

38/2005/417

MESSRS W N & E HAWKINS

ERECTION OF OFFICE BUILDING AND FORMATION OF ACCESS AND CAR PARK ON LAND TO THE SOUTH WEST AT JUNCTION 25 OF THE M5, BLACKBROOK BUSINESS PARK, TAUNTON AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 9TH NOVEMBER, 2005 AND PLANS 0508/A, 0508/04E AND 08B

25388/24755

RESERVED MATTERS

PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the detailed plans for an office building and formation of an access and car park on land to the south west of Junction 25 of the M5 with access off the Blackbrook Business Park. The application is one for reserved matters following an outline permission in 2000 and a revision to that outline in 2003 allowing the submission of details by February 2006.

The applicant's design statement comments that the site complies with PPG4: Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms. The design has been influenced by the site boundaries with a main office core utilising the site area and located at the front of the site. Design and orientation of the building is such that it allows the office core to benefit from solar gains reducing the impact on energy in terms of lighting and heating. The overhands of the building also help reduce the sun's impact at its brightest. The location requires a building which is distinctive and announces the arrival in Taunton. Its distinctive shape and form provides a gateway building not only for the Business Park but also when approaching from the motorway or the A358. The building is three storey but due to the levels of the surroundings the building would be 1 m lower. The shallow roof pitch would also reduce the scale and impact and the ridge of the service core would be approximately the same as the Clarke Willmott offices. It is intended that high quality materials are to be used subject to approval. Access is gained from the main Business Park via Clarke Willmott car park and so no new highway infrastructure works will be required. 36 parking spaces including those for the disabled are proposed as is a landscaping scheme in relation to the site. The site is in a sustainable location on the edge of an existing business park with access to a bus service and complies with the requirements of the outline approval.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY the application proposes the vehicular access to be via Clark Willmott car park and a pedestrian access is implied on the existing access off Blackbrook Park Avenue. However question 8 of the form says the proposal includes the construction of both a new pedestrian and vehicular access to the highway. The access through Clark Willmott car park is shown as being achieved by deleting two existing parking spaces. I would recommend that the adjoining parking spaces each side are converted to surfaced area (with no obstruction to visibility greater than

600mm above adjoining car park level). This would make for a safer access between the two car parks. In the event of permission being granted I would recommend conditions re amended access to car park, parking used in connection with the development permitted, no occupation until details of loading/unloading area has been submitted and approved, no vehicular or pedestrian access direct from M5 slip road or A358 roundabout and no vehicular access direct to Blackbrook Park Road. COUNTY ARCHAEOLOGIST as far as we are aware there are limited or no implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archaeological grounds. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no objections to the submitted details the following comments should be noted. Details of the means of surface water disposal should be submitted to the Agency for prior approval. It is recommended the developer investigate the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems for surface water drainage on this site in order to reduce the rate of run-off and to reduce pollution risks. WESSEX WATER the site is in a sewered area with foul and surface water sewers available. It is proposed to dispose of surface water to the existing ditch. It will be necessary to agree points of connection to our systems which can be agreed at the detailed design stage. There is a public water main crossing the site and normally a 3m easement is required for maintenance and repair. An informative should be placed on any consent. Extensive road alterations have been carried out in the vicinity and all mains should be located on site before excavations are carried out. HIGHWAYS AGENCY the Agency has no comment to make on this application.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER my concerns are the eastern boundary car parking which provides little opportunity for landscape mitigation, the building is too close to the existing hedgerow and poplar tree, the overall landscaping as sketched gives limited mitigation or interest on this important gateway site.

POLICY CONTEXT

RPG10 - Regional Planning Guidance for the South West

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policies STR1 - Sustainable Development, STR4 - Development in Towns, POLICY 18 - Location of Land for Industrial, Warehousing and Business Development, POLICY 48 - Access and Parking.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 - General Requirements, S2 - Design, EC1 - Employment Development, M1 - Transport, Access and Circulation Requirements, M2 - Parking, EN6 - Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards and Hedgerows, T34 - Approach Routes into Taunton

ASSESSMENT

The proposal is for the provision of an office block providing 1395 sq m of office space on this vacant site on the edge of the existing business park and the M5 slip road. The principle of an office development here has already been accepted under the outline approval and the current proposal is for approval of details. The main issues with the application are access, parking, landscaping and design.

The proposal provides access off the existing car park area serving the Clarke Willmott building and this is in line with the outline which prevented vehicular access being other from the business park. This access as initially proposed involves the loss of two parking spaces. The Highway Authority have raised concern over the access width and visibility to the existing car park and the applicant is seeking to address this issue as well as turning space for service vehicles. Conditions are recommended preventing access, however this is partly already covered by the outline permission. A condition preventing access to Blackbrook Park Avenue is considered.

The parking proposed allows for 36 spaces including disabled parking and this complies with policy given the scale of the building. The landscaping of the site is in the process of being amended to address the concerns raised and this is the subject of an outline condition to be complied with. The existing western boundary hedge and trees will be retained and supplemented while the northern and eastern boundaries are to be provided with new screening. The site is set below the boundary slip road of the motorway and total screening of the site is not possible, however improvement over the existing boundary treatment is considered necessary and achievable.

The building is designed to fit into the site and will be a prominent building on the approach into Taunton. The development of this site will be an improvement over the existing vacant area of land and a distinctive building will provide a gateway into the town. The building has been designed with energy efficiency in mind and visually it is designed to reflect both the character of the existing Business Park as well as being a design statement in its own right. There is an argument to providing a more modern design stand alone building in this prominent location on the entrance into the town, conversely it could be argued that such a building did not respect the character of those nearby. The current scheme is considered to be an acceptable one in design terms and consequently it is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Details be APPROVED subject to condition re details of external materials, no access other than as shown. Notes re surface water drainage, protection of Wessex infrastructure and compliance with outline conditions.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed building provides as office development in line with the outline and Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 and S2.

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: