

**APPLICATION NO.** P07/E0571  
**APPLICATION TYPE** FULL  
**REGISTERED** 26.04.2007  
**PARISH** ASTON ROWANT  
**WARD MEMBER(S)** Mrs Dorothy Brown  
**APPLICANT** Mr J McArdle  
**SITE** Parkwood Stud Aston Rowant  
**PROPOSAL** Change of use of existing building to B1 use. Provision of new parking area.  
**AMENDMENTS** None  
**GRID REFERENCE** 472348/198681  
**OFFICER** Mrs A.M. Fettiplace

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is referred to Planning Committee because the view of the Parish Council conflicts with the officer recommendation.
- 1.2 The site, which extends to some 0.19 ha comprises part of Parkwood Stud, an established equestrian centre that is now very low key in terms of its use. Whilst the land is still used for the private grazing of horses, some of the buildings are now redundant for equestrian use. The owner of the site has in the past sought to diversify to other uses including commercial office use. Another business that operates from the site involves the manufacture of arena surfacing. This activity has been investigated by the Council's Enforcement Team and is likely to be the subject of a retrospective planning application in the near future.
- 1.3 In September 2006, planning permission was granted for the relocation and enlargement of the access off the A40 serving Parkwood Stud. This work is now virtually complete.
- 1.4 The background to the current application is the conversion of an adjacent single storey stable building to offices in 2003 (P03/N0355). These offices have been occupied by MEGA Brands who manufacture games and activities for children that are marketed worldwide. MEGA Brands now require more space and wish to convert the stable building that is the subject of this application and provide an additional parking area. They intend to vacate their existing premises for which new tenants have been found. The floor area of the respective buildings are 197 sq m for the existing offices and 431 sq m for the proposed offices.
- 1.5 The site lies in an isolated rural location outside the confines of any settlement.

## **2.0 THE PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the existing stable building to commercial offices. The existing building measures 58 metres in length and 10 metres in width and has a roof height of 4.5 metres. It has been

erected using white painted blockwork with a cement sheet roof and has high level timber openings and corrugated plastic rooflights on its north eastern elevation. The proposal to convert the building into office use would involve replacement rooflights, new doors and windows

and the addition of timber weather boarding to the whole of the front and side elevations. The existing roof would be retained and insulated within. It is proposed to retain the rear 150 sq m of the building for equestrian storage use.

- 2.2 The proposal would also provide 18 additional parking spaces in front of the building which would be accessed through the existing MEGA Brand car park.
- 2.3 In support of the application, the agent maintains that the proposed conversion works would be sympathetic to the existing building and that the new offices will enable the expansion of a local firm on its existing site with further employment opportunities. A copy of the agent's design and access statement is **attached** to the report. Also **attached** are floor plans and elevational drawings.

### 3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Aston Rowant Parish Council Objection. Contrary to Policies G2 and G3. Overdevelopment of a rural site greatly altering the character of the area.

Would generate an increase in traffic.

Site unsuitable for commercial office use.

OCC  
(Highways)

Visibility at the existing entrance to the site meets the required standards. The principle to convert an existing building to a B1 use on this site has already been approved under P03/N0355. This proposal is similar to P03/N0355 as submitted and is also providing an acceptable level of parking for the site. Taking the above into account it is the opinion of the Highway Authority that recommending refusal on highway safety grounds and sustainability would not be appropriate or sustainable at appeal.

No objection.

Neighbour  
letters – 1

Support. The existing offices have been sympathetically converted and the proposal is likely to be to the same high standard.

### 4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 P62/M0640 Erection of stable buildings. Approved July 1962.

P62/M0974 Stables, loose boxes and covered yard. Approved October 1962.

P78/N0809 Indoor riding school. Refused March 1979.

P03/N0355 Conversion of existing stables to B1 office use. Approved June 2003.

P06/E1059 Extensions to B1 office building. Withdrawn November 2006.

## 5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

### 5.1 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan Policies:

G2 – Protection of the environment

G3 – Sustainable development

G6 – Design and scale

C1 – Protection of the countryside

E8 – Reuse of rural buildings

## 6.0 PLANNING ISSUES

### 6.1 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are as follows:-

- (i) Whether the principle of the proposal is acceptable in terms of planning policy.
- (ii) Whether the details of the proposed conversion are acceptable.
- (iii) Highway issues.

**(i) Whether the principle of the proposal is acceptable in terms of planning policy.**

6.2 Policies G2, G3 and C1 of the adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan seek to protect the countryside and steer new development to sustainable locations. However policy E8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan accepts that the reuse and adaptation of existing rural buildings has an important role in meeting the needs of the rural areas for commercial and industrial development. The policy states that:

“Proposals for the re-use of rural buildings will be permitted provided that:

- (i) they are of permanent and substantial construction and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction;
- (ii) their form, bulk and general design are in keeping with their surroundings;
- (iii) the fabric and essential character of the buildings are maintained;
- (iv) if the buildings are in the Green Belt, the proposed use does not have a materially greater impact than the present use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;
- (v) there are no overriding amenity, environmental or highway objections;

(vi) in the case of proposals for B1 or B2 uses the floorspace in the building or in the complex of buildings does not exceed 500 square metres; and

(vii) in the case of proposals for residential use, other uses have been explored and found to be unacceptable in planning terms.”

6.3 In the case of the current application, officers take the view that the existing building is permanent and substantial and its form, bulk and general design is in keeping with its surroundings. The fabric and essential character of the building would be retained. The building is not within the Oxford Green Belt, its floorspace does not exceed 500 sq metres and there are no overriding amenity, environmental or highway objections. Therefore, in terms of planning policy, the principle of the proposal is not at issue.

**(ii) Whether the details of the proposed conversion are acceptable.**

6.4 The proposed alterations to the stable building are minimal and the recladding of the visible walls with timber boarding would retain the rural character and appearance of the building. Replacement doors, windows and rooflights will also improve the appearance of the building.

**(iii) Highway issues.**

6.5 The Highways Liaison Officer is not raising an objection to the application. He states that visibility at the access onto the A40 meets the required standards and that the level of parking provided is acceptable. The concerns of the Parish Council in respect of the additional commercial traffic that would be generated is noted. However, given that the proposal accords with Policy E8 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and the lack of any formal objection by the County Council as the Highway Authority, officers consider that a refusal of this application on traffic grounds would be difficult to sustain.

**7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 The proposal accords with the relevant Development Plan policies and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposal would not detract from the rural character of the area or impact upon highway safety.

**8.0 RECOMMENDATION**

**8.1 That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:-**

**1. Commencement 3 years**

**2. Windows, external doors and rainwater goods to specification**

**3. Details of staining of timber boarding to be agreed**

**4. Retain and protect trees during development and for five years following completion**

**5. Parking provision to be as shown on drawing reference 060209**

**6. Details of surface water drainage to be approved**

**7. No development until foul drainage details are approved**

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