

38/2006/505

SUMMERFIELD DEVELOPMENTS LTD

**ERECTION OF NEW OFFICE BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AT BLACKBROOK BUSINESS PARK, TAUNTON AS AMENDED BY LETTER AND DRAWING 3881-2 G, 3881-6H AND 3881-7H RECEIVED 19TH DECEMBER, 2006 AND AMPLIFIED BY WILDLIFE SURVEY RECEIVED 11TH JANUARY, 2006**

325113/12451

FULL

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**PROPOSAL**

Permission is sought for the erection of a new office building and associated car parking within the existing Blackbrook Business Park. The site is designated for such use as part of the original outline application for the site. The proposed building would be three storeys high and would provide accommodation for the headquarters of the NHS Strategic Health Authority. The building would provide 2270 s m (20785 sq ft) of floor space and it is anticipated that the development would provide employment opportunities for up to 200 people. The business park has continuously grown and the transport infrastructure is in place to serve the development. Access to the proposed site is from an existing spur on the roundabout on the central spine road through the business park. The siting of the building would be to the southern end of the site overlooking the original Blackbrook and established lake, to maximise the environmental benefits for users. The agent has subsequently submitted amended plans to relocate the proposed conservatory from the rear (south) elevation of the building, the revision would see the conservatory wrap around the side (west) and rear (south) elevation. The amendment also repositions the building away from the existing water main. A wildlife survey has also been submitted as part of the application.

**CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

HIGHWAYS AUTHORITY there are no comments/objections to the application, but we would request the applicant provides an upgraded crossing facility for pedestrians/cyclists across Blackbrook Way. This would take the form of providing light control at the existing crossing point by the construction of a Toucan crossing.

The application in itself probably does not warrant an improvement but the accumulation of permissions increases the use of the existing cross point where traffic flows are increasing and speeds are relatively high. Upgrading the crossing to signal control would make crossing Blackbrook Way easier and also encourage more people to travel to the business park by cycle or on foot. A Section 106 Legal Agreement to be approved by the County Council would be required to secure funding for the works.

The applicant is the same as for other individual sites in the business park and the upgrading of the crossing would have benefits to other sites and is considered a relatively modest improvement that would increase access to the business park by

sustainable modes. WESSEX WATER there is a public sewers and a public water main in the assumed site area. If within the site boundary a 3 metre easement will be required on either side of the apparatus for the purpose of maintenance and repair. Diversion or protection works may need to be agreed. The development is located in a sewered area with both foul and surface water sewers available. It will be necessary for the developer to agree an arrangement for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows and surface water flows generated by the proposal. The connection can be agreed at the detailed design stage. Water supply connection can also be agreed at detailed stage. The Council should be satisfied with any arrangement for the disposal of drainage if alternative methods of drainage are proposed. It is recommended the developer agree a point of connection onto Wessex systems prior to commencement on site. A condition is recommended to protect the integrity of Wessex systems crossing the site.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER my main concern is proximity of the proposed building and fire escape to the existing trees. However it should be possible to overcome those concerns subject to protection of trees during construction; agreeing fire escape construction details and working arrangements close to the eastern end of the building. Landscape details will be important in providing a setting for the building especially along the pond elevation which looks poor at present. NATURE CONSERVATION & RESERVES OFFICER wildlife survey requested. This has now been submitted (11<sup>th</sup> January 2007) and committee will be updated of the wildlife officer's response.

ONE LETTER OF OBJECTION has been received raising the following issues:- loss of privacy due to overlooking and lack of screening during winter months; loss of value; create an eyesore; overbearing.

## **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 & Business Development, Policy 48 - Access and Parking Policy 60 - Floodplain Protection.

Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 - General Requirements, S2 - Design, EC1 - Employment Development, M1 - Transport, Access and Circulation Requirements, M2- Transport, Access and Circulation Requirements, M3 - Transport, Access and Circulation Requirements, EN5 – Protected Species - EN9 - Tree Planting, EN28 - Development and Flood Risk.

## **ASSESSMENT**

The proposal is to erect a B1 office unit with car parking within the existing built development at Blackbrook Business Park. This land was included in the original outline permission for the business park and the site lies within the settlement limits of Taunton. The primary issues are the design, scale and siting of the building, the

adequacy of the landscaping and parking; impact upon amenity of local residents; and, the provisions to ensure no flood risk as a result of the sites development.

The proposed building would be a three storey office building reflecting the adjacent three storey WPA building. It is noted that predominantly the buildings located adjacent to Blackbrook Way are two storeys in the main. The proposed materials are a mixture of brick and glass facades with a tiled roof. It is considered the proposed development would be compatible with the general character of the business park. As such it is considered the design of the buildings and general layout is an acceptable one. The internal arrangements include showers for the users of the building and it is anticipated that this will promote the use of cycling to work. The agent has indicated that all design work will be in conjunction with BREEAM to achieve a 'very good' sustainability rating.

The landscape officer has expressed concern in relation to the proximity of the fire escape to existing trees, however, is satisfied that subject to the protection of trees during construction and details of construction this can be overcome. The requirement for adequate landscaping is considered imperative in order to provide a setting for the building and help to assimilate the development into the locality. As such it is recommended a landscaping condition be imposed.

There are no elevations or further details in respect of the proposed generator, bins, composting and recycling storage areas. In order to assess the visual impact of these works and the possible need for landscaping measures to screen the development it is recommended that a condition be imposed requiring details of the design, siting and materials be submitted to and agreed in writing prior to the occupation of the building.

There has been one letter of representation to the application expressing an objection to the proposal and the issues raised are noted. However, it should be recognised that the site has been designated for such a use. In assessing the impact of the proposal, whilst it is accepted that the building is three storeys high, it is considered that by reason of the existing separation distances, in excess of 40.0m between elevations, the building would not result in such a loss of outlook or privacy or appear so dominating as to be harmful to the living conditions of local residents to warrant a refusal.

The Highway Authority has raised no objections to the application. However, the Highway Authority requests that the applicant provide an upgraded crossing facility for pedestrians/cyclists across Blackbrook Way. This would take the form of providing light control at the existing crossing point by the construction of a Toucan crossing. The agent has been informed of the requirement and Members will be updated at the Committee meeting.

The site is adjacent to a County Wildlife Site – The Black Brook and associated ponds are part of the Tone and Tributaries County Wildlife Site. The River and streams are noted for protected species that include otter and kingfisher. In addition the pond may support great crested newts. In response the agent has submitted an ecological survey and the wildlife officer has been requested to comment.

The site is within an area at potential flood risk and a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted with the application. The Environment Agency has not responded to date.

To conclude, it is considered the proposed building would be sited within an established business park where its use would be compatible and would not harm the character or appearance of the area or adversely affect the living conditions of local residents as to substantiate a refusal. As such it is recommended the application be approved subject to conditions detailed below.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Subject to the views of the Wildlife Officer and the Landscape Officer on the amended plans and wildlife survey and any conditions they may require, the submission of a landscape plan and details of the siting, design and elevation treatment to enclose the proposed bin storage, generator and recycling area annotated on the plan the Development Control Manager in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, landscaping, external lighting details, surface water drainage, site levels, landscaping scheme, tree protection; construction details. Notes re connection to mains drainage, protection of Wessex infrastructure crossing site.

REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION:- The proposed building is considered to comply with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1, S2, EC1, EN5, M3, EN9 and EN28 and material considerations do not indicate otherwise.

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

**CONTACT OFFICER: 356586 MR A PICK**

NOTES