

Committee: Development Control

Date: 7 November 2007

Agenda Item No: 6

Title: Advanced report of issues relating to planning application UTT/1788/07/OP for outline application (including layout, scale and access) for mixed use redevelopment to comprise: Class B1 offices, Class B1/B2/B8 industrial, storage and distribution and trade park, retail warehouse park and associated landscaping, access and internal roads and cycle/footways, including the provision of access to existing and proposed adjoining uses. Demolition of all existing buildings. Site at Thaxted Road (existing Civic Amenity Site/Granite Building and adjoining land), Saffron Walden

Author: Karen Hollitt – Senior Planning Officer (01799) 510495

Summary

- 1 The attached report sets out the main issues officers consider to be relevant in relation to the above application, and officers seek the views of Members on whether there are any additional matters that require consideration prior to drafting a final Committee report containing a recommendation. **Members are reminded that they should not form or offer an opinion on the merits of the proposal at this stage.**

Background

- 2 Members will recall that the advanced reporting scheme was introduced to improve the authority's performance in determining major applications within the 13 week target set by Government. Under the scheme officers prepare reports outlining the main issues relating to specific major applications, where appropriate, prior to final recommendation. These provide Members with an opportunity to identify additional planning issues they consider require investigation prior to determining such applications. This particular application is classified as a major application under the Government's definitions of Major, Minor and Other applications because it involves a site in excess of 1ha and the erection of buildings having a total floor space of more than 1000 square metres. It is likely to be presented to the committee for determination on 19 December 2007. The initial report is attached to this report.

Recommendation

That the Committee identify any additional issues that Members would like to be addressed in the report to Committee when it comes before it for determination.

Background Papers: Planning application UTT/1788/07/OP

24 October 2007

ADVANCED REPORT OF ISSUES RELATING TO PLANNING APPLICATION UTT/1788/07/OP FOR OUTLINE APPLICATION (INCLUDING LAYOUT, SCALE AND ACCESS) FOR MIXED USE REDEVELOPMENT TO COMPRISE: CLASS B1 OFFICES, CLASS B1/B2/B8 INDUSTRIAL, STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION AND TRADE PARK, RETAIL WAREHOUSE PARK AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, ACCESS AND INTERNAL ROADS AND CYCLE/FOOTWAYS, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF ACCESS TO EXISTING AND PROPOSED ADJOINING USES. DEMOLITION OF ALL EXISTING BUILDINGS. SITE AT THAXTED ROAD (EXISTING CIVIC AMENITY SITE/GRANITE BUILDING AND ADJOINING LAND), SAFFRON WALDEN

APPLICATION NO: UTT/1788/07/OP

CLASSIFICATION: MAJOR application

NOTATION: Part within Development Limits/Part within Employment Land (Policies E1, SW5)/Part within Employment Land to be Safeguarded (Policies E2, SW6)

DESCRIPTION OF SITE: The site is situated on the southern approach to Saffron Walden on the eastern side of the B184. The site is predominantly rectangular in shape, incorporating the Civic Amenity Point (CAP), a former Highways Depot, an open field and the site occupied by Granite. An additional parcel of land to the south, adjoining the Acrokool building completes the frontage of the site. The frontage of the site is approximately 195m and the site has a depth of approximately 175m, narrowing to around 55m adjacent to the Acrokool building. The site runs from south east to north west and the ground levels vary in the region of several metres, falling away towards the northwest. The ground levels also vary from south west to north east with the highway (B184) being around 1m higher than the access road into the Granite site and the civic amenity point. The land then rises at varying degrees into the varying elements of the application site. Within the application site the ground levels are reasonably level with small undulations at various points. However, there is a significant difference in land levels (possibly around 2m) between the Granite site and the area of land adjacent to the Acrokool building.

The application site constitutes four separate areas of land. The site adjacent to the Acrokool building is the highest element of the site. This is an open area of land with a compacted gravel surface and part of a hardstanding which appears to have been the slab of a building. There is a small portacabin located towards the rear of the site. The area to the north is the site occupied by Granite and this has a large grassed area to the front of the site. The remainder of the site is hard surfaced and there are two buildings on the site; the building occupied by Granite and an old warehouse building to the rear. Adjacent to the access road is the CAPoint. This is hard surfaced and has numerous skips and containers on the site and a small hut used by staff at the facility. To the north east of the CAP is an area formerly used as a Highways Depot. This area is covered in hard material, predominantly old broken up road surfacing material. To the north east of this, and adjacent to the Granite building, is an overgrown field.

Along the highway boundary of the CAP there is a fence together with vegetation, predominantly brambles, ivy and climbing weeds. The highway frontage to the Granite site has a high chain link fence and the adjoining site is open to the highway. The boundaries of the former Highways Depot are marked by a high chain link fence.

The boundaries of the field to the rear have a chain link fence which is obscured by vegetation. Along the northwestern boundary of the site is a public right of way.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL: The application seeks outline permission (including layout, scale and access) for a mixed use development of the site. Matters of appearance and landscaping (only) would be reserved for later consideration. The layout of the site incorporates access to the approved Museum Resource Centre and the new Civic Amenity & Recycling Centre facility and Highways Depot and Salt Store and a new office building which have previously been granted consent.

On the land adjacent to the Acrokool building and to the south west of the approved office building it is proposed to erect 1,128sqm of office space. The indicative drawings indicate that this would be provided within a 3 storey building, partially set into the ground adjacent to the access track. When viewed on the approach to Saffron Walden the building would have a height of 9.2m and when viewed from the Thaxted Road this would be 12.6m. The building would have a frontage of 18m and a depth of 26.2m. Lift provision is shown from the ground floor to first floor, but not to the lower ground floor. A car park providing 38 spaces, including 4 disabled spaces, is shown on the layout plan.

The main element of the proposals relates to the provision of 3058sqm of retail warehouse floorspace. It is envisaged it could be provided within 5 units with 1 unit of 1046sqm and the remaining 2012sqm being a unit which could be sub-divisible as required. This is proposed to be set behind a car park which would be located to the front of the site. The access road to the Museum Resource Centre would run along the rear of the units. Five units, totalling, 3275sqm, are proposed for B1/B2/B8 (Business/General Industrial/Warehouse and Distribution) trade use adjacent to the access road. This would constitute 1 unit of 930sqm, 2 units of 325sqm, 1 unit of 372sqm and a further unit of 743sqm with a 372sqm mezzanine floor. To the rear of the site it is proposed to construct 11 units for B1/B2 use (Business/General Industrial). This would consist of 7 units each of 102sqm floorspace with 28sqm of mezzanine floorspace; 1 unit of 117sqm with 28sqm of mezzanine and 3 units of 186sqm with 47sqm of mezzanine.

The indicative design of the retail units shows a flat roof building 8.8m in height with projecting front canopies under the eaves. The building would have a frontage of 111m broken into two elements. The divisible floorspace element would have a frontage of 68.8m and a span of 27.8m. The remaining 42.2m (envisaged to be the single retail unit) would be set back and this element would have a span of 23.4m. A total of 127 parking spaces, including 9 disabled spaces and 9 staff spaces, would be provided, together with 10 cycle parking spaces.

The proposed B1/B2/B8 trade units would consist of 3 blocks with rounded roofs. The Unit named B1 would have a frontage of 26.6m, a span of 36m and a maximum height of 10m. Units named B2-B4 would have a frontage of 35.8m, a span of 30m and a maximum height of 10m although this building will appear stepped due to the variation in ground levels. Unit B5 would have a frontage of 24m, a span of 32m and a maximum height of 9.2m.

The proposed B1/B2 units would consist of a block having a frontage of 103m, slightly offset so as to appear as two units. Variation in ground levels will give the

perception of 3 units due to variations in ridge heights. The buildings would have a span of 14m and a maximum height of 7.8m. The B1/B2 and B1/B2/B8 trade elements of the proposal would be served by 153 parking spaces.

APPLICANT'S CASE: The following documents have been submitted with the application:

Design and Access statement – An explanation of the process of formulating the proposal and of the proposal itself in line with the requirements of recent legislation.

Contamination Risk Assessment – a collection of documents relating to the assessment of contamination risk, including the results of a desk study and ground investigations, related to previous commercial uses on the site.

Flood Risk Assessment – Assessing the potential increase in flood risk from the proposals and the potential for using Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) and soakaways.

Planning Statement – An explanation of the proposals, including details of community involvement.

Retail Assessment

Transport Assessment Report and Travel Plan

RELEVANT HISTORY: Agricultural/horticultural nursery approved 1975. Erection of building for showroom, stores, warehouse, workshop and offices approved 1982, details approved 1983. Re-erection of Atcost building approved 1984. Storage and retail of calor gas approved 1981. Change of use from garden machinery centre to B2 General Industrial Use approved 1992. Change of use from garden machinery sales showroom, warehouse and workshop to publishers warehouse and distribution centre approved 1993. Certificate of Lawful Use for civic amenity and recycling site granted 1996. Outline application for industrial estate approved 1999. Erection of commercial buildings for B1, B2 and B8 use, provision of car parking and change of use of bungalow to B1 or D1 use approved 2003. Alterations and sub-division to create office and class B1, B2 and B8 industrial units approved for Granite building in 2003. Location of civic amenity and recycling centre, residential development, highways storage depot and associated roads refused 2003. Erection of 42 no. live/work units with offices, business support facilities, new vehicular and pedestrian access and roadways refused 2004. Outline application for live/work units, offices, business support facilities, civic amenity and recycling centre, road sweeping depot, other employment uses and road works refused 2004. Retrospective application for change of use from garden centre to car sales refused 2005. Location of civic amenity and recycling centre for waste disposal purposes, residential development and associated roads, footpaths and infrastructure, County Highways storage depot, District Council road sweeping facility refused 2003. New civic amenity and recycling centre, estate road infrastructure and associated junction to the B184 Thaxted Road approved by ECC subject to a S106 and S278 Agreement September 2007.

CONSULTATIONS: The following have been consulted, but at the time of writing the report no responses had been received:

Water Authority

Environment Agency

Essex County Council Highways

Natural England

Environmental Services

Drainage Engineer

24 October 2007

Policy Section

TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS: The Town Council have been notified of the application and have until 9 November to respond.

PUBLICITY: 3 properties have been notified and the application has been advertised in line with Government requirements for a Major application with site notices and a press advertisement.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS: The main issues identified by officers are:

1. Principle of development (Local Plan Policies S1, E1, E2, SW5, SW6 and S7)
2. Effect on the economic viability of Saffron Walden (PPS6 Planning for Town Centres)
3. Transport/traffic/parking/access issues (Local Plan Policies GEN1, GEN8, E3)
4. Scale, layout, design and sustainable construction issues (Local Plan Policy GEN2, ENV12, ENV15)
5. Contaminated land issues (Local Plan Policy ENV14)
6. Impact on biodiversity (Local Plan Policy GEN7, PPS9)