

ST MODWEN DEVELOPMENTS LTD

**APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESERVED MATTERS FOR APPLICATION 38/10/0214 FOR THE ERECTION OF 2711 SQ.M. OF OFFICE (B1) FLOORSPACE TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED CAR AND CYCLE PARKING, LANDSCAPING, PLANT, REFUSE STORE AND INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS AT PRIORY BRIDGE ROAD CAR PARK FIREPOOL AND 84-94 PRIORY BRIDGE ROAD, TAUNTON**

Grid Reference: 323019.125119

Reserved Matters

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**RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)**

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval for the following reason subject to the observations of the County Highways Authority

The development is on an allocated site in the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan and proposed an appropriate mix of uses to secure a strategic office site that has good sustainable access links, provides a high quality layout with public realm improvements and would not harm the amenity of the area. The proposal accords with policies FP1, FP2, IM1, IM2, TR2, TR3, TR4, TR5, F1, F2, and ED1 of the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan, Policies S1, S2 EN4 and T3 OF the adopted Taunton Deane Local Plan, Policies STR1 and STR4 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Structure Plan, and the advice and guidance contained in PPS4

**RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)**

1. No development, excluding site works, shall begin until a panel of the proposed brickwork measuring at least 1m x 1m has been built on the site and both the materials and the colour and type of mortar for pointing used within the panel have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be completed in accordance with the agreed details and thereafter maintained as such, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the character and appearance of the existing building in accordance with Policy S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

Notes for compliance

**PROPOSAL**

This is the first of the reserved matters applications for office development at

Firepool which and would provide 2,711 square metres and at least 28 car parking spaces. The application has been submitted by St Modwen and the building is to be occupied by Virdor. It is intended that the building will provided a new bespoke headquarter office building , accommodating in excess of 100 members of staff. Should consent by granted it is expected that building work will commence in the forthcoming months with completion in 2012.

The proposed building complies with the outline planning permission parameters plan and will be 6 storeys in height (the top storey being set back). Materials will be brick with the top floor clad in aluminium panels. This would be the tallest building on the Bridge Road Car Park site with building heights stepping down towards the existing residential dwellings that immediately border the site.

The building has been designed to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY**

Outline Planning Consent was granted last year for the redevelopment of Priory Bridge Road Car Park element of the larger Firepool site. The outline permission was for a mixed use development of offices and residential with an option for hotel accommodation in lieu of office space. All matters were reserved other than access into the site which would be derived from Priory Bridge Road. The maximum total amount of floorspace for the commercial development would be 11,200 sq m (gross external) with 112 car parking spaces and 65 cycle parking spaces.

The overall site is 1.54 hectares and is triangular in shape. It is bordered by Priory Bridge Road to the South, the River Tone to the North West and the residential development of Priory Park and Winters Field to the East.

The site was allocated for redevelopment in the adopted Taunton Deane Local Plan, has formed a key part in the Taunton Vision and forms part of a larger riverside allocation in the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (TTCAAP). The riverside allocation includes the surface car park, the former livestock market and railway siding sheds between Canal Road and the Station. Policies FP1 and FP2 of the TTCAAP state:

### Policy FP1

#### **Riverside - Development Content**

The Riverside development will provide:

- a. at least 47,000 sq m (net) office space
- b. approximately 8,000 sq m gross of additional retail and leisure floorspace, of which 4,000 sq m gross should be convenience retailing
- c. approximately 400 dwellings, including 25% affordable housing
- d. a 500 space multi-storey car park (screened with single aspect development where it adjoins public space)
- e. a 3- or 4-star hotel with at least 100 bedroom
- f. primary healthcare facilities
- g. the relocation of the Produce Market within the town centre
- h. a 'boulevard' linking the railway station with the River Tone and Priory Bridge Road

- i. public conveniences close to public parking and the River Tone, to replace the existing facilities at Canal Road and Priory Bridge Road
- j. potential for active street level uses at locations shown on the Proposals Map
- k. high quality riverside promenades
- l. a contribution towards public art at 0.3% of construction costs

## Policy FP2

### Riverside - Transport Measures

The Riverside development will provide the following transport measures:

- a. travel plans on the basis identified in Policy Tr4 and agreed with the County Council
- b. car and cycle parking within developments in accordance with the Somerset Parking Strategy
- c. a minimum of 200 public parking spaces during construction and on completion of the development
- d. a priority bus and cycle route from the railway station via the boulevard to Priory Bridge Road, including high-quality provision for waiting passengers
- e. initiatives to encourage rail and bus use by employees and visitors
- f. high-quality pedestrian and segregated cycle routes along each bank of the River Tone
- g. shared pedestrian and cycle bridges across the River Tone
- h. an internal layout that facilitates improved pedestrian and cycle links to North Taunton and Taunton East

## **CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES**

### **Consultees**

*SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP* – comments awaited

*BRITISH WATERWAYS* – comment:

- Elevations are bland require additional articulation – suggests additional materials or different brick bonds.
- Materials are acceptable as brick can be a very appropriate, tactile material to use providing a high quality finish.
- Interactions between the building and the waterside should be actively encouraged.
- Suggests field maple instead of hawthorn at the entrance.

*SOMERSET WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE* – no response received

*POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICER* – comment:

- The Design & Access Statement, at para. 3.0 Sustainability states that the 'Building, pedestrian routes and external landscaped areas will seek to gain Secured by Design accreditation'. I look forward to working with the developer to achieve this police approved award.

*SCC - ECOLOGY* – no response received

*SOMERSET WATERWAYS ADVISORY COMMITTEE* – no response received

*SOMERSET WILDLIFE TRUST* – no response received

*WESTERN POWER DISTRIBUTION* – no response received

*WESSEX WATER* – refer to comments on outline application

- The drainage strategy is in accordance with Wessex Water's discussion with the applicant.
- Require continuous access to the siphon chamber and no building should be within 3 metres of the chamber.
- It should be noted that there is likely to be an odour nuisance when the chamber is maintained.

*CONSERVATION OFFICERS* – no response received

*DRAINAGE ENGINEER* – comments awaited

*ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH - NOISE & POLLUTION* – no response received

*ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER* – supports

"The need to attract larger firms with a more developed corporate and international network is central to the Economic Development Strategy, as is the need to deploy improved technologies to ensure that buildings are much more energy efficient."

*LANDSCAPE LEAD* – comments:

Subject to details of plant specifications and densities the proposals acceptable

*BIODIVERSITY OFFICER* – comments awaited.

*ENVIRONMENT AGENCY* – no objection

## **Representations**

Four letters of observation/comment received which raise the following issues:

- The building will be too high.
- If other buildings on the site (nearer the residential properties) are going to be the same height then objections would follow.
- Potential for loss of views.
- Car access should be behind the building and not over the riverside public domain.
- The development could be a disaster and on residential should be on the car park site. – Big offices should be at Blackbrook or away from the river on the market part of the site.
- Concern at noise from the plant room.
- Believed that the properties at 84-94 Priory Bridge Road were to be used for

retail.

- Local builders should be used to construct the building.
- Concerned about noise from the development during the build.
- Very positive towards change but considered that there should be some compensation to those living next to a building site.
- Questions what provision has been made for alternative car parking once construction work commences.
- Questions where the proposed eastern entrance is.

## **PLANNING POLICIES**

S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,  
S2 - TDBCLP - Design,  
H10 - TDBCLP - Affordable Housing Targets,  
EC23 - TDBCLP - Tourist Accommodation,  
C4 - TDBCLP - Standards of Provision of Recreational Open Space,  
EN4 - TDBCLP - Wildlife in Buildings to be Converted or Demolished,  
EN25 - TDBCLP - The Water Environment,  
EN33 - TDBCLP - Building Waste,  
EN34 - TDBCLP - Control of External Lighting,  
T3 - TDBCLP - Firepool Major Development Site,  
STR1 - Sustainable Development,  
STR4 - Development in Towns,  
FP1 - TTCAAP - Riverside - Development Content,  
FP2 - TTCAAP - Riverside - Transport Measures,  
IM1 - TTCAAP - Priorities for Developer Funding,  
IM2 - TTCAAP - Approach to Viability,  
TR2 - TTCAAP - Parking in New Development,  
TR3 - TTCAAP - Smarter Choices,  
TR4 - TTCAAP - Travel Plans,  
TR5 - TTCAAP - Car Sharing,  
TR6 - TTCAAP - Developer Contributions to Transport,  
F1 - TTCAAP - Developments within the Floodplain,  
F2 - TTCAAP - Developer Contributions to Waterways and Flooding,  
ED1 - TTCAAP - Design,  
ED2 - TTCAAP - Public Art,  
ED3 - TTCAAP - Mixed Use,  
ED4 - TTCAAP - Density,  
ED5 - TTCAAP - Combating Climate Change through New Development,  
ED6 - TTCAAP - Off-site Public Realm Enhancements,  
TS1 - TTCAAP - Training and Skills,  
UNQ - Unique Policy Code,  
PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,  
PPS 1 SUPP - Planning and Climate Change,  
PPS3 - Housing,  
PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth,  
PPS 5 - PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment,  
PPS25 - Development and Flood Risk,

## **DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

Outline planning permission has been granted for development on this site in accordance with the policies contained in the Taunton Town Centre Area Action

Plan. This is the first of the reserved matters applications for the tallest building on the site.

The outline planning permission considered and fixed building zones with maximum heights. This application complies with the parameters that were previously agreed. The proposed building forms the corner plot where a maximum building height of 24 metres was agreed. It will be clearly prominent from the road and the river and as the first phase of development, it will appear isolated. The outline planning permission and Masterplan authorise further attached buildings which will step down towards the existing built form. This proposal should therefore be considered with the expectation of future development. Illustrative visuals have been submitted with the application to help visualise the proposals against this future development.

The building is simple in form and materials with no unnecessary detailing or additions. The design has a 'rhythm' of fenestration that respects the character of building form in Taunton without slavishly replicating historic detailing. With a building of this height, it will be very important to select the right colour and texture of brick. A condition requiring a sample panel of brickwork and pointing is proposed.

It is important to appreciate that the development of this site will be phased. It is likely that some building will be occupied prior to other being constructed. The overall Masterplan shows that the access to the commercial car parking will be to the east of this building with the western access being for the public realm and residential. In order for this building to be occupied early, vehicles will have to use the western access and as the site develops further, this will switch to a newly constructed eastern access.

Although not forming any part of this application, the Public Realm works that were permitted under application 38/09/400 will be constructed at the same time. This is essential to ensure that the proposed building has an active relationship with the river and has adequate flood protection. This is already controlled through conditions on the outline planning permission.

This is considered to be an acceptable scheme that will be the first phase of office development on the Firepool site. The building has been designed to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating and provide office accommodation for over 100 staff. The proposal is in accordance with existing policies and previous planning decisions. It is therefore recommended for approval.

**In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.**

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