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SCC

CHANGE OF USE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND AND CONSTRUCTION OF A PARK AND RIDE FACILITY (INCLUDING SECURITY/INFORMATION BUILDING INCORPORATING TOILETS AND BICYCLE STORAGE, APPROX 1000 CAR PARKING SPACES, COACH PICK UP/DROP OFF POINT, ACCESS ROADS, BUS PRIORITY MEASURES AND CYCLE ROUTE CONNECTIONS) AND LANDSCAPING AT OS FIELD REF 0061, 0046, 8763, 7967 (PT) AND 6873 (PT), CAMBRIA FARM , ILMINISTER ROAD, TAUNTON

325911/124580

COUNTY DECISION

PROPOSAL

This a "Consultation" from County Council, who are the determining Planning Authority, in respect of planning application for change of use of agricultural land and construction of a park and ride facility located at OS field ref 0061, 0046, 8763, 7967 (pt) and 6873 (pt), Cambria Farm, Ilminster Road, Taunton. This site lies on the south side of the A358 0.5km to the east of the Junction 25 on the M5. The proposal as submitted relates solely to land beyond the extent of the adopted highway but works are shown to the highway which are necessary in order to implement the scheme. These highway works are described below in relation to the other elements of the scheme.

The proposal incorporates various elements the predominant part of the proposal being the provision of approximately 1000 car parking spaces (incorporating 14 disabled parking spaces) with coach pick up/drop off point. These are arranged towards the centre of the site allowing significant space around the perimeter of the site to provide landscaping to all boundaries. All areas of carriageway and access routes will be surfaced with bitumen macadam. Parking areas will be surfaced in permeable paving (Formpave or similar) and parking bays delineated by white lining/alternative paving colour. Two existing hedgerows that cross the site in a north south direction will be removed as part of this proposal.

New accesses are to be provided to the site giving bus priority with a signal-controlled junction at the Ruishton Lane/A358 junction. These works will involve widening of the existing carriageway with provision of combined footway cycle way on both sides of the road which are all outside the application site and are consequently not part of the scheme. Cycleway and footpath links will continue into the centre of the parking facility. Loss of frontage trees and understory vegetation will result from these works and also the majority of the present parking lay-by on the south side of the road will be lost. Again, these works are outside of the application site. Whilst not part of the application, Ruishton Lane is also to be widened at its southern end where it joins the A358 with the loss of trees on the east side of that road. The Traffic Assessment as amended refers to the full signalisation of Junction

25 M5 roundabout to implement as part of the scheme but these works are not formally part of the application.

Within the site a building, to provide security/information incorporating toilets and bicycle storage, is proposed, which will house all the necessary CCTV controls and welfare facilities for the security staff. The building is of contemporary design and incorporates a palate of materials. It will be built using a number of sustainable construction materials and techniques. These include, rammed earth, straw bale/timber frame and glazing with a single roof span holding Photovoltaic panels.

Drainage works proposed include the provision of four on-site amenity and attenuation ponds. Surface water run-off will be controlled through a number of different Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems; including permeable paving, storage lagoons, swales and oversized piping

The application is accompanied by a Planning Supporting Statement, Design and Access Statement, Options Appraisal Report, Site, Environmental Impact Table, Design Concept Statement for the building, Landscape Design Statement and Draft Management Plan Transport Assessment and Traffic Modelling final report, Noise Assessment, Air Quality Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Ecological Surveys, Archaeological Field Evaluation, Drainage Strategy Report and a Ground Investigation Report.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

As this is a County Matter application, any neighbour consultations are carried out by SCC. However, one letter has been received which has been passed to the County for their consideration. This representation considers that this is the wrong location that will lead to increase congestion and all other associated problems.

The following consultations have been undertaken by Taunton Dean regarding this consultation with responses to date as indicated below.

FOOTPATH DIVERSIONS OFFICER - The public footpaths T20/22 and T26/12 are in close proximity to the (current) proposed development but will not be affected by it.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER - Overall I considered it a good landscape scheme that over a reasonable period of time will. I think more could be done to screen the car parking from A358 and more planting to the west and southwest would help to soften the impact from the wider local countryside. To provide more screening from the A358 I suggest using gabions as well as earth mounding to narrow the access and exit roadways.

SOMERSET DRAINAGE BOARDS CONSORTIUM - The site lies outside the Board area and therefore comments in an advisory manner. The resultant surface water run-off will discharge eventually into the Board's area via the viewed rhyne or main river network. It is my understanding from consulting the application details that the disposal of the surface water run-off from the proposals will be attenuated to the existing Greenfield run-off via proposed balancing ponds and sustainable urban

drainage systems. The Board has not been consulted with regard to the surface water disposal but notes that within the detailed drainage strategy the Environment Agency has been appraised of the proposed strategy.

The Board has been experiencing access problems with one of the Board's "viewed rhynes" known as Black Brook and therefore it is our intention to remove this watercourse from the viewed rhyne network. If it is, the intention to direct the resultant surface water generated from the proposals to the Board's viewed rhyne then this should be revised and an alternative disposal point be suggested.

The principal requirements for surface water drainage from developments are set out in PPS 25 annex F and are understood to be 'a material consideration' this point is emphasised in the Councils' own policies EN26, 27 & 28. As stated above the Board has difficulties in maintaining the viewed rhyne known as Black Brook and is proposing to take the watercourse out of view. Consequently, it is the Board's viewpoint that the proposed discharge from the proposals should be directed to the main river watercourse known as "Broughton Brook". There are no known local flooding issues to the Board's knowledge and the proposals indicate the use of sustainable drainage techniques (Suds) to reduce the proposed development's impact on the receiving land drainage system.

With the current proposals, the Board require that a maintenance strategy be agreed. This should identify the various responsible parties within the drainage strategy and their particular responsibility to maintain the drainage systems proposed within the development proposals. This document would also be necessary to the operators of the facility and should include the requisite CDM information.

CONSERVATION OFFICER - Views awaited.

TOURISM OFFICER - Views awaited.

PLANNING POLICY - Views awaited.

As part of this proposal, as noted in the Planning Statement, the County Council has held meetings with Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Council when various issues concerning the proposed Park & Ride were discussed. A presentation was also given to Stoke St Mary Parish Council.

Public exhibitions were held in the Parish of Ruishton & Thornfalcon at the village hall at which 187 people attended and a further exhibition was held in Taunton Town centre where details of the site were displayed with officers on hand to answer questions and discuss the proposals with Questionnaires given out at the exhibitions for the attendee to fill out.

The results of the analysis of the questionnaires returned show that generally the public supported a park & ride facility. However, residents that live near to the site are not convinced about the chosen location.

Of the 53 questionnaires that were returned, 34% said that they would use the park & ride facility and 66% said that they would not. Of the people who said that they would use the park & ride, the majority advised that the purpose of the journey

would be shopping.

Of the returns from the exhibition at Ruishton (45 no) 40% supported the provision of a Park & Ride (18 No) of which 11 considered that Cambria Farm was the wrong location and 7 considered it was the correct location. When the returns from the second exhibition in the Old Market Centre are added, 47% are in favour of a Park& Ride (25 No) with 11 considering that Cambria Farm not the right location and the remainder (14) felt it was the most appropriate.

The County Council were still awaiting responses from the Highway Agency and the County Highway Authority at the time preparation of this report response. The response just received from the Environment Agency has raised technical objections to the Flood Risk Assessment

POLICY CONTEXT

PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation), PPG13 (Transport), PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment), PPG16 (Archaeology and Planning), PPS23 (Planning and Pollution Control), PPG24 (Planning and Noise), PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk), RPG10 (South West) and Draft RSS.

Somerset Local Transport Plan (2006-2011);

Taunton Deane Local Plan (TDLP), Policies S1 (General Requirements), S2 (Design), M1 (Non-residential Developments), M5 (Cycling), EN3 (Local Wildlife and Geological Interests), EN5 (Protected Species), EN6 (Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards and Hedgerows), EN8 (Trees in and around Settlements), EN12 (Landscape Character Areas), EN21 (Nationally Important Archaeological Remains), EN28 (Development and Flood Risk), EN29 (Flooding due to Development) & T28 (Park and Ride Sites).

Taunton Transport Strategy Review (November 2004)

ASSESSMENT

Site and Surroundings

The site is located approximately 3km to the east of Taunton town centre, and approximately 0.5km east of junction 25 of the M5 motorway. It is bounded by the A358 to the north, a small stream to the south-west and a field boundary to the east. The site lies with a general slope from approximately 20.75m Ordnance Datum (AOD), at its highest point on the knoll at the northwest end of the site to 11.50m AOD along the south-west boundary. The existing site is a green field area covered by open grassland and fields. It is a triangular shaped site with an area of approximately 9.9 hectares. A small stream flows northwesterly along the south-west boundary of the site where it meets the Blackbrook.

The site is underlain by Mercia Mudstone overlain locally by thin layers of head deposits and permeability tests have indicated that the soil has a very low level of permeability.

Policy implications

The provision of “Park and Ride” facilities is supported by National and Regional Policy. The Adopted Local Plan makes specific reference to a park and ride through Policy T28 which states: "a park and ride site is proposed at East Taunton" and comments at Paragraph 8.60 that the East Taunton site is: 'intended to attract drivers from the A358 and M5 motorway'. Paragraph 8.262 of the TDLP explains that: 'Park and ride facilities are a necessary part of the strategy and will be provided on the two main routes into Taunton'. They will allow car-borne commuters from outside the urban area of Taunton to avoid town centre congestion by changing mode at the edge of town and using buses which take advantage of the bus priority corridors set out in policy T27. Paragraph 8.263 of the TDLP highlights that: 'the design of the sites will be extremely important, balancing their potential landscape impact with the need to provide an attractive, secure environment for all-day car parking.'

The Taunton Transport Strategy Review (TTSR) overall aims is to:

"undertake a baseline review of transport conditions in Taunton. This will be followed by a review of the existing transport strategy, in particular a qualified critique of the likely outcomes of the strategy against the current Local Transport Plan (LTP) objectives. The next stage will inform the outcomes of the land-use allocations arising from the Taunton Urban Extension Study (UES) with a view to optimising the sustainability of the transport system. The study will conclude with the identification of a preferred transport strategy to support the preferred land-use plan".

The Taunton and Surrounding Region Traffic Model (TSRT), is a traffic model that broadly covers the M5 Motorway from J23 to J26, the parallel A38 and any connecting roads that would be necessary to properly represent the interaction between these two competing routes, and the urban areas of Taunton, Bridgwater, and Wellington in sufficient detail to accurately represent the route choices available to drivers. It is a wide-ranging SATURN sub regional traffic model and is generally used to forecast traffic generation and characteristics through considering likely influences such as new development.

The model has also been used to examine complementary transport related measures and policies that could be introduced to optimise patronage and fare levels. This includes Park and Ride facilities and can be used to justify the schemes in economic terms.

Alternative Options

A Site Options Appraisal Report (SOAR) was commissioned by Somerset County Council through Engineering Consultants, Atkins, to identify and evaluate different sites to the east of Taunton. This report established a range of assessment criteria based upon policy context, good practice, environmental and transportation considerations.

The feasibility study identified a long list of 13 sites to the east of the motorway which provided the required direct access to serve the A358 southeast all but two of which lay along the existing A358 corridor. Following assessment against the established criteria a shortlist of two potential sites, one being Cambria Farm and the second

being a site to the east of Henlade was produced and these were subject to a more detailed appraisal taking into account effects on the highway network and other revenue implications.

This appraisal indicated the application site had significant advantages over the other site in that it would attract a significantly greater level of use, the overall network travel distance and time, improve network efficiency and air quality benefits, work well in tandem with the existing site at Silk Mills and pro rata for the same running costs it provides additional revenue income to the overall Taunton park and ride service.

Environmental Impact Assessment Issues

The County Council as Local Planning Authority has prepared a screening Opinion expressing the view that an Environment Impact Assessment should not be carried out in connection with an application.

In coming to this conclusion they state that the proposal was not considered to be a Schedule 1 development, but was considered to fall within Schedule 2 of the Regulations as a development that may require an EIA. They have considered the proposal under part 10 (c) of the regulations as an Infrastructure Project - 'Intermodal terminals' with a site area in excess of the threshold of 0.5 hectares.

Circular 02/99 advises under paragraph A20 'Intermodal transshipment facilities and intermodal terminals' that:

"In addition to the physical scale of the development, particular impacts for consideration are increased traffic, noise, emissions to air and water. Developments of more than five hectares are more likely to require EIA".

In examining the Selection Criteria for Screening Schedule 2 Development, the characteristics of the development have been considered. Regarding noise, it is acknowledged that there are properties within 50m of the boundary, but noted that the background noise of the A358 will be high and that space is available for mitigation measures such as bunding to be put in place. Whilst in terms of local air quality there will be some changes associated with the proposal the overall scheme is expected to reduce traffic volumes within Taunton and improve air quality.

Landscape and visual assessment refer to the need maintaining the nature of public rights of way that cross the site and mitigate the visual impact on neighbouring properties and the wider area.

In Heritage and Historic Resources terms, the County consider that the proposal is likely to have an adverse impact on the Grade II listed buildings of Woodlands House and Ruishton House and its stable blocks.

No significant biodiversity harm is expected to arise from the proposal with replacement planting proposed.

The proposed includes sustainable drainage systems which can be designed to treat waster before discharge from the site dealing with concern regarding water runoff and possible discharge of pollutants into watercourses and soils.

The County consider that given its scale and intended use the development is considered to be of only local importance and will affect a localised area. The proposed development will be permanent, the use constant and any impacts are likely not to be reversible. They have concluded that the development will not be sited within any sensitive area as defined in Regulation 2(1) and that it is not considered to be a development with particularly complex and potentially hazardous effects that would cause significant impact on the environment. It is expected that the potential impacts as listed above will be addressed by information in support of the planning application.

For those reasons they have deemed that in this case an EIA will not be required.

Building Design

The concept of the building design is that it should clearly illustrate and utilise sustainable design and constructions techniques, thereby exploiting the opportunity for learning. Hopefully visitors should be intrigued and encouraged, both passively and actively, to enquire into and investigate the building's sustainable virtues.

The intention in the design is to convey a clear message and illustrate the potential of sustainable design, to look beyond and challenge current perceptions of sustainable and ecological design and to look towards innovation as a positive and exciting process of learning.

Landscaping

With regard to the proposed ground level formations, to accommodate the volume of fill material resulting from the car park and highways cut, a series of mounded bunds are proposed along the edge of the northern boundary. Not only does this reduce the amount of material to be removed from the site, it also helps to create the visual screening required into the site.

To accentuate this screening, dense broad leaved woodland behind native hedgerows is also proposed along this edge. Lower level bunding has been provided at the interface between the edge of the parking zone and the existing public footpath to the east of the site.

The central section of the scheme, where the park and ride facility is to be located, is set within open grassland adjacent to the A358. The scheme contains four drainage attenuation ponds; two to the south of the parking area, a further amenity pond is located adjacent to the central bus loop with a further pond to the north. Some of these will be dry in normal conditions.

All ponds are to be planted with a variety of aquatic and marginal vegetation to provide a degree of filtration to runoff water from the park and ride areas and to provide visual interest to these areas.

The majority of the soft landscape work is concentrated adjacent to the four

attenuation ponds and around the periphery of the scheme between the parking zones and the site boundary. Primary planting types include broad-leaved woodland and shrub species; woodland, native boundary hedging with standard trees strategically planted plus wet areas and neutral grassland areas.

Existing trees and hedgerows have been retained where the development permits. Retention is predominantly along the eastern and southern boundaries where mature vegetation is well established and is a great asset to the site.

A landscape Management Plan has been submitted which provides for the following broad objectives:

- Enhancement of the Landscape - to maintain and develop the proposals for the planting scheme such that they are integrated with the surrounding landscape.
- Nature Conservation and Biodiversity - to create and maintain habitat types where possible and to encourage a greater bio-diversity which is sustainable within the limits of the site.
- Recreation/Education - to enhance local use of the site for passive recreation such as walking and for the appreciation of the natural environment.
- Visual Amenity - to provide a pleasant, attractive park and ride facility that is visually pleasing and safe for commuters and pedestrians, through the rapid establishment of plant material with the resultant total ground cover helping to suppress weed growth and reduce maintenance requirements. This objective also includes the screening of various elements to reduce their visual impact.
- User Safety - to ensure the health and safety of all park and ride users. All design proposals shall be in line with H&S requirements including warning signage at water bodies and clear way-marking. These items will need to be included as part of the hard landscape proposals set out by SSC. All proposals shall be compliant with 'Disability Discrimination Act' (DDA) and 'Access for All' requirements. Site security shall also be ensured. Car park tree pruning shall maintain clear stem heights to between 2 - 2.5m and car park hedgerows to approximately 1.5m height from car park ground level to ensure clear views across the scheme. Tree arrangements and CCTV column locations are to be coordinated to ensure full site coverage.

Traffic Issues

The submitted information indicated that results of the TRANSYT analysis show that the proposed Park & Ride signalised junction will operate within capacity in both the morning and the evening peak hours in 2009 and 2017. Where queues exist, they will not adversely affect the operation of the junction. The pedestrian crossings shown can be accommodated within the P&R junction without having a significant impact on its operational effectiveness.

The model shows queues in both peak hours of the assessment years in both directions on the A358 between the M5 Junction 25 and the P&R junction; however these are not of such a length so as to affect the operation of either junction. The report indicates that overall, the proposed signal controlled Park & Ride access

junction has been shown to operate well in 2017 and queues will not effect the operation of M5 Junction 25.

The following is noted with regard to the operation of the M5 Junction 25 roundabout that this will not be adversely affected by the presence of a signalised junction at the P&R access although some approaches on this roundabout are approaching or are over capacity in 2009.

Information shows that there will be severe congestion on the A358 Toneway out of Taunton. The north-bound off-slip from the M5 and the A358 East approach are also approaching maximum capacity in the 2009 AM and PM peak respectively.

By 2017, before roundabout improvements are implemented this situation will be significantly worse, although this is not the result of the P&R traffic which has shown a minimal impact in comparison to traffic growth rates. When the roundabout improvements and full signalisation are implemented then congestion and delays will be significantly reduced.

Noise

The submitted Noise Report indicates that construction activities have the potential to significantly affect the amenity of the nearest noise sensitive receivers. This impact can be minimised through the use of mitigation measures and best practice techniques. It is expected that through these measures, the impacts can be reduce to "minor - moderate" in significance. It should also be noted that these impact are a "worst-case scenario" and are based on activities occurring at their closest location to the noise sensitive receiver. The majority of the works will occur at distances greater than this and impacts may be further reduced to "no significant change - minor" in significance when works occur furthest from a given noise sensitive receiver.

With regard to Traffic Noise, the opening and design year impacts both indicate that there are likely to be no increases or decreases of greater than +/-1dB on any of the main roads in the study area excluding a short section of the existing A358. In the opening year, the introduction of the park and ride scheme results in a perceptible decrease in noise on the short section of road. This is attributed to the reduction in the average speed of traffic approaching and pulling away from the new signal controlled junction.

In the design year, the use of the park and ride scheme results in a perceptible increase in noise on the short section of road. This is partly due to a large percentage increase in traffic flow resulting from the use of the park and ride scheme, and partly due to higher average speeds at which vehicles approach and pull away from the junction. This is because there are overall fewer vehicles on the road in the design year, a product of the introduction of the new bypass.

The predicted impact from operational noise levels from the park and ride is 'negligible' upon the existing ambient levels at Ruishton Court and Cambria Farm which are the closest properties. It is likely that intermittent noise events from the

park and ride will still be perceived at both of these locations.

The overall opening year ambient noise impact from the proposed park and ride is likely to be neutral. The overall design year ambient noise impact from the proposed park and ride is likely to be perceptible at nearby properties. It is likely that individual noise events from the operation of the park and ride will be perceived at nearby properties in both the opening and design years.

Air Quality

In terms of Air Quality, the submitted report refers to the two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in relation to exceedences of the annual mean nitrogen dioxide AQS objective. The East Taunton Park and Ride scheme is situated approximately one kilometre North West of the Henlade AQMA.

An assessment of the effect of additional traffic likely to be generated by the park and ride on local air quality was undertaken using the DMRB screening method. The results show that there will be no exceedence of the AQS objectives at receptors around the park and ride site or adjacent to significantly affected roads.

Adjusted annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations were estimated to be below the AQS objective at all receptors for all modelled years and scenarios. The estimated increases in concentrations of nitrogen dioxide with the development are assessed to be negligible.

Modelled results of PM10 concentrations indicate that the AQS objective will be met at all receptors over all years in all scenarios.

A Local Air Quality assessment worksheet was prepared and completed, in accordance with Transport Analysis Guidelines. An improvement in air quality was estimated at the majority of properties within 200 metres of the affected links in the opening year (2009).

Emissions of carbon along the affected routes are expected to decrease slightly (2%) with the scheme in the opening year.

There is the potential for air quality to be affected by dust-raising activities during construction. However, where appropriate mitigation measures are applied as the best practicable means to control dust generation, this should not cause a statutory nuisance.

Ecological Issues

An Ecological Survey has been carried and is also submitted as part of this planning application. This indicates that Badger setts exist and badgers are active within the development area such that badgers are a material consideration in planning approval. A subjective evaluation of the badger setts and badger activity found would suggest that two social groups of badgers occupy territories which include parts of the survey area.

A mitigation plan will be put in place and a licence obtained from Natural England to allow development, as it will be necessary to exclude badgers and destroy one sett and potentially disturb another. Badger movement around the site will be maintained as part of the mitigation plan. Operatives working on site will be briefed that badgers are in occupation within the site and active in the area.

Otters or Dormice were not considered present on the site but the proposal for attenuation ponds will mitigate in favour of Otters as those habitats develop.

At least six bat species were detected during the surveys. It is possible that other species may frequent the site, as they are known to occur in the locality.

The retention of the hedgerows at the eastern and southern boundaries will favour bats, but the removal of the woodland area at the northwest of the site and the dividing hedgerow will not. There were few findings of bats feeding over the grassland suggesting that it does not provide significant foraging for bats. The attenuation ponds and replacement landscaping proposed for the site will potentially enhance the foraging for bat and dormice.

All the birds identified as being present on the site were 'common' species and none afforded special protection. With the exception of the woodland area adjoining the A358 road, most of the bird nesting activity was in or near the eastern and southern boundaries. However, the removal of the woodland area and sub-dividing hedgerows will destroy potential bird nesting sites. Planting schemes included in the development proposals will compensate when established for nesting sites lost, but will need to include appropriate plant species.

Removal of hedgerow and woodland is proposed to be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season where possible. The planting scheme proposed for the development will use species that enhance and protect the ecosystem and biodiversity for all the above considerations.

Heritage Issues

Four Grade II Listed Building are located within the vicinity of the site. These comprise Woodlands House approximate 100m to the north, Ruishton House and Stale block immediately to the west of Acklands Farm House approximately 350m north-east, with the site of the former WWII anti-aircraft battery 350m to the south.

Your Conservation Officers views are awaited on the impact of the scheme on those properties. Any impact on the setting of these properties could be mitigated by careful planting.

The Archaeological evaluation revealed a total of 14 ditches/ gullies, all of which were confined to trenches the southern half of the Site. All of these features probably relate to a network of former field boundaries and/or enclosures. Five ditches/ gullies produced dating evidence. Bone from a range of domesticated animals was also recovered from the evaluation and the majority of this assemblage was found in the prehistoric ditches/gullies. This is likely to have been dumped as part of refuse disposal although it is suggested that the character of the bone group might indicate that this area is away from the main focus of settlement activity,

Although the majority of features could not be dated, it is clear that these reflect multi-phased activity on the Site. There is tentative evidence for activity from the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age but it is the evidence for occupation activity during the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age that is most prominent here. This is significant in that it represents the first record of activity from this period in the immediate area. The Romano-British evidence, albeit from a minority of finds, adds to a growing corpus of evidence for the environs that attest to some degree of occupation. Despite the hypothesis that the ditches/ gullies may be peripheral to a focus of settlement, the southern half of the Site at least, has the potential to reveal more intensive occupation activity and provide a fuller understanding of the nature of the archaeological resource. In addition, given the recovery of possible plant macrofossils from the evaluation, it is likely that further organic remains could be preserved on the Site, particularly in the low-lying areas where preservation of waterlogged deposits would be high. The analysis of any surviving plant macrofossils from such deposits offers an important opportunity to examine the evolution of past environments in the area.

Drainage Issues

There are no surface or foul water sewers within the proposed car parking area, and the existing highway drainage in the A358 is not suitable for the revised road alignment. The soil at the site is impermeable and as such it is anticipated that surface water at the site flows directly into the stream, which bounds the southern edge of the site.

To comply with the government's policy for flood risk (PPS25) for new developments, the environment agency was requested to provide the details for the predicted flooding for a 1-in-100 year storm event. Part of the site is within the 1 in 100-year flood zone and mitigation in relation to the drainage design is described in section 6.

The Drainage Report recommendations option 2. This requires the areas where cars will be parked, which will be intersected by Bitumen Macadam access roads, should be constructed with a permeable paving system which will include a 350mm sub base. Underlying the sub base a geo-membrane should be installed, which will prevent the water percolating into the ground beneath.

A 3m wide by 1 m deep filter drain will be constructed around the exterior of the car park and will be connected to the permeable paving system at sub base invert level. The drainage catchment will be divided in two and drain to either the north or the south attenuation pond. The eastern filter drain will drain via a piped connection to the northern attenuation pond which will have a base area of 500m². The western catchment filter drain will connect into a grass swale, 50m in length. This connecting grass swale will connect into the southern attenuation pond which will have a base area of 1000m².

The existing highway drainage should be removed or abandoned. It should then be replaced with drainage pipes in alignment with the new highway. Type A or B manholes, as detailed in Sewers for Adoption [Ref. 2] should be used, depending on

depth to invert.

An oil interceptor should also be installed prior to the highway drainage discharge into the tributary to the River Tone watercourse. Determination of the proposed interceptor should be made during detailed design, for this report it is noted that the NSBD024 produced by Klargestar would be suitable.

The foul water drainage shall consist of a 150mm diameter conduit which connects directly from the amenities to the existing combined sewer to the north-west of the site. This will require a manhole survey to be completed prior to any finalised design.

A ground water investigation will have to be conducted to allow the final design of the attenuation pond to be undertaken. This should include any seasonal variations in ground water level.

Mitigation Measures

In respect of this scheme, various mitigation measures are included to address issues that have arisen from the detailed reports on the development prepared as part of the evolution of the scheme.

Earth shaping/bunding will be utilised throughout the site to help visually screen the site from the surrounding properties and from the A358 and M5 corridors. In addition scattered trees and shrubs will be planted throughout the development to replace a number of trees that will be removed as part of the construction. This will help with visual screening of the site and the breaking up of what has the potential to be a large flat area of development.

Attenuation ponds are shown around the site to assist in flood mitigation measures and drainage provision as well as adding to the encouragement of biodiversity within the site. Marginal vegetation and open water vegetation will be planted in and around the attenuation ponds to encourage insect life as well as aid cleaning of water run off. Also wet woodland and woodland areas are included within the development site to further help with the screening of the site as well as encouraging bird and bat life within the site boundary.

Different types of grass seeding have been chosen to encourage best growth within the wetter and drier areas of the site and some grass seeding will be of a type to provide habitat/food source suitable for invertebrates as well as the encouragement of insect life.

Mitigation measures for the protection of badgers will be included. Retention of as much hedgerow as possible and the enhancement of these east and southern hedgerows where possible with native species and the use of native species will also be used for all new hedging provision will allow for potential nesting sites, encourage bat life, provide a dormouse habitat and mitigate the removal of other trees and. The provision of attenuation ponds will mitigate in favour of otter activity. The aquatic plants will be species that encourage insect life providing a food source. Bat boxes will also be provided. Infra red CCTV will be used to allow for lighting of the site to be kept to a minimum. Wood piles will be placed around the site to provide a further wildlife habitat and encourage insect life within the site

A full archaeological excavation will be commissioned prior to any construction start.

The application indicates that night/weekend working may need to be utilised to mitigate against traffic management issues during construction with two-way traffic being maintained at all peak times along the A358.

Conclusions

The proposed scheme has been through extensive public consultation through the Local Plan, TTSR and LTP2 processes as well as meetings with the local community most affected by the proposals. In reviewing technically acceptable options, this site has been considered to be the most appropriate site.

In particular the site would contribute substantially to the delivery of the objectives of the Taunton Transport Strategy Review, the Somerset Local Transport Plan and to the delivery of sustainable growth in Taunton as a "Strategically Significant Town" (LTP2) in the South West.

This scheme meets many National, Regional and Local aims and objectives for Sustainable Transport. However, the situation has been complicated by the recent Government decision to not proceed with the "Stonehenge Bypass" and associated works such as the realignment of the western section of the A358. In the light of these changes it is disappointing that this proposal cannot be said, in its current form, to have the full acceptance of the Highways Agency (who have right of Direction on such applications) and the County Highway Authority. Both these bodies are yet to comment on the scheme.

It also unfortunate that all associated highways works necessary to operate this scheme are not included within the development proposal but will need to be secured by "Grampian" conditions.

It is considered that some additional careful landscaping could be introduced to minimise the impact of the scheme from views from the highway and to reduce its impact on the setting of the closest Listing Buildings.

The Environment technical objections also need to be resolved prior to the approval of this scheme.

Notwithstanding those concerns, the proposals are in compliance with many National and Local Policies, in particular the Local Plan and the Local Transport Plan. The proposals will also assist in reducing the rate of growth in congestion in Taunton Town Centre, which will assist in improving air quality in general. In raising no fundamental objection to this project the Local Authority would recognise that this proposal would make a significant contribution to the sustainable transport proposals for Taunton which will contribute to the growth and prosperity of Taunton in particular, and Somerset's overall economic growth.

RECOMMENDATION

That Taunton Deane Borough Council supports this application subject to further detailed consideration of the following matters:

1. Clarification of the views of both the Highways Agency and the County Highway Authority regarding the acceptability of this site in highway design and traffic flow terms.
2. Imposition of appropriate of "Grampian" conditions to secure the implementation of all necessary off-site highway works and improvements including all necessary signalisation within a timescale to accord with estimated future traffic flow demands.
3. Landscaping proposal to take on board the suggestions of the landscape officer to keep accesses from the site as narrow as possible. In addition adequate replacement planting to mitigate against the loss of all highway trees and help preserve the setting of closest Listed Buildings should be achieved through the imposition of appropriate conditions.
4. Technical issued regarding Flooding should be resolved prior to approval or made the subject of appropriate conditions.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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NOTES: