

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Planning Committee

4th February 2009

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

S/1822/08/F - PAMPISFORD

Offices and Showroom (Retrospective Development) and Revised Parking Layout (Part Retrospective), Station Road for Solopark PLC

Recommendation: Approval

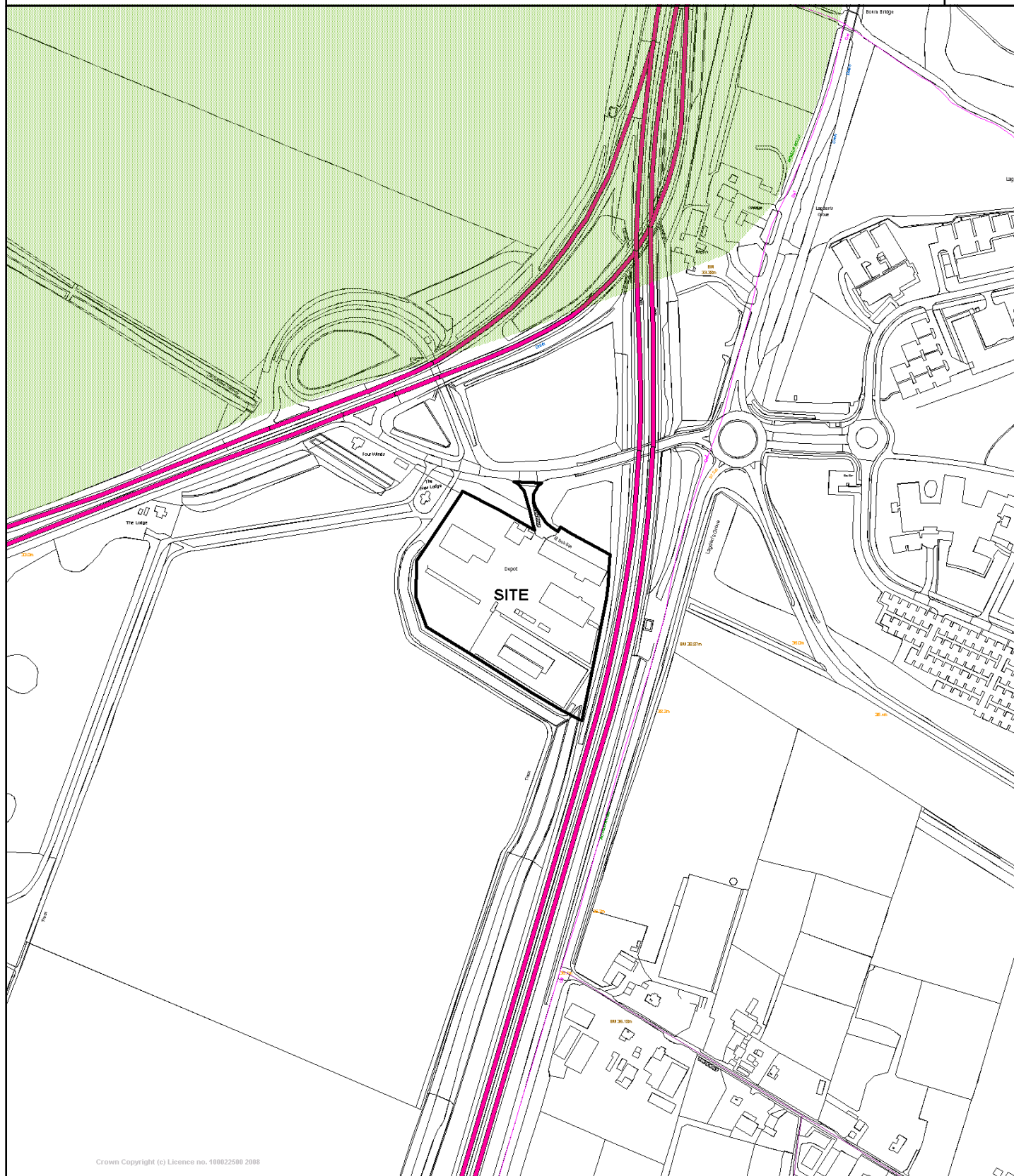
Date for Determination: 3rd February 2009 (Major Application)

This Application has been reported to the Planning Committee for determination because the application is a departure from the development plan and has attracted an objection on material planning grounds.

Departure Application

Site and Proposal

1. The application site, area 2.57 ha, is located on the site of the former Pampisford railway station, approximately 12 km south-east of Cambridgeshire adjacent to the A11 Trunk Road, south of its junction with the A505. The site is adjacent to, but outside, the Green Belt. The site is set back from Station Road by a distance of between 17m and 80m, and is screened by a tall wall on the frontage. The site is occupied by two companies, Solopark Plc and Ridgeons Ltd, whose principal market is the building trade. Solopark specialise in salvaged architectural goods and building materials.
2. The full application, dated 13 October 2008, as completed by ownership certificate received 16 January 2009, seeks retrospective planning permission for the erection of a retail showroom and office on the north western part of the site fronting Station Road. The proposal also includes a rearrangement of car parking within the site, which has been implemented during the lifetime of the application.
3. The building has been erected on the site of a formerly-consented development, which has been partially implemented and is still extant. The new building has a floor area of 1426 m², compared with the floor area of the previously consented building of 958 m². The building has a ridge height of 7.2 m, and eaves height to the offices of 5.8 m, and eaves height of 4.6 m to the showroom. The building is clad in profiled metal sheeting coloured green, and has two roller shutter doors in the front elevation together with first floor windows to the offices.
4. Provision for the parking of up to 162 vehicles has been made on the site to service both users.



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Planning History

5. There is a long and complex history of planning applications on the site. The determinations most relevant to this application are:
6. **S/2618/89/F** Office and Workshop Building Approved April 1990.
7. **S/1684/92/LDC** Lawful Development Certificate issued for the substantive use of the property for the storage, display and sale of building materials and other specified materials type Issued February 1993.
8. **S/1023/93/F** Change of Use of Agricultural Land to Commercial Yard for Reclaim Building Materials Approved September 1993.
9. **S/0447/96/F** Retention of Office Building and Access Approved late 1996.
10. **S/0694/00/F** Storage/sales building Withdrawn June 2000.
11. **S/1751/04/F** Change of use to general builders merchants together with storage and restoration of reclaimed building materials for sale or use for storage and distribution (application in the alternative) - Approved 18 November 2005. This application was the subject of a Section 106 agreement dated 14 November 2005 to (a) limit the sale by retail to 33% of the total turnover of the business and (b) limit to 75% the aggregate floor area of buildings used for the display of goods for sale.
12. **S/0969/08/F** Offices showroom and amended access (part retrospective) - withdrawn August 2008.

Planning Policy

13. *East of England Regional Spatial Strategy 2008*
ENV7 (Quality in the Built Environment)
CSR2 (Employment Generating Development)
14. *South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)*
DP/1 (Sustainable Development)
DP/2 (Design of New Development)
DP/3 (Development Criteria)
DP/7 (Development Frameworks)
ET/1 (Limitations on the Occupancy of New Premises in South Cambridgeshire)
ET/5 (Development for the Expansion of Firms)
NE/1 (Energy Efficiency)
NE/3 (Renewable Energy Technologies in New Development)
NE/14 (Lighting Proposals)
TR/1 (Planning for More Sustainable Travel)
TR/2 (Car and Cycle Parking Standards)
TR/3 (Mitigating Travel Impact)

Consultations

15. **Pampisford Parish Council** - No recommendation. Comments that as the building has already been completed Parish Council cannot refuse it. However Parish Council continues to be disgusted that large companies employing professionals who are fully

aware of all planning requirements, regulations and obligations are getting away with retrospective and inaccurate applications. The Parish Council expressed frustration at the difficulty of understanding all the documentation.

16. **Great Abington Parish Council** recommends approval.
17. **Disability Forum** - Six disabled parking spaces are needed at the front of the building.
18. **Local Highway Authority** - No objection in principle. Comment that the parking spaces should be dimensioned.
19. **Highways Agency** - The Highways Agency is satisfied that this retrospective development will not have a material impact upon the operational capacity of the A11. The Agency would encourage the developer to reduce the need to travel by car and to promote more sustainable means of transport to and from the site.

Representations

20. One letter of objection has been received on behalf of the owner of surrounding land.

The issues raised are:

- a) Intensification of the use of the site. A showroom use was permitted in 2006 in part of the previously consented workshop area; the new building is larger than the consented building; Ridgeons occupied part of the site so that it now has two separate major uses.
- b) Increase in traffic.
- c) Creeping urbanisation of rural setting which is made worse by the signage and lighting associated with the new building.
- d) The white frames to the windows are especially out of character with the green cladding of the building.
- e) The amenity of the area is affected by the night-time lighting.

The objector recommends that:

- a) A similar condition to condition 3 of S/2618/89/F should be imposed to ensure that the use of the building remains ancillary to the Solopark use and that there is not a further occupation of the site.
- b) There should be no overall increase in floor area of the whole site above that permitted by permission S/2618/89/F.
- c) There should be no increase in the floor area to showroom compared to the S/2618/89/F permission.

Planning Comments

Principle of development

21. The site has planning permission for use as a general builders merchants together with storage and restoration of reclaimed building materials for sale or for storage and distribution by virtue of planning consent granted in 2005. The erection of a building within this use complies with policy ET/1, but does not comply with Policy ET/5 as the proposal represents an expansion of existing business in the open countryside, which does not fall into any of the categories within the policy where such expansion is permissible. The application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan for this reason.

22. The applicant has put mitigating considerations forward. The main consideration is the building consented under planning permission S/2618/81/F for an office and workshop, which was granted in 1990 but not built. An amendment to the consented development was agreed by officers in 2006 to allow the storage for sale of building material and architectural goods within the area of the building formerly shown to be a workshop. The following table illustrates the difference in floorspace between the buildings (as built and as consented, SCDC figures):

New building	Office	Retail/storage	Total (sq m)
Ground floor	242	748	990
First floor	242	252	494
	484	1000	1484
1990 consent			
Ground floor	281	608	889
First floor	281	nil	281
	562	608	1170

23. This table shows that the development as built has 314 m² more floorspace than the consented development, and that this is accounted for by an increase in the retail/store area both on the ground floor, and first floor by the insertion of a mezzanine level. The footprint of the building has been increased by 101 m².
24. A second consideration put forward by the applicant is the demolition of buildings within the site to compensate for the additional floorspace created. The first of these buildings is a single-storey storage building, floorspace 140 m², located centrally within the overall site, which has been removed during the lifetime of this application. A second building is the former station house, floor area of 321 m², which was removed from the site several years ago to facilitate the realignment of the A11 trunk road to the east of the site. The latter building has not formed part of the fabric of the site for several years, and I do not consider that its removal amounts to a significant consideration in the assessment of the current application. The removal of 140 m² floorspace from the site leaves a net increase of floorspace over the previously consented building of 174 m².

Retail use

25. Compared with the previously consented building, which had 608 m² of retail area, the current proposal represents an increase of 392 m², or 64%. By virtue of planning permission S/1751/04/F, ancillary retail sales and sales to the trade are permitted on this site. A significant proportion of the open area site is given over to the display of these materials and architectural goods, and I do not consider that the enclosure of these displays within the new building to have any significant effect upon the intensity of the use of the site. The Section 106 agreement dated 14 November 2005 limits the sale by retail of such goods to 33% of total turnover. The applicant has submitted a statement indicating that the turnover for the twelve months to October 2008 for Ridgeons was 15% and for Solopark was 23% of total business. The S106 agreement also limits the retail floorspace to 75% of total floorspace: the applicant has stated that the present proportion is 24%. The retail element complies with the requirements of the Section 106 agreement.

Scale and design

26. When viewed from the adjoining highway, the front elevation is shorter than the previously approved scheme, and the ridge height is marginally higher at 7.2 m,

compared with 7.0 m previously. Olive Green profiled metal cladding is in keeping with the other buildings on site, and the screen fence along the frontage. The upper storey of the building, including the white frames to first floor windows, are visible above the screen fencing, but not significantly harmful to the appearance of the building. I conclude that the building is appropriate in scale and design when viewed from prominent positions outside the site.

Other matters

27. The objector has raised concerns about an increase in traffic; this has not been supported by the Local Highway Authority or the Highways Agency. Issues of signage on the building have been raised with the agent and will be pursued separately from this application. If approved, I recommend that a condition be attached for the approval of external lighting to the building, but it is not within the scope of this application to control external lighting generally within the site.

Conclusions

28. The development represents a departure from the development plan, as it is an extension to an existing business in the open countryside, contrary to Policy ET/5. I do not consider that harm arises to the visual amenity of the area, highway safety, or residential amenity, or that the development raises significant new issues compared with the previously consented building on the same site. Compensatory floorspace has been removed from the site to partially offset the net increase in floorspace compared to the previously consented building. This represents a 15% increase on a long established commercial site, which provides local employment. The development has been completed without planning permission, but this has not influenced my consideration of the proposal nor my recommendation to Members. If approved, I do not consider that this development is required to be referred to the Secretary of State as a departure from the Development Plan, having regard to the size of the proposal compared with the previous consent, the longevity of the business on this site and the absence of significant harm to the environment.

Recommendation

29. Approval of the application dated 13th October 2008 subject to the following conditions:
1. Use to be carried out in association with the main use of the site as general builders merchants together with storage and restoration of reclaimed building materials for sale.
 2. Occupation to comply with Policies ET/1 and ET/5.
 3. Details of external lighting of the building to be submitted.
 4. Retention of car parking.
 5. SC90 – Energy Audit
 6. SC91 – Energy Statement

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

- East of England Regional Spatial Strategy 2008
- South Cambridgeshire Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (2007)
- Planning File refs: S/2618/89/F, S/1684/92/LDC, S/1023/93/F, S/0447/96/F, S/0694/00/F, S/1751/04/F S/0969/08/F & S/1822/08/F.

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