
SUBJECT DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REPORTS ITEM 9
REPORT OF Head of Planning & Building Control

APPLICATION NO.	P08/E0193
APPLICATION TYPE	Full
REGISTERED	12.02.2008
PARISH	Goring Heath
WARD MEMBERS	Mrs Ann Ducker Mrs Pearl Slatter
APPLICANT	Hazell & Jefferies Ltd
SITE	Woodcote Sawmill, Pot Kiln Lane, Goring Heath, RG8 7SS
PROPOSALS	Replacement industrial building
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	464193/180856
OFFICER	Mr T Wyatt

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is referred to Committee as the Officer's recommendations conflict with the views of the Parish Council. It was the subject of a site visit by Members on 12 May.
- 1.2 The application site (which is shown on the OS extract **attached** as Appendix A) forms part of a wider area of land totalling some 2 hectares. The site lies in a relatively isolated rural location some 500 metres to the south of the main built up edge of Woodcote. However, there is some scattered residential development in close proximity. The site was used as a sawmill for a number of years with the planning history for this use dating back to the 1950s. However, planning permission was granted in March 2004 for a change of use of the land to use as a civil engineering and public work contractors depot. This change of use has not yet been implemented and the site is currently being used largely for the processing of waste timber. The site contains two large buildings and otherwise is open but hardsurfaced with areas of stacked waste timber.
- 1.3 The site and the surrounding area also forms part of the Chilterns AONB, and in general terms, the site is dominated by the surrounding natural landscape, which includes woodland protected by tree preservation orders to the south and east and open farmland to the west. The scattered housing is generally found to the north before the countryside concedes to the main urban area of Woodcote.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal seeks to replace one of the two main buildings currently on the site. This building, which lies parallel to the north west boundary of the site, is currently derelict and not in use. The proposal involves the demolition of the existing building and its replacement with a building on a very similar footprint and of similar dimensions.

- 2.2 The existing building is formed from two attached structures, which in total measures approximately 33.5 metres long, 19.5 metres wide and between 5 and 6.5 metres in height. The proposed building is a single structure measuring 33.5 metres long, 19.5 metres wide and between 6 and 6.5 metres in height depending on the slope of the land, which falls gently from north east to south west. Therefore, the height, width and length of the building are identical to the existing building. The siting of the building is also the same, with the only discernible difference between the dimensions of the existing and proposed buildings being the ‘squaring off’ of the north east and south east elevations of the building.
- 2.3 The facing materials for the building would comprise dark green coloured profile sheeting for the walls and grey coloured cement fibre sheeting for the roof. The roof pitch has been kept low at approximately 12° to retain a low ridge height. Four rooflights are proposed in the front (south east) elevation whilst there would be no rooflights or other openings on the rear (north west) elevation, which faces onto the adjoining agricultural land. The main doors to the building would be located on the south west elevation with a single roller shutter door on the north east elevation.
- 2.4 The building would be used for storage and maintenance purposes in connection with the current use of the site for the processing of waste timber.
- 2.5 A copy of the proposed plans and design and access statement is **attached** as Appendix B.
- 3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**
- 3.1 **Goring Heath Parish Council** – The application should be refused. The current use of the site does not relate to the use of the site as a sawmill, and therefore, the proposed development would be used for industrial purposes outside of the scope of the original sawmill use. The proposal would represent a significant increase in development in the AONB.
- 3.2 **Woodcote Parish Council** – The application should be refused. The site is being used for the processing of waste, which has a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents through noise and dust. Lorries carrying waste to the site represent a highway safety issue and are damaging the road.
- 3.3 **OCC Highways** – No objections as there is no alteration to the existing access and parking arrangements.
- 3.4 **Environmental Health (Contaminated Land)** – No objections subject to the imposition of conditions to ensure that any contamination on the site is remediated.
- 3.5 **Forestry Officer** – Details of landscaping need to be approved in relation to the development.
- 3.6 **Chiltern Society** – Objects due to the visual impact of the development and the impact on the amenity of users of the adjacent footpath and local residents.
- 3.7 **CPRE** – The new building will be visually more intrusive and will not conserve or enhance the AONB. The use of the site is also audibly intrusive.
- 3.8 **Neighbours** – Eight letters of objection received:
- Impact on neighbouring amenity through noise and dust from the current use, including the emission of harmful particles due to the processing of treated timber.

- Impact of heavy lorries of narrow rural roads in relation to highway safety and road damage
- Visual impact of the development and impact on the AONB
- Loss of vegetation on the north west boundary of the site and lack of planting
- Burning of waste on the site

One letter stating no objections has also been received.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P03/S0157 - Demolition of garage. Erection of two bed detached bungalow and double garage. Planning Permission granted on 16 September 2003.
- 4.2 P07/E0738 - Replacement industrial building. Refusal of Planning Permission on 23 July 2007.
- 4.3 P05/E1193 - Erection of a replacement industrial building. Refusal of Planning Permission on 14 February 2007.
- 4.4 P04/E1084 - Change of use of land and buildings from sawmill & timber storage depot to civil engineering & public work contractors depot. Planning Permission granted on 18 March 2005.
- 4.5 P03/S0168/LD - Clearance of site, surfacing with hardcore for storage of timber ancillary to the use of the existing sawmill. Certificate of Lawful Use or Development on 17 July 2003.
- 4.6 P01/S0915/O - Demolition of buildings, clearance of site and building of 21 dwellings including affordable housing, means of access. Refusal of Outline Planning Permission on 25 January 2002.
- 4.7 P94/S0572 - Erection of building for the storage of timber. Planning Permission granted on 28 November 1994.
- 4.8 P67/H0819 - Steel framed building. Planning Permission granted on 25 January 1968.
- 4.9 P64/H0696 – Sawmill. Planning Permission granted on 25 September 1964.
- 4.10 P64/H0395 - Permanent use of land for sawmilling business including sheds and offices with hardstanding for approximately 5 vehicles. Planning Permission on 25 June 1964.
- 4.11 P63/H0282 - Retention of corrugated iron shed and continued use as a sawmill. Planning Permission on 25 June 1963.
- 4.12 P60/H0301 - Retention of sawmill shed and continued use of land as sawmilling business. Planning Permission granted on 21 April 1960.
- 4.13 P57/H0273 - Erection of sawmill shed. Planning Permission granted on 15 May 1957
- 4.14 P56/H0596 – Use of land for wood sawing business, storage of logs. Planning Permission granted on 20 December 1956.

5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:
 - G1 – General Policies for Development
 - G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development

- G5 – Development Outside Settlements
- T8 – Development Proposals
- EN1 – Landscape Character
- E1 – Provision for Employment Development

5.2 Policies of the Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP):

- G1 – General Restraint and Sustainable Development
- G2 – Protection and Enhancement of the Environment
- G3 – Locational Strategy
- G4 – Development in the Countryside and on the Edge of Settlements
- G6 – Promoting Good Design
- C1 – Landscape Character
- C2 – Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- C9 – Landscape Features
- EP1 – Prevention of Polluting Emissions
- EP2 – Noise and Vibrations
- EP8 – Contaminated Land
- D1 – Good Design and Local Distinctiveness
- E3 – The Rural Areas
- E4 & E5 – General Employment Policies
- T1 & T2 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

5.3 Government Guidance:

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPG4 – Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
- PPS23 – Planning and Pollution Control
- PPG24 – Planning and Noise

5.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide December 2000 (SODG)

6.0 **PLANNING ISSUES**

6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. The impact on the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area
3. The impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers
4. Other material considerations

The Principle of the Development

6.2 Policy E3 of the SOLP, which relates to development in rural areas, seeks to ensure that new employment generating development such as development relating to business and industry is located within the built up area of existing villages. However, although the site is outside of any built up area, the industrial use of the site is firmly established by the use of the site as a sawmill since the 1950s. Although this original sawmill use has now effectively ceased, the land is currently largely being used for the processing of waste timber, which, like the sawmill use, is considered to fall within Class B2 of the Use Classes Order, which relates to general industry. Thus the existing use of the land does not represent a change of use of the land from the original sawmill use. It is apparent that the permanent use of the site for the purposes of a sawmill was granted planning permission under application number P64/H0395 in June 1964. No conditions were imposed on this planning permission to limit the use of the land to a sawmill only. In light of this, planning permission is not required for a change of use of

the sawmill to an alternative general industrial use falling within Class B2.

- 6.3 The existing use of the land involves heavy machinery and does generate a substantial amount of noise and dust. Many of the objections to this application have referred to the negative impact of the existing use on the amenity of nearby residential properties. There is no doubt that the existing use does have a negative impact on local residents, however, as the current use has not resulted in a change of use of the land, the use can continue without a further requirement for planning permission. Hence there are limited opportunities for controlling the current use of the land under planning legislation.
- 6.4 The existing building is currently largely vacant due to its derelict state. However, the building could be repaired and possibly be extended under 'permitted development' rights. The proposed building would be the same depth, length and height as the existing building with the additional area of floor area/volume being created by 'squaring off' the north east and south east elevations.
- 6.5 There is no doubt that the buildings to be replaced by the proposed building are in a poor state of repair. These structures are derelict and their restoration would require a substantial capital investment. Given the poor state of the buildings it is not surprising that the applicant is seeking to replace them with a purpose built modern industrial building. The applicant is also seeking to take this opportunity to slightly increase the size of the building in comparison to the existing. Criterion (vi) of Policy E3 does allow for the reasonable extension of a firm on its present site provided that, inter alia, the extension is well related to the existing buildings on the site, the firm is not considered to be badly sited, and that the site is in a sustainable location in terms of its accessibility if the extension would generate significant new employment opportunities.
- 6.6 In relation to the above Criterion, the proposed building is well related to the existing buildings, being sited largely on the same footprint. The firm is considered to be badly sited given the impact of the use on neighbouring residential occupiers and having regard to the relatively isolated location of the site within the AONB. However, the general industrial (Class B2) use of the site is long established and the proposed development is only slightly larger than the existing building in terms of floor area and volume. Given these facts and that the existing building could be repaired without planning permission, Officers consider that it would be reasonable to object to the proposal on the grounds of the location of the site.

The Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Site and Surrounding Area

- 6.7 The application site forms part of a larger area of land within the AONB. The surrounding area is largely dominated by agricultural fields and woodland, and despite the use and development on the site and adjacent loose knit residential development, the site and its surroundings has a distinctly rural character and appearance.
- 6.8 This application follows two recent applications (P05/E1193 and P07/E0738) for the replacement of the same building. Both of these applications, due to the siting, height, design, scale, bulk and massing of the proposed buildings were refused due to the impact on the rural character and appearance of the surrounding area and the impact on the natural beauty and special landscape qualities of the AONB. Policy C2 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development conserves or enhances the natural beauty, special landscape qualities and distinctiveness of AONBs. This position is emphasised by guidance contained within PPS7.

- 6.9 The previously refused schemes related to replacement buildings substantially larger than the existing building in both height, length and overall floor area and volume. Therefore, in comparison to the size of the existing building, the previous schemes were considered unacceptable due to the increased visual impact of the development over the existing. The plans relating to the two previous applications listed above are **attached** as Appendix C.
- 6.10 Such an increased visual impact is not apparent in relation to this application as the dimensions and siting of the building are essentially the same as the existing. In addition the 84 rooflights proposed in relation to the previous schemes have been reduced to only 4, which would be located on the south eastern elevation of the building, which faces into the main body of the industrial site. The extended part of the building as a result of the ‘squaring off’ of the north east and south east elevations would also face into the main body of the site and, as such, would be screened from views from the adjacent open farmland to the north west.
- 6.11 The size and siting of the building would result in a neutral impact in terms of the bulk and massing of the building and its resultant visual impact within the landscape. In addition to this, this proposal would provide a purpose built modern development in place of the rather derelict and untidy building currently in existence. The proposal would also consolidate the double pitched roofs of the existing structure into a single pitched roof, which again would help to improve the appearance of the development.
- 6.12 There are two public footpaths close to and running parallel with the north western boundary of the site. The development would be highly visible in views from these paths, and the building would appear as an incongruous element in an otherwise wooded and agricultural landscape. However, the height, and length of the building would replicate the existing building and it would be sited in the same position relative to the north western boundary. In addition, unlike previous proposals, no rooflights with the attendant light pollution, would be sited on the north western elevation of the building. Given these facts, the proposal would result in additional harm to the character and appearance of the landscape when viewed from adjacent public vantage points.

The Impact on the Amenity of Neighbouring Occupiers

- 6.13 There are several residential properties in close proximity to the site, particularly to the north and west, including a pair of semi-detached dwellings located alongside the vehicular entrance into the site. The occupiers of these dwellings are subject to noise and general disturbance from the existing timber processing activities on the site. These activities are ongoing and are unconnected to this application apart from the intended use of the proposed building in connection with existing use of the wider site.
- 6.14 As already stated above, the site has historically been used as a sawmill, which in itself can generate a significant amount of noise and other disturbance such as through the movement of heavy goods vehicles. The sawmill use falls under a Class B2 use as does the current use of the site. Therefore, planning permission is not required for the existing use and no objections, in planning terms, can be made to the existing use. The proposed building would be used in connection with the lawful use of the land, and again, it would not be justifiable to object to the use of the building in this way.
- 6.15 The proposed building would provide undercover storage and maintenance space for materials, plant and general equipment associated with the lawful use of the land. This would have the potential benefit of reducing the visual impact of such storage in the open areas of the site and of reducing the noise of the activities that would otherwise

be carried out in the open. Therefore, the development could help to reduce the impact of the on-site activities on the amenity of the neighbouring residents. Due to the replacement building occupying the same position and having very similar dimensions to the existing building, it would at worst result in a neutral impact on the amenity of local residents and other users of adjoining land.

Other Material Considerations

- 6.16 The proposal does not alter the existing access and informal parking arrangements on the site. As the building is effectively replacing an existing building almost like for like in terms of size, and this building would be used in connection with the existing use of the land, it is not anticipated that the development would result in any significant additional traffic movements to and from the site.
- 6.17 There is a thin belt of vegetation between the north west elevation of the existing building and the boundary of the site with the adjacent open land. Some of this vegetation will inevitably be lost through the redevelopment of the site, however, provided that this is compensated for through new planting on the boundary, the loss of the vegetation will not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area or the natural beauty and special landscape qualities of the AONB.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The application proposal is broadly in accordance with the relevant development plan policies and national planning policy, as, subject to conditions, the proposal would not cause any significant harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, the landscape quality of the Chilterns AONB or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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

1. **Commencement – 3 years**
2. **Samples of materials to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing**
3. **Tree protection details to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing**
4. **Landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing**
5. **Permitted development rights excluded for extensions**
6. **No windows in the north west elevation**
7. **Use of the building only in conjunction with the use of the land as outlined in blue/no separate use**
8. **Contaminated land assessment and remediation**
9. **Control over noise emissions from the development**
10. **No external lighting unless agreed previously**

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