

38/15/0374

VOSPERS MOTORHOUSE LTD

CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE SPACE TO CAR DEALERSHIP WITH SERVICING FACILITY FOR VOSPERS MOTORHOUSE AT GOODWOOD HOUSE, BLACKBROOK PARK AVENUE, TAUNTON

Location: GOODWOOD HOUSE, BLACKBROOK PARK AVENUE, TAUNTON,
TA1 2WR

Grid Reference: 325145.124655

Full Planning Permission

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the provisions of Section 91 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

(A3) DrNo 15018 - P.01 Rev A Site Plan
(A3) DrNo 15018 - P.06 Rev A South & West Elevations Proposed
(A3) DrNo 15018 - P.05 Rev C North & East Elevations Proposed
(A3) DrNo 15018 - S.03 Rev A Site Plan as Existing
(A4) DrNo 15018 - S.100 Rev B Site Location Plan
(A1) DrNo 15018 - C.04 Rev D Proposed Floor Plan

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

3. The area allocated as a service yard shall not be used other than for the loading/unloading and manoeuvring of vehicles in connection with the deliveries to the site and use of the premises as a car showroom and no servicing of the premises shall take place direct from the adjacent highway.

Reason: To ensure that adequate off-street servicing facilities are provided within the curtilage of the proposed development, thereby to ensure that the proposed development does not prejudice the free flow of traffic or the

conditions of general safety along the adjacent highway in accordance with Core Strategy Policy DM1.

Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and entered into pre-application discussions to enable the grant of planning permission.
2. You are advised that separate planning permission will be required for the used car sales kiosk and that advertisement consent will be likely to be required for any signs on the site.

PROPOSAL

The proposal is the change of use and conversion of an existing single storey office building to a motor car dealership serving 3 brands. The works involve replacing brickwork with glazed and clad sections and providing associated signage which will be subject to separate consent.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The site at Goodwood House was a single storey brick office building designed to handle cheques for a major High Street bank. The site employed around 50 staff and the site has access and parking associated with the approved use. The site has been vacant over recent years.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - Please refer to standing advice.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER - I should like to object to the proposed development on the following grounds.

Firstly, Blackbrook Business Park has developed over the past 20 years as Somerset's premier business park, attracting many large and highly prestigious businesses due to the quality of its business environment and the cluster of numerous business and professional service providers. I have strong concerns that permitting a car dealership into the business park will detract significantly from that environment

Secondly, I am concerned over the precedent that the development may have. By allowing one operator we would run the risk of opening the door to another and

another, and in due course Somerset's prestigious business park would have become reduced to a trading estate. I would have no doubt that the loss of that status would not be welcomed by the existing businesses, who would question their future within the park as well as Taunton and Somerset. It could be argued that the business park already accommodates non-office uses (for example the Holiday Inn and the petrol filling station) but those uses are complementary to an office park, providing essential, local services to support the overall offering to occupants. A car dealership does not fall into that category.

Thirdly, I have concerns over the traffic impact of the proposal, particularly caused by the movement of HGV delivery vehicles and their unloading. Blackbrook Avenue is already congested and busy road, and I would be concerned that HGVs would cause severe disruption to the traffic flow.

Fourthly I have concerns over the visual appearance of the operation. Blackbrook was designed as a landscaped business park, accommodating a number of large office buildings of a similar scale and situation in a leafy, green setting. It has successfully created and maintained that attractive setting, which is one of its strengths as a business location. A car dealership would be incongruous, destroying the setting and the form of the business park.

A number of existing and potential investors on Blackbrook have expressed their concern to me over the proposal, indicating that they would think twice about investing on the business park were the development to proceed. At stake, therefore, is Taunton's reputation and its ability to attract quality investors creating higher skilled jobs. I would argue that there are other, more suitable sites available in Taunton that could accommodate new car dealerships.

DRAINAGE ENGINEER - None received.

PLANNING POLICY - None received.

Representations

Cllr Smith - I am writing to express my concerns with reference to planning application 38/15/374 and the change of use from office space to a car dealership. This building is at the forefront of a longstanding business park at the entrance to Taunton Deane which has been used by the service sector for 25 years. I have concerns that whilst we are in need of retail/commercial units within Taunton Deane, this is not the most suitable facility and would have a negative effect on the landscaping, purpose and set up of the business park. From converting the building to a sui generis use, whilst this may provide jobs which are expected to be in the region of 50 individuals, it is taken away the raison d'être of the business park in its formation. The business park has a variety of differing employers, many of which are office based and a change of use of the building has the potential to impact the existing employers through increased short journey traffic (it is already an issue in being able to enter and exit the park during peak times) and also causes a loss of business prestige to the site for tenants with regards to their existing customers and potential new ones.

I am pleased to see that a successful business is wishing to open premises within our town however it would be more suitable that this was located in the other

commercial areas within town, near other car retailers which other neighbouring towns and cities follow.

Other concerns have also been raised which can impact on the nearby residents in Calder Crescent which is that of the additional noise created by the workshop which would not be present if a serviced business was using the premises alongside that of the hazardous substances on site.

I would be grateful if you could take these concerns into consideration, refer the application to the planning committee and perhaps as a council we can look to work with the applicant to find alternative premises.

5 neighbour objections on grounds of

- noise from compressors and workshops carrying out valeting,
- impact on quality of life,
- MOT and servicing and adequate sound proofing should be provided with a fence along Blackbrook Way.
- Detraction from office park and an alienation to other business users,
- inappropriate use,
- increase in congestion with traffic at peak times.
- concern over future signage.
- impact on rental values.

PLANNING POLICIES

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework,
CP1 - TD CORE STRAT. CLIMATE CHANGE,
CP2 - TD CORE STRATEGY - ECONOMY,
CP8 - CP 8 ENVIRONMENT,
DM1 - TD CORE STRATEGY - GENERAL REQUIREMENTS,

LOCAL FINANCE CONSIDERATIONS

There is no CIL liability.

The development of this site would not result in payment to the Council of the New Homes Bonus.

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations are the policy impact of the use which is not a B1 use, contrary to the other office uses on the business park, and the impact on amenity.

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states that 'proposals which lead to the loss of existing or identified business, industrial or warehousing land to other uses, will not be permitted unless the overall benefit of the proposal outweighs the disadvantages of the loss of employment or potential employment on the site.

The site has been vacant for sometime and has been marketed since January 2013

without success. The provision of an alternative B1 office user has not come forward and the site has been marketed for the required 12 month period. The intended use is a sui generis use, however it will result in employment on a similar scale to the that which it replaces. The use is also considered to comply with the thrust of the NPPF.

The alterations to the building are limited to providing sections of glazing and cladding on three side within the square plan footprint of the existing building. Around half the masonry will be retained along with the whole roof and the alterations are considered acceptable ones in keeping with the character of the building. The main layout change will be to the car parking area, where the areas will be split into customer parking, demonstrator parking and used car displays. As a result additional spaces are provided to the north of the existing building to serve the Renault franchise, although 3 electrical vehicle charging points will be provided. The site already has a significant car park area at the front of the building and the additional parking is set to the rear and has no significant visual impact. The site itself is already well screened from the road through the business park by boundary trees and vegetation and the changes are not considered to harm the visual amenity or character of the area.

The service yard at the rear of the building will be utilised as access for the service areas within the building and the car valeting. A compressor was initially shown exterior to the building but within an insulated brick housing. This however has since been relocated to within the building. A neighbour the other side of Blackbrook Way has raised concerns over noise issues, however given the distance away across a road (over 50m between buildings) with two areas of landscaping in between and the new location of the compressor housing, the impact of noise during the working day is not considered to be detrimental to amenity to warrant refusal of the development. This is similarly the case with valeting bays and the Environmental Health Officer has raised no issues.

The Highway Authority refers to standing advice. No new accesses are formed and the current ones are considered adequate. The accesses into the site will not be changing and are considered safe in terms of the proposed development. The site has two access points and so allows for deliveries to take place within the site without unloading or manoeuvring on the estate road. Parking is considered sufficient and while there may be more traffic as a result of the proposal, this is not considered to be a significant increase in terms of the highway network and the proposed use of the site is considered acceptable.

It is clear that whilst the application site forms part of a quantitative consideration in terms of B1 allocation, Goodwood House does not meet the necessary qualitative needs in satisfying any demand which might emerge for modern office space. The building has been marketed since January 2013 and remains unoccupied. The current development proposal is the only realisable proposal to have emerged in that period. I do not therefore consider that this proposal would set a precedent. Grant of consent would be consistent with the NPPF at clause 22 insofar as policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. In this context the building's qualitative aspects are a relevant consideration as to financial viability of converting such building to meet future office demand.

The development will provide circa fifty new jobs comprising a mix of administrative and skilled engineering staff. Each of the brand franchises is new to Taunton. The jobs those franchises will support are new to Taunton; they are not relocations or diversions from elsewhere in Taunton Deane and so represent net new additional employment opportunities in both the service and engineering sectors of the local economy.

The Economic Development Manager and a local Councillor has raised objection over the impact on the environment and attractiveness of the setting of the business park. While these concerns are noted they do not amount to a policy objection that can be substantiated in light of the NPPF and policy CP2, and so little weight can be given to these concerns. The site is well screened by existing trees which are shown as being retained as part of the scheme and the alterations to the building are not considered to harm the attractiveness of the business park where there is currently one site left to develop. There are obvious employment benefits and wider economic benefits in allowing this sui generis use as an alternative to B1(a). The development is considered policy compliant and is not considered to cause harm and there are not considered to be any significant disadvantages to allowing this proposal. Any future signs would need advertisement consent and impact on rental values is not a planning consideration. In the circumstances the use here is therefore considered an acceptable one and is recommended for approval.

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

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