

UTT/13/0964/FUL (SAFFRON WALDEN)

(MAJOR - additional commercial floorspace exceeding 1000sqm)

PROPOSAL: Alterations to existing layout and creation of additional internal first floor accommodation to provide warehousing, offices and research facilities

LOCATION: Nos.1-6 Carlton Place, Shire Hill Industrial Estate, Saffron Walden.

APPLICANT: Contamac Ltd.

AGENT: N/A

GRID REFERENCE: TL 238 022

EXPIRY DATE: 31 July 2013

CASE OFFICER: C Theobald

1. NOTATION

1.1 Within Development Limits / Safeguarded Employment Land (SW6).

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 The application site comprises a large modern industrial building accommodating six individual industrial units with associated front apron parking area situated in a prominent position at the top end of Shire Hill Industrial Estate (building also known as Unit 1). The building has a rectangular footprint with shallow ridged roof and profiled sheeted sides and forms one of a pair of similar designed industrial/warehousing buildings separated by a central shared yard where the subject building stands on higher ground than the adjacent building positioned below.

2.2 The industrial building as constructed incorporates both a lower and upper ground floor in view of the difference in ground levels on each side of the building with a first floor over the upper floor level on its east elevation and a void/mezzanine floor over the lower floor level on its west elevation facing onto the central shared yard. It should be noted that the lower ground level comprising a further six individual units (Nos.7-12 Carlton Place) does not form part of the proposal site for the current application. Nearby premises are industrial/commercial in nature, including the vacant Pedley's site which lies opposite.

3. PROPOSAL

3.1 This application relates to the conversion of the existing "first floor" mezzanine/void area of the industrial building over the existing lower ground floor along its entire length to provide additional floorspace comprising light industrial, R & D, office and storage areas to accommodate a single commercial user which develops and distributes medical supplies to the ophthalmic industry where the existing upper ground level of the building (east side) and existing first floor over would be adapted in connection with the proposal. The proposal would involve a stated net additional gross internal floorspace of 2,530.30 sqm.

3.2 The proposal would involve a series of small window openings at new "first floor" level along the western upper façade of the building where this is currently devoid of window

openings and various minor window and door opening changes to the upper ground floor and first floor over on the other side. External cladding materials for the shown changes would match the existing building. An array of p.v. solar panels would be placed along the entirety of the roof of the building on both roof planes where it is stated that the applicant operates a carbon footprint reduction policy. It should be noted that the proposal does not involve any footprint extension to the existing industrial building.

4. APPLICANT'S CASE

4.1 A planning, design and access statement has been submitted with the application in support of the proposal: The following extract sets out the applicant's case:

- *"The applicant, Contamac Ltd, is a leading developer of specialist polymers and provider of materials used for medical applications to the ophthalmic industry. The business, which currently employs 52 people, is currently located on the Bearwalden Business Park, close to Audley End Railway Station. Saturation point, operations-wise, has been reached in its existing building and there is no opportunity to expand at the present location and the company wishes to keep the current workforce together. Unit 1 Shire Hill Industrial Estate has been identified as the only suitable building in the Saffron Walden area that could be utilized to meet the property requirements for the expansion, although it does not provide quite enough floorspace.*
- *The application building was erected approximately 5 years ago as a terrace of 6 No. business units with internal first floor office/storage areas. The applicant's use does not require high bay storage and the removal of the dividing walls, whilst some of the staircases and service areas and an extension of the first floor accommodation will provide the additional floorspace required. It is understood that there are no planning policy objections in principle to the proposed building alterations and a specialist engineer has been called in to assess the practicability of the proposal, which has subsequently been confirmed.*
- *There is no accommodation available in the Saffron Walden area to meet the applicant's requirements and Unit 1 is the only available building which can be adapted for the use. It is located on an established Industrial estate and, being a relatively recent development, has good site and building access. The additional floorspace can be provided by a fairly straightforward adaptation and merging of some of the existing first floor areas. In addition, staircases and associated lobbies can be reduced in number, whilst still meeting the Fire Officer's requirements".*

5. RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

5.1 Planning permission granted in 2007 for the demolition of existing and vacant industrial shed at 9 Shire Hill and erection in its place of 18 industrial units comprised within two new industrial buildings (Nos.1-12 and 13-18 Carlton Place) consisting of 12 individual units with B2 use (general industrial - Building Unit 1) and 6 individual units with B8 use (storage and distribution - Building Unit 2) (UTT/1249/07/FUL refers). Permission implemented.

5.2 In recommending approval for this redevelopment proposal, the planning case officer commented that;

"The Uttlesford Local Plan has designated Shire Hill for employment development. Many of the buildings in Shire Hill are showing their age and were originally built for a single occupier. Such large companies are now rare and the existing building will not sub-divide. Redevelopment will provide a range of small flexible units that will meet the

needs of many small to medium sized enterprises and this offers the prospect of considerable employment growth in the area, which is welcome. The proposed buildings are utilitarian "industrial shed" type buildings, typical of such estates. The considerable slope across the site has been a design challenge, but the response is to use this as an advantage to make the eastern building "double decker", with units on the low level accessed from the central yard and units on the upper level accessed from the top, or north-south, end of Shire Hill. This building will be quite large and sited on the corner of the junction where it will be visually prominent. However, there are other very large buildings within the estate, for example the Pedley Furniture building across the road, and so the structure is not considered to be out of place here".

6. POLICIES

6.1 National Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

6.2 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

ULP Policies E2 / SW6 – Safeguarding Employment Land

ULP Policy GEN2 – Design

ULP Policy GEN8 – Vehicle Parking Standards

7. TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

7.1 No objections.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 None.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

9.1 None. Notification period expired 22 May 2013. Advertisement expired 30 May 2013. Site notice expired 30 May 2013.

10. APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

A Principle of development (ULP Policies E2/SW6 – Safeguarding Employment Land);

B Design / Amenity impact (ULP Policy GEN2);

C Whether the proposal would have any adverse effect on existing parking arrangements (ULP Policy GEN8).

A Principle of development (ULP Policies E2/SW6 – Safeguarding Employment Land - Shire Hill)

10.1 The Proposals Map for the current local plan identifies Shire Hill Industrial Estate as safeguarded employment land where ULP Policy E2 states that key employment areas within the district will be safeguarded from redevelopment or change of uses to other land uses. The application proposal as submitted seeks planning permission for the creation of additional floorspace within an existing building for a large floorspace single occupier where it is stated that the existing business has outgrown its existing premises elsewhere in the district and where it needs to relocate in order to keep its current workplace together. The application site has been identified as being the only suitable

industrial building in the Saffron Walden area that would suit the company's property requirements subject to an increase in floorspace.

- 10.2 As the planning history above describes, the site's redevelopment for a mix of industrial and warehousing units across two buildings was intended to provide future flexibility of employment use given the then reported declining trend in single occupier industrial users on the estate, hence the provision of 18 individual business lets within the design and layout of the approved scheme (Nos.1-18 Carlton Place). The current proposal represents a reversal of this situation where it would keep all business operations of the applicant under the same roof on a single user site and where the applicant has stated that adaption of the existing industrial building for this single occupier use could be achieved by way of a fairly straight forward conversion process where its conversion back would not appear to be reversible at a later date if required. Furthermore, as previously stated, the proposed usage of the existing void area would not affect those smaller business units currently occupying the lower ground floor of the building (Nos.7-12 Carlton Place). The principle of the proposed use is therefore in line with the Council's local employment policy where an existing workforce would be retained through relocation.

B Design / Amenity impact (ULP Policy GEN2)

- 10.3 The proposed conversion/adaption would include the introduction of a series of windows at upper level along the west elevation of the building and changes to existing windows and doors along its east elevation as well as the introduction of solar panels. The external changes proposed would not significantly alter the building's design and appearance or affect adjoining amenity where these are considered acceptable under ULP GEN2 at this industrial estate location.

C Whether the proposal would have any adverse effect on existing parking arrangements (ULP Policy GEN8)

- 10.4 The proposed block plan for the application shows that a total of 43 No. parking spaces, including 6 No. disabled spaces would be available to employees of the applicant's business on the existing front enclosed apron situated on the higher eastern side of the building where 14 No. cycling spaces would also be provided. It is stated in the application that the proposal would result in 52 No. full-time employees at the site, but where it is further stated that *"staff parking requirements will be for a maximum of 35 No. cars where a car sharing policy is actively encouraged and is in operation. Some members of staff, who currently live in Saffron Walden, will be able to walk to work, but there is no indication of numbers at this stage. It is quite likely that the car sharing scheme, together with the new option of some staff being able to walk (or cycle) to work, will further reduce the parking requirement"*. It is further stated that the applicant's company operates a shift system and that there is a current need for an absolute maximum of 35 No. parking spaces where the applicant asserts that the provision of 43 spaces would therefore exceed the on-site parking need.
- 10.5 Car parking requirements for B1/B2/B8 uses are based on varying floorspace ratios between the uses. Given this is a hybrid use proposal for a single site user, it is difficult to calculate exact parking space requirements based upon proposed floorspace provision. However, adopted parking standards for proposed industrial/storage uses use maximum and not minimum standards and it is considered from the number of spaces which would be made available, employees' likely pattern of working/travelling to and from the site and the site's relatively sustainable town location that car parking arrangements for the proposal would be satisfactory. Existing car parking for Nos.7-12 Carlton Place and for the adjacent industrial unit would be unaffected by the proposal.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

- A The proposal would be acceptable in principle where the additional floorspace proposed would provide suitable accommodation for a single site user through company relocation where this development would accord with ULP Policy E2 and ULP Policy SW6 relating to the safeguarding of key district employment sites;
- B The external changes proposed to the building in connection with the proposal would be acceptable under ULP Policy GEN2;
- C Car parking arrangements would be satisfactory under ULP Policy GEN8.

RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The materials to be used in the external surfaces of the building conversion hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: In the interests of the appearance of the development in accordance with ULP Policy GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

3. The proposed car parking scheme for the development hereby approved as shown on Drwg. No. A1521-003 dated March 2013 shall be properly laid out on the site in accordance with that approved drawing and shall be made available for use by employees and visitors of the building known as Nos.1-6 Carlton Place (Unit 1) prior to first occupation of the building in association with this permission.

REASON: To ensure that adequate parking provision is made available for employees and visitors to the site and to reduce the incidence of on-road parking in the interests of highway safety in accordance with ULP Policies GEN1 and GEN8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).