

Item No. 8

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/14/00389/REG3
LOCATION	Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ
PROPOSAL	Extension to office car park for 146 car parking spaces.
PARISH	Campton/Chicksands
WARD	Shefford
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Birt & Brown
CASE OFFICER	Nikolas Smith
DATE REGISTERED	31 January 2014
EXPIRY DATE	28 March 2014
APPLICANT	Central Bedfordshire Council
AGENT	EC Harris LLP
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	This application is before the Committee because the Council is the applicant. At the time that the agenda for the meeting was finalised, it was not known whether any objections to the planning application would be received.
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Full Application - Grant

Site Location:

Priory House is a two-storey tall office building that is occupied by Central Bedfordshire Council. It is to the North of Ampthill Road, from which access to the site is taken off a roundabout. To the Northeast is the Chicksands Ministry of Defence base and to the Northwest and West is residential development. Access to that housing is taken along Monks Walk, which runs along the South of the application site.

Existing car parking to serve the building is located in the southern portion of the site. There are currently 288 car parking spaces and 40 cycle spaces at the site.

Existing surface water drainage is attenuated under the tarmac and is then discharged in to swales, which are now established with rushes. None of the swales link to surface water sewers.

The Application:

Planning permission is sought to extend the car park at the site northwards by 146 spaces. These would be located immediately to the West of the building and would include 21 short stay/visitor bays and two additional bays for disabled drivers/passengers. 13 cycle bays would be provided (which would accommodate up to 26 bicycles) together with a cycle rail (for which details have not yet been provided) along the western edge of the building.

The applicant has set out that employee numbers based at Priory House have increased and will reach a maximum of 696 by the end of March 2014. Up to 65%

(452) are expected to be at Priory House at any one time, because of the Council's flexible working policy. Visitors also use the car park because Priory House is a public building and when large meetings are planned, this can result in as many as 100 additional cars looking to use the car park.

The submitted plans show that the existing bike storage shelter at the front of the existing car park would be removed and replaced with car parking spaces, but this would fall outside of the application, site, which is limited to the new car parking spaces.

Relevant Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009)

- DM3 High Quality Development
- DM4 Development Within and Outside of Settlement Envelopes
- DM9 Providing a Range of Transport

Appendix F (Parking Strategy) of the Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan (2012)

Planning History:

MB/08/01888/FA District Council Regulation 3: Erection of centralised offices for Mid Bedfordshire District Council and ancillary facilities on part of the MOD site at Chicksands, together with access and egress off the A507, provision of associated car parking, landscaping and servicing.

Approved: 9th February 2004

Representations:

Campton and Chicksands Council Parish No response at the time of writing

Neighbours No response at the time of writing (site notices were displayed)

Consultee responses:

Internal Drainage Board No response at the time of writing

Environment Agency No response at the time of writing

Building Control No response at the time of writing

Public Protection My only concern would be any potential noise impact from

the pump used to pump water from the final section of the new drainage to the existing ditch in the southwest corner of the Priory House site. Bernie Fraser has confirmed the pump would be sited in a tank about 2m below the ground and would be submersed in water. It would operate on demand and be operated by a float. She said she had heard pumps in foul sewage tanks and the noise above ground is barely perceptible when standing next to the access lid. She said that those pumps have to macerate whereas one for water only would be a simple pump and would be even quieter. She claims that at the distance from houses she cannot see that anyone would hear it from their gardens and would not be disturbed in any way.

That being the case I do not have any further comments to make.

Public Protection
(Contaminated Land)

No response received at the time of writing

Trees and Landscape

No response received at the time of writing

Highways

No response received at the time of writing

Ecology

Having looked at the documents submitted in support of the application information on the future landscaping and impact on existing landscape does not appear to have been adequately addressed. Priory House lies within 200m of 2 County Wildlife Sites recognised for their wetland habitats. It is noted from drawing 2 that the existing swale is retained and the design and access statement refers to 'the majority of the landscaping and the effects of the new work are being designed to improve the existing landscaping and biodiversity within the site.' However such details of improvements do not seem apparent. The existing swale has established itself with a variety of wetland plants and it is likely that a number of animal species are present here.

The D & A notes that natural habitat and small trees are present on the site and yet no allowance for mitigating the loss of this habitat has been provided with the application. The trees are not yet fully established and hence could potentially be moved and incorporated within the expansion. The NPPF calls for a net gain to biodiversity through development and given that the applicant is CBC this is an ideal opportunity to offer an exemplary scheme.

Whilst there is no dispute over the need for the proposal,

methods to create the additional parking and associated habitat enhancement require clarification to ensure no detrimental impact on the ecology of the site.

Landscape Officer No response received at the time of writing

Determining Issues:

The considerations in the determination of this application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. Sustainable transport
3. The appearance of the site
4. The impact on neighbours
5. Drainage
6. Other material planning considerations

Considerations:

1. The principle of the development

The site is used for offices and an extended car park to serve the use of the building in that way would be acceptable in principle.

2. Sustainable transport

Whilst the applicant has justified the need for additional car parking spaces, Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to promoting sustainable travel opportunities and reducing reliance on the private motor car. These objectives apply to all new developments in Central Bedfordshire, including at the Council's own sites.

The applicant has submitted a Travel Plan, which sets out in detail, how the Council is approaching its sustainable travel objectives in general, and at Priory House. It sets out that the following policies and measures are already in place:

- 'Flexi-time' and home working policies: allow staff to travel to and from the office at times when congestion on the highways network might be less or to not commute to the office at all on some days.
- Car sharing: is encouraged and car parking bays are allocated for car sharers.
- Cycle purchase scheme and cycle to work scheme: encourage people to use travel methods alternative to the car.
- Corporate marketing: like Bike Week, Walk to Work Week and Liftshare Week help to promote sustainable travel.

In advance of submitted this planning application, the applicant carried out a survey of staff. 255 staff members who were either based or moving to Priory House completed the survey. The results demonstrated that car travel was the dominant mode of transport to and from work (92.2%). A survey of visitors to Priory House was also carried out.

The applicant proposes the following measures to promote the use of sustainable travel options to and from Priory House:

1. Appoint a Travel Plan Co-ordinator
2. Set up a Priory House Travel Plan Steering Group
3. Internally market sustainable travel options
4. Display travel notice boards
5. Induct new staff in sustainable transport best practice
6. Make use of the Council's website and intranet
7. Segregate visitor parking and parking for disabled drivers/passengers
8. Issue parking permits to staff
9. Introduce a parking code of conduct
10. Properly enforce car sharing bays and pool car bays
11. Remove short-stay bays
12. Increase the number of car sharing parking spaces
13. Create a car sharing database
14. Regularly communicate car sharing initiatives
15. Provide a guaranteed journey home to a car sharer in the event of an emergency
16. Provide pool cars
17. Look to increase frequency of bus services that come near to the site
18. Provide a discount for staff using public transport
19. Invest in existing bus stops on Priory Road
20. Provide enough safe cycle storage
21. Form a bicycle user group
22. Publish sustainable travel information to visitors to Priory House

It is the case that the location of Priory House does mean that travel by car is likely to remain the principle travel method to the site but the actions set out above would likely reduce the number of people travelling to the site by car on their own. These measures would ensure that despite the increased car parking provision, which has been justified, the site would continue to respond to the sustainable travel objectives of Central Bedfordshire Council and would be acceptable. A planning condition would control compliance with the Travel Plan.

A planning condition would require the provision of at least 40 bicycle parking spaces (the number that are currently provided) to ensure that the development would not result in less provision that is currently the case.

3. The appearance of the site

An extension to the car park would change the appearance of the site and would result in the loss of some green space and its replacement with hard standing. That visual impact would be mitigated both by the existing commercial character of the site, where additional hard standing would not appear out of context, and

the need for additional car parking that has been set out by the applicant and is explained above.

4. The impact on neighbours

The extension to the office car park would bring activity nearer to existing houses to the North and West and as a result, noise and disturbance caused by activity associated with the use of the car parking would increase for those neighbours. The increase would likely be modest, though, and it would be limited to hours when the office is in use, which is predominately during conventional working hours. The use of additional lighting columns would not likely result in an impact significantly greater for those neighbours than the current situation. The Council's Public Protection Officer is satisfied that the proposed drainage system would not cause harm to living conditions.

5. Drainage

The applicant has set out that porous materials will be used for the extended parking areas, which would allow water to penetrate to voids below. This attenuated water would discharge in to the existing swale at the site which would overflow to new drainage that would be installed. Water would then be pumped to the existing ditch in the South West corner of the site.

In addition, it is proposed to install a further cellular attention tank which would provide additional capacity for an existing swale and cellular soakaway which takes water from the roof of the building. The new attenuation tank would connect in to the pumped main and then in to the ditch.

The applicant has set out that the use of soakaways is not likely to be compatible with this site.

The Internal Drainage Board has been consulted for a view on these drainage proposals and at the time of writing no response has been received. Any response received will be reported in the Late Sheet.

6. Other material planning considerations

Landscape

Limited details have been provided in respect of new landscaping at the site, which would be required to help mitigate the visual impact of the development. A planning condition would require the submission of details).

Ecology

Limited details have been provided in respect of provision for biodiversity at the site, which would be required to comply with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, which seeks a net gain in biodiversity as a result of development. A planning condition would require the submission of details).

Recommendation:

That Planning Permission is granted subject to the following planning conditions:

- 1 The development shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with 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 development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the terms of the submitted and approved Travel Plan (prepared by WYG and dated December 2013), unless otherwise agreed beforehand in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the site continues to respond to the Council's sustainable travel objectives.

- 3 Within one month of commencement of the development, a scheme for landscaping, a timetable for its implementation and a programme for its maintenance shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be carried in accordance with the approved timetable and maintained in accordance with the approved programme.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the development is acceptable.

- 4 Within one month of the commencement of the development a scheme for provision of biodiversity improvements for the site and a timetable for its implementation shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To ensure that the site makes suitable provision for biodiversity.

- 5 Notwithstanding the submitted details, within one month of the commencement of development, a scheme for the provision of at least 40 cycle parking spaces within the site together with a timetable for its provision shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall have been implemented in accordance with the details and the timetable.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient cycle parking is provided at the site.

- 6 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers [001C, 002C, 003A, Design and Access Statement (January 2014), Priory House Travel Plan (December 2013)].

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012 - Article 31

The Council acted pro-actively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-

application stage which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012.

Summary of recommendation:

The principle of the development would be acceptable and no harm would be caused to the appearance of the site or to living conditions at neighbouring properties. Subject to compliance with planning conditions, drainage at the site would be properly handled and the Council's sustainability objectives would not be undermined. The development would be in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) and the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009).

DECISION

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