the amenity of nearby residential properties. This approach ensures that vehicles moving within the site are as far as possible from residential properties in the vicinity of the site. This approach also ensures that units 25-27 serve to provide a screen between those properties and vehicular circulation areas and other units within the site. The buildings will also be insulated to prevent unacceptable levels of radiated break out noise. We would also point out that units 25 to 27 are most likely to be occupied for storage/warehousing purposes, which is an inherently quieter use than the light industrial and industrial uses that will also be applied for at the site. It is also relevant that as part of the previous use of the site storage/circulation areas extended right up to the site's

western boundary and therefore, the proposed redevelopment represents a significant improvement in this regard.

26. To confirm, we also propose to position an acoustic fence from the corner of unit 24 along the remainder of the south western boundary to the site's western most corner. This will mitigate noise resulting from vehicles manoeuvring outside of units 15 to 24. We can also confirm that any air conditioning units to serve units 15 to 27 will face into car parking areas and will not be placed around the perimeter of the site. No air conditioning units are proposed as part of this application and will be a matter for occupiers to address, subject to planning control.
27. In respect of maintenance, the applicant is expecting that a condition will be attached to any planning permission requiring the submission of a maintenance/management plan. I can confirm that the applicant will retain ownership of the buildings at the site and that the applicant will adopt best practice in ensuring that maintenance is carried out such that its impact upon neighbouring residential properties is minimised.
28. In terms of visual impact, it is proposed as part of the planning application to maintain the leylandii hedge which runs along the site's south western boundary. The hedge rises to a height of approximately 8 metres. Units 25 to 27 rise to a height of 10.6 metres and therefore only a small part of the overall elevation of those units would be visible above the leylandii hedge. As has been explained above, it was considered to be of particular benefit to position the largest units along the site's south western boundary with regard to noise considerations. The largest units are also the most likely to be occupied by the B8 users which are the 'least noisy' of the employment uses applied for at the site. Therefore, although a small part of the south western elevation of units 25 to 27 will be visible above the leylandii hedge, the benefits of positioning those units along the south western boundary of the site are considered to outweigh any disbenefit that could be considered to be associated with the visibility of those units above the hedge. It should also be recognised that units 15 to 24, will rise to a height of 8.2 metres which should ensure that these units are not visible above the hedge.
29. From a general perspective, you will be aware that we wrote to members of the Parish Council prior to the submission of the planning application along with neighbouring residents and business and also South Cambridgeshire District Council members for Sawston, inviting comments upon the proposals. I enclose a copy of this letter dated 4 August. Following this letter, Savills received comments from Mrs Ritchie of 11 Fairfields. Savills response to Mrs Ritchie's letter dated 22 August is also enclosed.
30. We had also hoped to present the proposals at a meeting of the Parish Council prior to their response to the planning application. However, owing to a lack of available Parish Council committee dates before the deadline for their response, this was not possible. However, I can confirm that Endurance Estates, Salmon Harvester Properties joint venture partner for the development, has spoken with Councillor Bard to discuss the proposals. Endurance Estates explained that they, along with Salmon Harvester Properties and their consultancy team, would be pleased to meet to present the proposals if that were considered to be desirable'.

Planning Comments

Scale

31. Policy ET/1 allows for the development of small-scale industries in the use classes proposed up to a maximum floorspace of 1850 square metres. This limitation is met in all cases with the exception of Units 27 in Block H, which has a floor area of 1932

square metres. In the context of the replaced building, which approached 4000 m² in floor area, it is considered that the breach in floor level limitation is minimal and acceptable in this context. Policy ET/4 places floorspace limits on developments within villages. The proposal meets these limitations with the exception of Block H which has two units each having 1100 m² and one unit with 1932 m². The applicant maintains that such units are most suitable for warehousing B8 use, in which case only unit 27 would be in breach of this policy. In view of the context of buildings to be replaced, officers are again of the view that this minor breach is not significant.

32. The height of the buildings is similar to others on the industrial estate, the highest being sited on the south western boundary will provide visual screening and noise baffling to adjacent residential properties.
33. Policy GB/3 requires developments adjacent to the Green Belt to take account of potential impact on its setting. Units 1 to 5 adjoining the Green Belt have a height of 7.5 m and are provided with a screening outside the site by an existing tree belt adjoining the former railway track. The Landscape Officer has assessed this arrangement to be acceptable in the context of the setting of the Green Belt.

Parking and highways

34. The proposal has been provided with car parking at a ratio of 1 space to 50 square metres of floorspace (266 places in total), which is appropriate for Class B2 general industrial use. Because the application proposes flexible uses for each unit, an alternative layout of parking and vehicle manoeuvring areas showing 320 spaces has been provided, representing provision 1 space per 41 square metres. The maximum standard for B1 uses is 1 space per 30 square metres. Cycle parking provision is provided at a ratio of 1 space per 83 m², which is significantly lower than the recommended requirement for Class B2 general industrial, but as the scheme will contain a significant element of Class B8 warehousing for which there is no recommended standard, the precise nature of the shortfall is not readily quantifiable. The application has been supported by a Travel Plan which is intended to reduce trips by car to and from the site, and takes account of walking and public transport links to and from the site. In the context of an operational Travel Plan, I consider the potential shortfall in parking and cycle space provision to be acceptable.
35. The application is accompanied by a transport statement, which projects traffic flows to and from the site over a five-year period. The report concludes that the development will have a negligible effect upon the junction of Grove Road/Babraham Road and the signalised crossroads of Babraham Road/Cambridge Road/Hillside/New Road, both now and in the future. The Local Highway Authority has concluded that the development should have no significant impact on the public highway subject to recommended conditions.

Environmental impact

36. The concerns of the Corporate Manager (Health and Environmental Services) have been brought to the attention of the applicant, and a formal response is awaited. The concern about 24-hour operation is also shared by Sawston Parish Council. The agent has presented a case to substantiate the proposals. Pending resolution of these concerns, I recommend that a holding objection be upheld. I will report further information verbally to the Committee, if received.

Renewable energy

37. The buildings will be designed to reach a Very Good rating under the BREEAM assessment, which will achieve a 15% reduction in carbon emissions, in compliance with Policy NE/1. The provision of a vertical axis wind turbine will provide 21% of the energy requirements of the development's base speculative scheme, in compliance with Policy NE/3. The application has been supported by a Sustainability Statement and Health Impact Assessment, and Building Services Renewables Report, which sets out the provisions for renewable energy in the development. The proposal vertical access wind turbine will be some 100m away in a north easterly direction from the rear boundary of residential properties in Fairfields. It is similar to the turbine installed at the new Arbury Park School. I consider it to be acceptable.

Recommendation

38. Refusal

Notwithstanding the submission of the noise and assessment dated 21 August 2008, the Local Planning Authority has been unable to fully assess the implications and impact of noise generated by the operation of the site and from vehicles visiting the site upon adjacent residential dwellings. The applicant has not demonstrated that the proposal would comply with Policy NE/15 (Noise Pollution) of the Local Development Framework Development Control Policies 2007.

In the event that this objection can be overcome, I recommend approval of the application dated 22 August 2008 completed by wind turbine details received 29 September 2008 subject to the following conditions:

39. Conditions

1. Time limit.
2. Business occupancy.
3. Maximum occupancy by a single user.
4. Mezzanine floor control.
5. Details of landscaping and implementation of landscaping.
6. Samples of external materials.
7. Scheme of archaeology.
8. Control of outside storage of materials.
9. Details of external lighting.
10. Implementation of the renewables strategy including retention of the wind turbine.
11. As required by the H&ES Corporate Manager: noise insulation scheme; noise management plan; air quality screening and management; contaminated land; plant noise scheme.
12. Retention of car parking and cycle parking provision.
13. Operation of the submitted alternative car parking layout in the event of occupation of any units for class B1 (c) purposes.
14. Stopping up of the existing access.
15. As required by the environment agency.
16. Scheme for the provision of a travel plan scheme and advisory lorry route adherence strategy.

Informative

External plant to be the subject of further planning applications.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, adopted January 2007
- South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003
- East of England Regional Spatial Strategy 2008
- Planning File refs SC/63/472, SC/65/193, S/1784/87/F, S/0775/04/F and S/1598/08/F.

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