

APPLICATION NO.	P17/S4441/O
APPLICATION TYPE	OUTLINE
REGISTERED	18.12.2017
PARISH	GREAT HASELEY
WARD MEMBER	Caroline Newton
	ADJOINING WARD MEMBERS
	Nigel Champken-Woods
	Jeannette Matelot
	David Dodds
APPLICANT	Mr M Sutton
SITE	Land north of Rycote Lane near Thame, OX9 2BY
PROPOSAL	The erection of up to 180,000 square feet (up to 16,722 square metres) of B2/B8 with ancillary B1(a) and B1(c) together with parking, drainage, landscaping (structural and incidental) and highway works
OFFICER	Amanda Rendell

1.0 INTRODUCTION

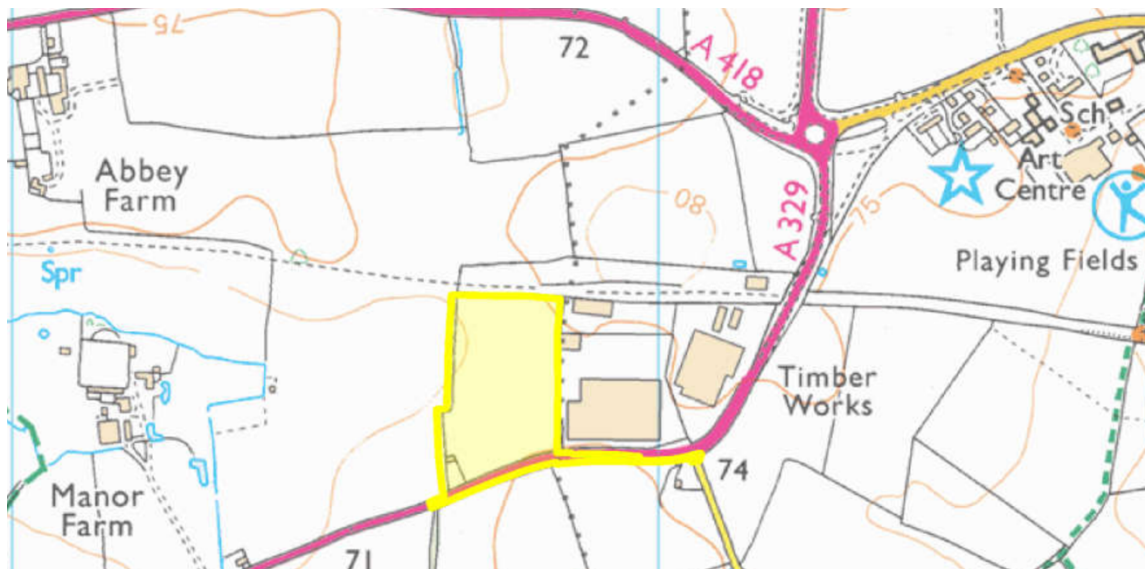
- 1.1 This application has been referred to Planning Committee as the views of Great Haseley Parish Council differ from the Officer's recommendation.
- 1.2 The development is proposed at The Old Brickworks, Rycote Lane, to the west of Thame. The site falls outside the Parish of Thame and falls within Great Haseley Parish Council. A location plan is **attached** as Appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Outline planning permission is sought (with all matters reserved except for access) for the development of up to 16,722m² (180,000 sq ft) of B2 (general industrial) / B8 (storage/distribution) with ancillary B1 (a) and B1(c) business/office uses, alongside parking, drainage, landscaping (structural and incidental) and associated highway works. The Illustrative site layout plan (Appendix 2) shows how this could be accommodated on the site with a range of commercial units varying from 276m² to 7896m² but the precise layout and configuration of the units may change depending on occupier needs.
- 2.2 Access is proposed via single point off Rycote Lane (Appendix 3), positioned broadly centrally across the site frontage and running through the central section of the site to serve the proposed commercial units.
- 2.3 A 10m wide ecological buffer is proposed along the full extent of the western boundary of the site, along with enhanced landscaping and drainage swales incorporated into the overall landscape design for the development.
- 2.4 The site is located on the northern side of Rycote Lane (Appendix 4) and is broadly rectangular. It is generally open, extending to an area of approximately

5.35ha with a low point in the central section of the site before rising to the north and south. A small dilapidated structure was located in the western section of the site in an area that historically accommodated a pair of bungalows.

- 2.5 The southern boundary of the site to Rycote Lane comprises a mixture of hedgerows and hedgerow trees with the exception of a field access located in the eastern corner of the site.
- 2.6 Directly to the east lies the Menlo Industrial Estate which comprises a range of commercial buildings and activities including ASM Auto Recycling which use a large proportion of the site for the open storage of end-of-life motor vehicles together with ancillary buildings. Other users are Thame Cars and David Einig Contractors. To the south, adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site lies a large warehouse building with ancillary offices which is occupied by Gregory Distribution.
- 2.7 The site lies within the Parish of Great Haseley and the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Area adjoins the site to the east. It is not within a Conservation Area and the nearest Grade II Listed Building at Manor Farm is situated approximately 500m to the west.



3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1 Oxfordshire County Council Single Response - No objections subject to conditions requiring the following details: 1) New vehicular access 2) shared cycleway/footway 3) turning area and parking 4) Cyclist shower/changing facilities 5) Construction Travel Management Plan (CTMP), 6) Travel Plans, 7) Sustainable Drainage Scheme. A legal agreement is also required to cover Travel Plan Monitoring and a Section 278 Agreement to cover the necessary highway works. An Informative is also recommended regarding the proposed highway works.

South Oxfordshire District of CPRE – Object to the proposal on the basis that it is contrary to policies CSR2 (Employment in Rural Areas), CSM1 (Transport). It is also contrary to the emerging local plan policies EMP1 (The amount and distribution of new B-class employment land), EMP11 (Development in the

countryside and rural areas) and EMP6 (New employment land in Thame) – which seeks to upgrade existing sites and expects that new employment sites will be delivered through a review of the Thame Neighbourhood Development Plan. Concerns regarding light pollution and state that the site should not be used for housing in the future. Conditions should be imposed to minimize light pollution and remove permitted development rights. Also, fully support the objections set out by Great Haseley Parish Council.

Forestry Officer - No objections.

Environmental Health - Air Quality – No objections.

Environmental Health - Contaminated Land - No objections

Drainage Engineer - No objections subject to conditions.

Countryside Officer - No objections subject to contributions being secured to secure contributions to deal with the net loss of biodiversity on site, in line with that secured on the adjacent site for the relocation of Thame Cattle Market.

Environmental Health - Environmental Protection Team – No objections subject to conditions.

Thame Town Council – Make the following comments:

- 1) Traffic-The proposal would result in increased traffic movement along the busy A329 the width of which reduces in places making it difficult for large lorries travelling in opposite directions to pass. Concern re: safety of traffic accessing and egressing the proposed site.
- 2)Employment Land- There was a need to provide employment land in the town to replace that lost through permitted development rights and to ensure existing companies had the opportunity to expand and remain in the town. If the application is approved a condition must be placed on the units that removes permitted development rights, to avoid a housing development by the back door. More employment space is needed now. Concern regarding the creep of employment sites along the A329 into the countryside.
- 3) Planning Policy- The proposal represents unplanned industrial development which should wait for consideration in the next Thame Neighbourhood Plan.
- 4) Landscaping-The buffer zone running along the edge of the site adjacent to the A329 must be widened to lessen the impact of the proposed development.
- 5) Parking- Provision for parking on site must be increased to avoid overspill onto the surrounding verges, which already occurs from the existing premises.
- 6)Sustainability-Question how easy will it be to walk or cycle to the site

The following concerns were also expressed on behalf of the Moreton Residents Association, together with a resident of Rycote Park:

- 1) The proposal represented unplanned major industrial development, with no reference in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan or the District Local Plan
- 2) The arguments for more employment land do not stack up – South Oxfordshire has the second lowest unemployment rate. The 3ha of employment land provided for in the Thame Neighbourhood Plan was immediately occupied

by two companies relocating from Long Crendon Industrial Estate implying that the vacated space was available to backfill. There are already industrial areas in Thame, Haddenham, Long Crendon and Milton Common.

- 3) The Accident and Traffic Survey submitted with the application only covered a small portion of the A329. The application would have an impact on the whole road not just immediately around the development site. The A329 is a dangerous road, with blind bends and the scene of 2-3 accidents per year. Despite the 50mph speed limit motorists drive too fast. The A329 requires major maintenance work on the surface and areas of subsidence in order to cope with the extra heavy lorries. The proposed usage on the site would increase the number of heavy lorries, vans and cars using the A329 and local roads. Added to this the proposed cattle market site and possible development at Harrington, congestion would only increase. A number of lorries already back up along the A329 when entering the established industrial area which includes ASM, Gregory's, Thame Cars and David Einig.
- 4) The application site appears overcrowded with little buffer provided between the first buildings and the road. There is insufficient parking, people already used the grass verges opposite the existing industrial site to park.
- 5) There are better pre-existing industrial areas in the town that could be developed.
- 6) Careful consideration is given to the lighting of the development so as not to add to the already considerable light pollution caused by the existing industrial area.

Great Haseley Parish Council – Object for the following reasons:

1. This site is not included in the Development Plan as an employment site and there has not been a demonstrated need. There are empty commercial units all around Thame including Thame itself, Long Crendon, Haddenham and North Weston. Thame and the rest of South Oxfordshire has effectively zero unemployment and so the Parish Council cannot see why more employment land is required.
2. Unsustainable. Lack of public transport options for workforce. While the proposal includes for extending into the site the path that currently stops at the turning to Moreton, this path is not suitable for bicycles and pedestrians as it is too narrow.
3. Foul Drainage-Concerns regarding impact of development on water course between the site and the River Thame and its ability to accept the run-off from the site even allowing for the attenuation effect of the swales. The Parish Council has seen evidence that shows that it is struggling to cope with the current demand and that there is frequently localised floodings, after even modest rain fall. If the water course has to deal with treated foul drainage the problem gets substantially worse.
4. Lack of parking- Insufficient parking available on the site and the Parish Council strongly suspects that the result will be parking on verges as is already occurring opposite the nearby ASM site and down Morton Lane.
5. Access- Major concerns with the junction of the access road with the A329.

If permission were to be granted for this application, the Parish Council asks that conditions be included to prevent the site subsequently being used for

housing and that the on-going maintenance of water courses all the way to the River Thames is made the responsibility of the owner of the site.

3.2 Thirty one letters of objection have been received from local residents raising the following concerns and issues:

- Height and massing of unit at the rear
- Lack of screening generally
- Drainage concerns
- Light and noise pollution
- Increased traffic and HGV's
- Highway safety
- Need? Other sites/units available
- Thame has low employment rate
- Highways data doesn't seem up to date
- Cumulative effect with existing industrial estate/Expansion from small-medium sized industrial estate into the countryside
- Units at front of site will look unsightly
- Impact on Moreton Village from noise and visual impact
- This development would set a precedent for further development in this location creeping into the countryside
- Loss of green space
- PD rights must be withdrawn to avoid site being used for residential

3.3 Four letters of support have also been received from the following: Thame Business Forum, Pentangle Technology Ltd, Unicarriers and Good Fabrications raising the following comments:

- Support the proposed development as it will help to provide some momentum towards addressing the current acute shortage of employment provision in the area.
- Wholeheartedly support this planning application. Something has to be done to replace the units that are being either destroyed for residential use or those that have been converted under permitted development. Thame is growing and so are its employers both in number and in size. Currently we have no visibility of any future plans to alleviate this issue so development is important to supporting the growth of Thame and helping to maintain it's currently very vibrant business community.
- Location is ideal and provides more opportunities on employment sites.
- As a local business based in Long Crendon, which has outgrown its existing premises and is unable to find suitable accommodation in the Thame area, Good Fabrications fully supports this planning application for new and much needed employment stock.
- Lack of alternative industrial sites in Thame. Businesses frustrated by inability to move to suitable larger premises. This site is ideal in terms of communications to the motorway network and town through the new cycle path.

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P02/N0175/TM](#) - Approved (02/05/2002)

Erection of one 15-metre monopole mast complete with six dual band dual polar antennas, one dish antenna, one radio equipment cabin.

[P98/N0623](#) - Refused (17/03/1999) - Appeal dismissed (28/01/2000)

Erection of 2 agricultural storage buildings. (As amended by Drg No.1333/3 Rev B and 1333/4 accompanying Agents letter dated 15 December 1998 and as amplified by Agricultural Appraisal received 3 December 1998 and as amended by Site Plan received 22 January 1999).

[P96/N0285](#) - Approved (05/07/1996)

Underground vehicle wash water/surface water/foul pumping main from United Transport's Depot off Rycote Lane to the local public sewer in Oxford Road.

[P86/N0703/O](#) - Refused (19/11/1986) - Appeal dismissed (15/09/1987)

One dwelling, access works.

[P85/N0646/O](#)- Industrial/Warehouse with ancillary office phased development of approximately 200,000 sq ft, access and drainage. A resolution to approve planning permission was made by the Planning Committee. It represented a departure to policy and was called in for decision by the SoS with the appointed Inspector also recommending that planning permission be granted for the development. However, despite this recommendation the SoS refused the application citing a conflict with strategic level policy at that time.

[P81/N0162/O](#) - Refused (16/12/1982)

Use of land for an industrial and warehouse estate, access.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) Policies

CS1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CSB1 - Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

CSEM1 - Supporting a successful economy

CSEM2 - The amount and distribution of employment

CSEM4 - Supporting economic development

CSEN1 - Landscape protection

CSG1 - Green infrastructure

CSM1 - Transport

CSM2 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

CSQ1 - Renewable energy

CSQ2 - Sustainable design and construction

CSQ3 - Design

CSQ4 - Design briefs for greenfield neighbourhoods and major development sites

CSR2 - Employment in rural areas

CSS1 - The Overall Strategy

CSTHA1 - The Strategy for Thame

CSEN3- Historic Environment

CS11- Infrastructure Provision

5.2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 (SOLP 2011) policies;

- C4 - Landscape setting of settlements
- C6 - Maintain & enhance biodiversity
- C7 - Adverse affect on protected site
- C8 - Adverse affect on protected species
- C9 - Loss of landscape features
- CON11 - Protection of archaeological remains
- CON12 - Archaeological field evaluation
- CON13 - Archaeological investigation recording & publication
- D1 - Principles of good design
- D10 - Waste Management
- D2 - Safe and secure parking for vehicles and cycles
- D6 - Community safety
- D7 - Access for all
- E5 - Business, industrial, warehousing and storage proposals
- E9 - Extensions to existing institutions
- EP1 - Adverse affect on people and environment
- EP2 - Adverse affect by noise or vibration
- EP3 - Adverse affect by external lighting
- EP4 - Impact on water resources
- EP6 - Sustainable drainage
- EP7 - Impact on ground water resources
- EP8 - Contaminated land
- G2 - Protect district from adverse development
- G3 - Development well served by facilities and transport
- G4 - Protection of Countryside

5.3 Neighbourhood Plan policies

The site lies within the Parish of Great Haseley who do not yet have a Neighbourhood Plan.

Thame Neighbourhood Plan was made in March 2013 and the area covers the adjacent industrial estate and abuts the application site on its eastern boundary. Therefore, the following policies are of relevance to this proposal:

- WS11- Allocate a minimum of 2ha of land for new employment
- WS12- Retain existing employment land in employment use
- WS13- Support improvements to existing employment areas.

5.4 Emerging South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033

The Council is preparing a new Local Plan, which sets out how development will be planned and delivered across South Oxfordshire to 2033. The overall strategy in draft policy STRAT1 includes supporting and enhancing the economic and social dependencies between towns and villages; supporting the role of Thame and allowing limited housing and employment development at

smaller villages. Due to the stage of preparation, the Emerging Plan can only be given limited weight.

5.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 (SODG 2016)

This guide sets out the standard that we expect developments to meet through a series of checklists that relate to key design principles

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Framework Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

5.6 **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

The proposal is beneath the thresholds set in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (as amended). The site area is under 5ha and is not within a 'sensitive area'. It is therefore not EIA development and a screening opinion has been produced to confirm this.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The key planning considerations in determining this application are:

- Principle of development
- Material Considerations-Economic support, Thame Cattle market.
- Highways and Sustainability
- Landscape impact and design
- Ecology and biodiversity
- Impact upon residential amenity
- Drainage
- Contaminated Land
- Financial contributions and legal agreements

6.2 **Principle of development.**

6.3 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.4 The National Planning Policy Framework and Development Plan policies steer development towards to the towns, larger villages and sustainable locations in the first instance with limited development being appropriate in the smaller villages. Outside of settlements, development will only be appropriate. The application site is currently an undeveloped area of agricultural land and has no specific policy designations.

6.5 In the case of South Oxfordshire, the Development Plan consists of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy (SOCS) which was adopted in December 2012, and the saved policies of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (SOLP) 2011. As referred to above Great Haseley Parish Council do not have a Neighbourhood Plan however, strategic policies of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan ('made' in July 2013), particularly those relating to employment provision are material to the proposed development.

Development which is not in accordance with an up to- date development plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.6 The National Planning Policy Framework and Development Plan policies steer development towards to the towns, larger villages and sustainable locations in the first instance with limited development being appropriate in the smaller villages. The site is currently an undeveloped area of open land that has no specific policy designations.

6.7 Policy CSS1 of the South Oxfordshire states that "*Outside the towns and villages, and other major developed sites, any change will need to relate to very specific needs such as those of the agricultural industry or enhancement of the environment*".

6.8 Policy CSR2 of the Core Strategy states that in relation to employment in rural areas: "*Planning permission will be granted for proposals which support the economy of the rural areas through:*

- *schemes for agricultural diversification and the re-use of rural buildings;*
- *small-scale infill schemes in villages including mixed housing and employment schemes;*
- *working at home;*
- *schemes which support agricultural production and the retention of functioning farm units; and*
- *schemes which support tourism based on the character of the area."*

6.9 Paragraph 84 of the revised NPPF clarifies that:

Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact upon local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously development land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

6.10 Whilst the site is located outside the built-up limits of Thame there are material planning considerations which weigh in favour of the proposal, subject to meeting other Development Plan policies which are considered below. It is noted that a previous application for a similar sized development was the subject of a resolution to grant planning permission by a previous planning

committee. Similarly, this was a departure from the local plan, and whilst it was supported by an Inspector, the Secretary of State at the time overruled this citing conflict with strategic level policy relevant at that time. This decision was over 30 years ago when the whole area was one of restraint. There have subsequently been changes in both national and local planning policy with, in particular, the introduction of Neighbourhood Plans.

6.11 **Material Considerations: Economic Support.**

6.12 Policy CSEM1 of the SOCS supports sustainable economic growth. Policy CSEM2 allocates about 2ha of further employment land at Thame and indicates that additional employment land will be allocated to replace any need identified from a review of existing commitments in the Site Allocations DPD. New employment sites should provide for a range of types and sizes of units including start-up and grow-on space. Policy CSEM4 states that “Planning permission will be granted for: (i) employment on identified allocated employment sites in accordance with the policy; (ii) the redevelopment of employment sites where this improves the quality and choice of business premises available; (iii) the reasonable extension of premises on existing sites; (iv) appropriate forms of working at home, where permission is needed; (v) new premises or the conversion of existing buildings on suitable sites within the built-up area of settlements; (vi) the re-use of rural buildings where the proposals accord with other policies in the development plan”.

6.13 An objective of the Thame Neighbourhood Plan (TNP) is for new employment to secure high quality jobs and be offices / business use (B1) or hi-tech office / industrial use (B2) or warehousing / distribution (B8). Policy WS11 allocates a minimum of 2 hectares of land for new employment and states that permission will be granted for 3 hectares of land for employment on Site B off Howland Road.

The TNP allocates 3 hectares additional employment land to make up for the loss of employment land at the former Memec site, which is allocated for residential. This allocation has since been taken up and is occupied by two companies. The Menlo Industrial Estate is not a protected employment site in the Local Plan and there is no allocation or proposed allocation in respect of it.

6.14 The proposed development does not accord with some relevant adopted policies and has therefore been advertised as a departure.

6.15 Objections have been made by the Parish Council and local residents regarding the specific need for additional commercial development in this location. Notwithstanding the allocations made in the TNP for employment use, there is a need for employment units in the area as confirmed in the letters of support received. Concern has been expressed that existing employment units are being lost through the redevelopment of sites and conversion from offices to residential use under permitted development.

6.16 Turning to the economic benefits of this application, advice was sought from the council’s Economic Development Team. The South Oxfordshire District

Council's business and innovation strategy 2016 to 2020 examined the needs of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) (0-250 employees) business sector in the district, and highlighted the lack of available, good quality and affordable workspaces in the district. Specifically, there is a lack of 'move on' space to accommodate rapidly growing locally based micro and small businesses. One of the key findings is that there is a lack of suitable premises for businesses, in the right location, of the right size and of the right price.

- 6.17 The strategy found that there is strong commercial demand for such premises in Thame and that the Council is aware of several growing businesses who are seeking new premises in the local area but are struggling to find suitable premises. It is understood that 98% of commercial premises in Thame area are already fully occupied. The Economic Development team have indicated that development such as that proposed here, is vital to ensure existing businesses can remain and grow in the district. Due to the location of Thame, there is also strong commercial demand from larger businesses, particularly in the distribution sector, due to the proximity to the M40. The development proposed offers an opportunity to support the growth of these businesses with 180,000 sq ft, mixture of B2 and B8 commercial units, along with ancillary B1.
- 6.18 The proposal also allows for flexibility to support growing businesses with 13 units offering varying size premises. Typically, businesses in South Oxfordshire employ between 2 and 9 employees, with 99.8% of all business in South Oxfordshire falling into the SME category. This is important to ensure existing businesses can remain in the district and do not need to move to premises out with the district. The proposed development has the opportunity to bring significant investment in the local economy. In the short term there would be opportunities associated with the construction of the development and in the longer term the potential for additional and sustained job creation with the associated flow of spend in the local economy.
- 6.19 The Thame Business Forum also comment on the current situation in Thame and identify that, due to its location and proximity to the M40, the town needs more employment space. The Economic Development Team are aware of the struggles of Thame-based businesses to find move-on space in the town and/or surrounding areas, as well as the issues for businesses wanting to move to the area.
- 6.20 The forthcoming Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy outlines the plan to increase productivity of Oxfordshire by supporting the creation of new businesses and jobs that will allow residents to live and work in the same area. The proposed commercial development is the first step to providing the opportunity for Thame and surrounding residents to live and work in the area and not have to commute out of the district, which is the concern of the Town Council.
- 6.21 Whilst comments are made regarding other sites in Long Crendon and Haddenham, these employment sites are not big enough for business users to expand their premises.

6.22 **Material Considerations: Thame Cattle Market.**

6.23 Members will recall that an application for Thame Cattle Market (on the adjacent field to the west) was presented to Planning Committee on 19 December 2019 where it was resolved to grant planning permission subject to completion of a Section 106 agreement to cover highway works, travel planning monitoring and public art.

6.24 In determining this application it was recognised that the site was located outside Thame but there were material planning considerations which weighed in favour of the proposal. It was also argued that the proposal continued a long established and important agricultural and business function for the District and serving areas further afield, meeting a specific agricultural need which could be lost from the District if the market could not be relocated. The revised NPPF recognises that there may be instances where development proposals in rural areas may need to be located outside settlements in order to meet specific business and community needs. There were also strong economic reasons to support the relocation of the livestock market.

6.25 The proposal would be sited between the relocated Thame Cattle Market and an existing industrial area. It is considered that for the reasons above, there is a clearly a need for additional employment premises of a suitable size in the vicinity and that given the proximity to the M40 and the location next to existing businesses and the proposed cattle market there appropriate circumstances to support the proposed development.

6.26 **Highways and sustainability.**

6.27 Whilst objections have been raised from local residents on highways grounds. The County Council as Highways Authority (HA) have not raised any objections subject to planning conditions. The application was accompanied by a Transport Statement (TS) report and as a result of comments raised by the HA a revised transport submission was prepared and submitted in support of the development which has been found acceptable.

6.28 **Access Arrangements.**

6.29 The proposed access arrangements consist of a ghost right turn lane with lane widths of 3m, a ghost island lane width of 3.5m and a 15m radii bell mouth. Such an access arrangement has been designed with reference to Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), Technical Document 42/95. The revised transport submission confirms that a speed survey has been undertaken along Rycote Lane 9A329) of eastbound and westbound vehicle movements. The results of this survey confirm that the required Design Manual for Road and Bridges (DMRB) sightlines for a 50mph speed restriction area are appropriate for this development proposal.

6.30 Measurements have been undertaken on site in accordance with the design standards within DMRB at the location of the proposed new vehicular access of the site. Due to the existing 50mph speed restriction in place, DMRB sightlines

of 2.4m x 160m (as measured to the nearside of the kerb line) have been assessed. From observations on site, the sightline to the west (looking towards Little Milton) exceeds this design requirement. To the east (looking towards Moreton and Thame) it is unclear if the required sightline is achieved due to the gradient and alignment of Rycote Lane (A329). This design issue has been recognised and BCAL has assessed the vertical and horizontal alignment of Rycote Lane (A329). To overcome this issue, indicative drawing 5583-31 has been prepared demonstrating how providing an overlay of Rycote Lane (A329), at the position of the proposed access, will improve the vertical alignment of the road and enable the new access to achieve the required DMRB sightlines. This is considered acceptable and will be subject to detailed drawing being submitted to OCC for assessment as part of a S278 legal agreement.

- 6.31 The revised swept path analysis drawings (ref 5583/102 and 103) have been assessed and are considered acceptable, as are the existing shared footway and cycleway. BCAL drawing 5583-35 Rev D has been revised to incorporate a larger refuge island depth of 2.5m. This will ensure both pedestrians and cyclists have a safe and suitable crossing facility along Rycote Lane (A329).
- 6.32 A Road Safety Audit (RSA) 1 has identified some design issues but all of these can be addressed by appropriate / additional infrastructure and secured as part of a S278 legal agreement.
- 6.33 The existing pedestrian/cycle network which extends up to the Moreton junction on the south-east side of Rycote Lane will be extended eastwards with a new footway/cycle way on the southern side of Rycote Lane before crossing to the northern side at a point consistent with the eastern boundary and then along to the site access.

6.34 Traffic Generation & Impact

Having assessed the Traffic Assessment the HA are of the opinion that the increase in traffic associated with this application would be acceptable and would not have a significant impact on local junctions in the vicinity of the site.

6.35 Parking provision.

Parking provision will be addressed in any future reserved matters application, but the size of the site would allow for appropriate on-site parking with turning facilities. Secure and sheltered cycle parking is to be provided for each commercial unit, with appropriate changing and shower facilities. The level of cycle parking to be provided will be dependent on the floor area shown as part of a future reserved planning application.

6.36 Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

Due to the nature of Rycote Lane (A329), it is considered appropriate for a CTMP to be secured as part of a Construction Method Statement planning condition. This would cover the routing of construction traffic and delivery vehicles and details of times for construction traffic and delivery vehicles.

6.37 Sustainability.

Pedestrian and cycle access to the site can be taken via a shared cycleway / footway on the south side of Rycote Lane (A329) from approximately 100m south of the A418 roundabout to the Moreton turn; this route provides a link onto Oxford Road into Thame. While, such a route exists there are currently no connections to the development site; raising the issue of sustainability. To address this issue and as part of the highway works, the existing shared cycleway / footway is to be extended (approximately by 500m) with a crossing facility to provide a link to the site. This improvement is welcomed but the distance of the site from local facilities and services is recognised.

6.38 There are no bus services operating within the immediate vicinity of the local area, with the nearest bus stop located on the Oxford Road near Lord Williams Upper School, being approximately a 1 kilometre walk away from the development site. The existing footway from this bus stop terminates at the Moreton village junction, which is approximately 500m short of the development site. With or without this connecting footway link (with crossing facility) it is considered unlikely that staff employed at this site will frequently use this bus stop. It is therefore considered appropriate for this site to provide a shuttle bus service for staff to encourage sustainable transport patterns as part of a Travel Plan for the site.

6.39 Landscape Impact and Design.

6.40 Policy CSEN1 of the SOCS states that:

“The districts distinct landscape character and key features will be protected against inappropriate development and where possible enhanced.

(i) Where development is acceptable in principle, measures will be sought to integrate it into the landscape character of the area.”

6.41 Policy G2 of the SOLP states that:

“The districts countryside, settlements and environmental resources will be protected from adverse developments”.

6.42 Policy G4 states that:

“The need to protect the countryside for its own sake is an important consideration when assessing proposals for development.”

6.43 Policy C9 seeks to protect important landscape features and a feature of the site is its soft landscaped frontage. There is open countryside to the north, south and west. In parts it is slightly degraded and not of high scenic quality. There are no formal landscape designations such as AONB or Green Belt.

6.44 Whilst the application seeks outline planning permission, with means of access only for consideration, it is accompanied by a Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment (LCVIA) which complies with guidance and prevailing good practice. The LCVIA concludes that the value of the existing landscape is medium-medium/low (varying with distance from the site) with a capacity to absorb change. The most significant visual changes are likely to be evident

from Rycote Lane where a section of hedgerow and associated trees would be removed in order to accommodate the access road, thereby opening up views into the site.

- 6.45 The exact dimensions of the buildings will only be confirmed at reserved matters/full application stage, although the illustrative layout plan estimates that the largest structure (unit 1 to the rear of the site) would have a maximum ridge height of 13.7m with the smaller units ranging between 7- 8.5 m high. This would be comparable to nearby structures on the Menlo Industrial Estate although the application site is on slightly lower land.
- 6.46 The units to the eastern and northern boundaries are indicated to leave buffers of approximately 5 m and 10 m respectively. A number of landscaping improvements are proposed including buffers along the western and northern boundaries, restored and reinforced hedgerow and trees along the road frontage, a new hedgerow along the eastern boundary, and landscaped drainage swale running broadly across the centre of the site and areas of ground cover, mown grass and specimen trees. Your officers share the concerns raised by the Forestry Officer regarding space for tree planting and landscaping opportunities within the site. Given the outline nature of this application the plans are purely illustrative at this stage, and the issues of scale and density would need to sensitively be addressed at the reserved matters stage.
- 6.47 Concerns have been raised about the reliance on proposed landscape mitigation to screen the development and the green field condition of the site being harmed by the urbanising influence of the development. However, with the proposed Cattle Market to the west, the wider landscape impact of the proposal would be reduced. Inevitably the development of both sites will bring a change to the current rural character and open appearance of the area. However, the adjacent industrial estate has already had an urbanising impact and with suitable landscape mitigation planting it is considered the proposals would have a moderate effect on the local landscape.

6.48 **Impact on Trees.**

- 6.49 There are no protected trees on site. Most the vegetation fronting the site adjacent to the road is an overgrown hedge which also includes a small number of sycamore trees. Some concerns are expressed regarding the space available within the site for tree planting and a site layout that allows a greater space at the front of the site and centrally along the main access route would provide space for a more substantial tree planting scheme.

The suggested planting along the western boundary would in time provide a significant vegetative buffer. Given the site's location a comprehensive planting scheme would be essential to help soften the development's appearance over time.

6.50 **Ecology and Biodiversity.**

6.51 Policy C6 of the SOLP indicates that in considering proposals for development, the maintenance and enhancement of the biodiversity resource of the District will be sought and net losses of biodiversity will be avoided. Paragraph 170 of the revised NPPF and Policy CSB1 of the SOCS call for planning proposals to minimise impacts on biodiversity and seek to achieve a net gain where possible.

6.52 The existing habitats on site are dominated by species poor semi improved grassland which is periodically managed to remove scrub. Reptile surveys have been conducted on site but no populations were discovered.

6.53 The southern boundary hedgerow is species poor and will be replaced as part of the landscaping proposals for the site. There is a line of scrub along the northern boundary which falls mainly outside of the site boundary which would remain unaffected by the proposals.

6.54 There are known populations of great crested newts (GCN) near to the application site to the south, associated with The Oxfordshire Golf Course, and the terrestrial habitats on site are suitable to support GCN. The applicant has elected to use the new GCN district licencing scheme and has submitted a Nature Space report to address this matter. The GCN district licencing scheme involves the developer funding the creation of high quality newt habitat within the district.

6.55 The biodiversity impacts of the proposals have been assessed using a Biodiversity Impact Calculator and they indicate that the scheme would result in a net loss of 3.49 biodiversity units. To compensate for this net loss, and secure compliance with local and national policies, a biodiversity offsetting payment of £27,920 will be required. This money will be used to create habitats within the district of an equal or greater value of wildlife. This payment to an offsetting provider can be secured via a planning condition.

6.56 The Countryside Officer has reviewed the submitted Nature Space report and Biodiversity Impact Calculator assessment. Subject to conditions implementing the GCN district licence and securing the offsetting payment, the Countryside Officer has no objections to the proposal on the basis of ecology.

6.57 **Impact upon residential amenity.**

6.58 Policy EP1-EP8 of the SOLP are concerned with the management of environmental factors and the safeguarding of the amenity of nearby occupants. Specific considerations include impact as a result of the development, or the construction process, which give rise to: noise, air quality, light spill, dust. Odour or risk of contamination or require careful management of surface/foul water.

6.59 The nearest residential property is Whitehouse to the east of the site on the corner of Rycote Lane and Moreton Road. Concerns have been expressed by

a number of parties regarding noise and light pollution. Given the distance from nearby residential properties and its proximity to an established industrial estate, it is unlikely that there will be any significant adverse impacts arising.

- 6.60 The application is accompanied by a noise statement which identifies that potential noise sources from the proposals could include noise from vehicles using the highway, production machinery and activity etc. The conclusions are that given the location of the proposed development adjacent to an existing industrial estate, significantly remote from dwellings or similar noise sensitive premises, no significant adverse noise effects at sensitive premises should arise from typical activities associated with industrial units at the application site.

As confirmed by the Highways Authority and discussed earlier the anticipated increase in traffic would not have an adverse impact on the highway network.

- 6.61 In accordance with the provisions of policies EP1 and EP3 of the SOLP, conditions can be imposed to control lighting details and hours of operation.

It is also recommended that permitted development rights are removed for the offices to protect employment.

- 6.62 **Contaminated Land/Environmental Protection.**

- 6.63 Policy EP8 of the SOLP states:
“Development on contaminated land will not be permitted unless the contamination is effectively treated by the developer to present any harm to human health and the wider environment”.

Based on land contamination investigation report accompanying this application, the Council’s Environmental Health Officers are satisfied that the application site is considered suitable for the intended development from a contaminated land perspective.

- 6.64 No objections are raised to the proposed development on the grounds of environmental protection. The nature of the local area bordering the site gives rise to potential issues in the future should this application be granted, specifically noise during demolition/construction and air quality due to construction site dust. In order to address concerns regarding impact on amenity conditions are recommended to be imposed to cover noise, light pollution, hours of operation, dust, and noise.

- 6.65 **Drainage and Flood Risk.**

- 6.66 Policies EP6 and EP7 provide for the protection of surface water and groundwater. The application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment, Drainage Strategy and Sustainable Drainage System. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore suitable for the proposed development.

- 6.67 The investigations identify that there has been some surface water flooding though the central section of the site and as a result, the illustrative layout shows a clear corridor which will be retained as an open landscaped area. The drainage strategy sets out a number of measures that reflect sustainable urban drainage principles including permeable paving with delayed discharge, swales, ditches and open watercourses, open ponds/basins for storage
- 6.68 As the application is only seeking outline planning permission it is recommended that conditions are imposed to require full details of the proposed foul drainage for the site. In respect of flood risk and surface water drainage, the applicant is advised to seek permission to connect to the surface water culvert crossing the site. It is recommended that a condition is imposed to require sustainable surface water drainage details.
- 6.69 **Archaeology and the Historic Environment.**
- 6.70 The site is located in an area of archaeological potential 300m to the west of a deserted medieval village surviving as low earthworks identified from aerial photographs. The site is also located 600m south west of the site of a multi-period archaeological site identified during development. The earliest part of the archaeological site consists of a large, triple ditched, causewayed enclosure and a possible henge. This is then overlain by an Iron Age to Roman settlement site consisting of enclosures, pits and roundhouses. A number of Saxon sunken-featured buildings were then constructed on the site.
- 6.71 A report for the archaeological evaluation has been submitted with this planning application. The evaluation has shown that archaeological remains do not survive on this site. There are therefore no archaeological constraints to this proposal.
- 6.72 No adverse impacts are anticipated on the nearby Listed Buildings.
- 6.73 **Infrastructure contributions/Community Infrastructure Levy**
- 6.74 It is considered that the following contributions/obligations accord with policy CS11 and CSR3 of the SOCS which requires new development to be supported by appropriate on and off-site infrastructure and services. The requirements accord with the relevant tests in paragraph 56 of the revised NPPF as they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, are directly related to the development, and are fair and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
- Public Art-On site delivery of public art scheme in accordance with policy D12 of the SOLP and the S106 Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document 2016 - to be secured via S106 agreement.
 - Contribution for biodiversity enhancements £27,920 - to be secured by planning condition.
 - Travel Plan Monitoring (£2,040) - to be secured by S106 agreement.

- S278 Agreement with OCC for 1) vehicular access onto Rycote Lane (A329) with ghost right turn lane and 2) Shared cycleway/footway and crossing works along Rycote Lane (A329).

6.75 Community Infrastructure Levy

The council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) in 2016. Based on the current Regulation 123 list, contributions towards education, health, sports/leisure, community and cultural facilities and general highways infrastructure would be collected through CIL. As this application is only outline in nature, the final floorspace is not yet known. Therefore an informative would be added to cover to explain the CIL liable floorspace will be calculated with the reserved matters application.

6.76 Environmental Impact Assessment.

6.77 The proposed development is classified as schedule 2 development (10. Infrastructure Projects (a) Industrial estate developments). The development exceeds the EIA threshold of having an area of development greater than 0.5ha. The local planning authority issued a screening opinion concluding that the development would not result in significant environmental impact or require an environmental impact assessment.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Your officers recommend that outline planning permission be granted.

7.2 As the development is located outside any settlement and in an open and undeveloped area the proposal does not accord with some adopted policies and that conflict is acknowledged. However, the NPPF recognises that there may be instances where development proposals in rural areas may need to be located outside settlements in order to meet specific business and community needs. This development would result in significant economic benefits and is supported by the Council's Economic Development Team and local business community.

7.3 Whilst not situated within the built-up area of Thame, it lies on the edge of the town and in close proximity to the M40 and adjacent to an existing industrial estate. It is compatible with existing and proposed uses in the immediate area being located between the existing Menlo Industrial Estate and proposed site for the Cattle Market.

7.4 Although concerns have been expressed regard highways safety, no objections have been raised by the Highways Authority subject to the highways improvements that can be secured by condition and a S278 Agreement. The cumulative impact of this development and the Cattle Market have been carefully assessed and the anticipated increase in traffic is not expected to have a detrimental impact on the local highway network.

7.5 The site has a degraded, appearance, is semi enclosed and absent of any landscape designation. Whilst in a countryside location it is seen in the context of the adjacent industrial estate.

7.6 As the application is only seeking outline planning permission (with access only) the site layout is only illustrative at this stage. However, conditions will be imposed to secure enhanced landscaping and screening, the detailed design of buildings, proposed lighting and drainage etc. Taking all this account officers recommend approval of the outline planning permission

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To authorise the head of planning to grant planning permission subject to:**

The completion of the relevant legal agreements to secure:

- **Highways works (s278)**
- **Public Art**
- **Travel Plan Monitoring (£2,040)**

Subject to the following conditions:

1. **Commencement outline planning permission with reserved matters.**
2. **Approved plans.**
3. **Levels.**
4. **Sample materials required.**
5. **Withdrawal of pd for B1 (a) use.**
6. **New vehicular access.**
7. **Refuse and recycling storage.**
8. **Off-site highway works.**
9. **Turning area.**
10. **Cycle parking facilities.**
11. **Cyclist shower/changing facilities.**
12. **Construction travel management plan.**
13. **Travel plan.**
14. **Landscape management plan.**
15. **Landscaping details.**
16. **Landscaping details.**
17. **New hedge details.**
18. **Biodiversity/wildlife protection.**
19. **Hours of operation during construction and demolition.**
20. **Dust mitigation measures.**
21. **Noise control/mitigation.**
22. **External lighting.**
23. **Surface water drainage works.**
24. **Foul water drainage works.**
25. **Sustainable drainage.**
26. **Wildlife Protection.**
27. **Wildlife Protection.**
28. **Wildlife Protection.**
29. **Wildlife Protection.**
30. **Surface water drainage.**

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