

AXA SUN LIFE PROPERTIES LTD

DEMOLITION AND ERECTION OF REPLACEMENT BUILDINGS TOGETHER WITH SERVICING, CAR PARKING AND LANDSCAPING AT PRIORY FIELDS RETAIL PARK, TAUNTON.

23500/25020

FULL PERMISSION

PROPOSAL

The application seeks the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and the erection of replacement buildings of the same size. It is intended that the same retailers will occupy the units i.e. Carpet Right, MFI, Harveys, Allied Carpets and Focus (Wickes), one of the units is currently vacant. The S106 Agreement restricting the type of goods sold will remain valid. The applicants state their motivation for redevelopment as the need to reconfigure the floorspace in line with modern retailer's requirements.

CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY while there is no objection to the principle of this development, there has been a shift in transport policy since the original planning application for development of this site. While the car parking provision proposed for the site falls below the maximum level set in RPG10 (511 spaces using ratio for non-food retail of 1 space per 20 sq m GFA), there is little provision for access to the site by other modes of transport. Consequently I would request that the applicant contacts the Travel Plans Co-ordinator, Craig Lamberton, (01823 355598) to provide a travel plan for the site, which should be incorporated into any consent. I would also request that the applicant incorporates secure, covered cycle parking facilities, close to the entrances of the retail units, and upgrades the footpath to the rear of the site to provide shared footway/cycleway access. The lanes between parking bays are wide enough to take two-way traffic. Drivers returning to vehicles may forget the direction of the one-way system without excessive signing, and it may be beneficial to make most of the lanes two-way. Because of the proximity to the Priory Park junction, I would request that the first lane on the left, when entering the site, be stopped up at its southern end, and the first lane on the right be either stopped up or clearly signed for exit only. Visibility should be provided at the junctions of the lanes (2 m by 15 m for vehicle speeds of 10 mph and less), and any landscaping at the ends of parking bays should be designed so as not to impede visibility. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY no objection subject to conditions and notes. WESSEX WATER requests notes. COUNTY ARCHEOLOGIST as far as we are aware there are limited or no archeological implications to this proposal and we therefore have no objections on archeological grounds. POLICE ARCHITECTURAL LIAISON OFFICER I would recommend that it should be possible to secure the area at the rear of the units by way of suitable fencing and gates, (it is not clear from the drawing if this is to be included). If this is possible then this fencing, and other security fencing shown on the drawing should be erected to British Standard 1722 specification.

LANDSCAPE OFFICER the proposed arrangements for replacement buildings, parking, etc will result in less landscaping on site as well as the felling of several trees, (unfortunately some of the best specimens on site ie T1, T2, T3 and T11). In addition, a proportion of the trees marked for felling are protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TD 889). Does the new fencing need to be as high as 4 metres? If approved the fencing facing Priory Avenue and the River Tone should be softened with planting. The proposed parking adjacent to Priory Avenue will not be screened by planting as there is not enough space. There is no proposed tree planting within the parking bays. RIGHTS OF WAY OFFICER the footpath will not be affected. POLICY SECTION This proposal raises two policy issues that require assessment. Retail. Current retail policies seek to accommodate new retail floorspace within town centre locations (as a priority), followed by locations adjoining town centres. Accordingly, applicants would normally be required to undertake a sequential test/need /vitality and viability analysis (refer to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies EC7, EC8 and EC9). However, this proposal is for a reconfiguration of an existing retail park. The applicant states (their letter dated 28 November, 2002) that, when compared to the existing scheme, redevelopment will not result in an increase in retail floorspace. Furthermore, the applicant is not seeking to expand the range of goods that are currently sold from the site. Given this, I consider that it would be unreasonable to require the applicants to undertake a sequential test/need analysis. The proposal is not contrary to existing retail policies, given the particular circumstances of the case. Transport. Current transport policies seek to restrict car parking provision to an absolute minimum (certainly no more than the operator themselves wish to provide), whilst seeking modal transfer by the provision of new cycle routes/improved bus services etc (refer to Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies M1 to M3). I note that the applicant wishes to provide 395 car parking spaces as a result of redevelopment. I cannot find any reference to an existing number of car parking spaces. However, my own records show that the original proposal provided 437 car parking spaces. Accordingly, there would appear to be a reduction in car parking provision, which is to be welcomed. As previously noted, the proposal is for reconfiguration of existing floorspace, and as such the Borough and County Councils may not wish to be as rigorous in applying transport policies compared with normal circumstances. However, the opportunity to facilitate the provision of alternative modes of access, consistent with sustainable development objectives, should not be lost. I would suggest that you contact the Highway Authority with a view to obtaining their advice as to how access to this site can be improved for alternative modes. Their advice should form the basis of negotiations for an improvement on the current position. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH suggest contamination conditions.

POLICY CONTEXT

As there is no increase in retail floorspace there are no policy implications in respect of the principle of the development. In sustainability terms the reduction in the number of car parking spaces and the opportunity to provide cycle parking should be welcomed. The proposal therefore accords with Policies M1 - M3 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit.

ASSESSMENT

As is stated in the Policy Context section above there can be no objection to the principle of redevelopment, baring in mind the fact that neither the floorspace nor the

range of goods to be sold is to change. The layout of the site with the buildings running close to the northern boundary of the site enables the laying out of a car park which will be safer and more convenient to customers than the existing. Detailed concerns raised by the Highway Authority has been discussed with the applicant and revised drawings should be available by the date of the meeting. Whilst the positions of the building chosen gives a long elevation and service yard adjacent to the riverside path, the existing planting will soften the impact to a degree. Whilst the front of the building is broken up to a degree by the entrance features, the larger unit at the eastern end will benefit from further detailed amendment. One of the major attractions of the existing retail park is the quality and maturity of the landscaping. It is essential to maintain this quality, (a number of the perimeter trees are protected by a Tree Preservation Order). Whilst the submitted scheme fails in this request, subsequent negotiations should lead to revised proposals which will retain important trees where possible and supplement with new planting.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to details of floor levels revised elevation drawings, and layout showing amended parking layout and landscaping the Chief Planning Officer in consultation with the Chair/Vice Chair be authorised to determine and permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, materials, hardstanding, landscaping, trees to be retained, protection of trees, service trenches, visibility splays, parking, cycle parking, flood lighting, amplified music, services underground, site levels, contamination, floor levels, surface water drainage, entrance barrier. Notes re River Tone, landfill site, surface water drainage, S106 Agreement, sewer diversion, Wessex Water systems, infrastructure changes, Remediation Strategy and advertisements.

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:

