

## **Item No. 7**

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER</b>	<b>CB/14/00389/REG3</b>
<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ</b>
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	<b>Extension to office car park for 146 car parking spaces.</b>
<b>PARISH</b>	<b>Campton/Chicksands</b>
<b>WARD</b>	<b>Shefford</b>
<b>WARD COUNCILLORS</b>	<b>Cllrs Birt &amp; Brown</b>
<b>CASE OFFICER</b>	<b>Nikolas Smith</b>
<b>DATE REGISTERED</b>	<b>31 January 2014</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE</b>	<b>28 March 2014</b>
<b>APPLICANT</b>	<b>Central Bedfordshire Council</b>
<b>AGENT</b>	<b>EC Harris LLP</b>
<b>REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE RECOMMENDED DECISION</b>	<b>This application is before the Committee because the Council is the applicant and objections to the development have been received.</b>
	<b>Full Application - Granted</b>

### **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).

### **Background:**

A decision on this planning application was deferred by the March 2014 meeting of the Development Management Committee to allow more detail to be provided by the applicant on a number of points. These were cycle and motorcycle parking provision, comments from the Internal Drainage Board and landscape impact and ecology comments. These points are addressed in the remainder of this report.

### **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. The existing cycle/motorcycle parking shelter would be retained and five additional cycle hoops would be provided along the western edge of the building. A planning condition would control this provision.

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.

### **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: 9<sup>th</sup> February 2004

### **Representations:**

Campton and No response received  
Chicksands Parish  
Council

Neighbours Two responses have been received from neighbours to the site, which read as follows:

I have no objection overall to the development going

ahead, but would like you to consider the adverse impacts it will have on adjacent residential neighbours if certain controls are not put in place.

Vehicle access should be restricted to this area and the whole site. There are ongoing problems with boy racers congregating right through the night driving dangerously fast around the site with loud music and shouting. My bedroom backs onto the proposed development and I am often kept awake at night especially through the summer months.

The car park should be used as an overflow by the Council to minimise disruption and noise when residents may be trying to sleep - especially those working night shifts.

There is antisocial behaviour, vandalism and arson taking place on site with marauding youngsters congregating. I travel to work early and have personally seen and heard groups at 0500 in the morning during the school holidays. Restricting vehicle access, especially at close proximity, to the residents would help to reduce the problem.

Vandalism etc usually takes place at night. The CCTV should be upgraded to night vision to capture images, deter individuals and to assist with prosecutions of perpetrators.

The current bio diversity of the site should not be disrupted. The low lying wet areas are habitat to some interesting species, flora and fauna beneficial to the environment. An environmental impact assessment should be undertaken by a suitably qualified person with careful consideration and control measures put in place to eliminate risks.

I sincerely hope my views will be upheld and the appropriate actions taken to minimise environmental impact.

I would appreciate if you could keep me informed of progress and any opportunities for further consultation.

And

Being a resident that would back onto these new 146 car parking spaces, I feel I need to comment on the following  
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### **Restricted Access**

We have a BIG issue with "boy racers" at the week end

and I am for ever calling out the police, it is just a matter of time before there is a serious accident

I feel frightened of the fact that, these new spaces would be close to my back garden and would like to propose that they are used for "overflow" in such a way that they may be "blocked" off when not in use ( **eg a barrier** ). This would make access to the new spaces impossible for the boy racers.

### **CCTV**

This is a great thing if it is WORKING ~ we have a problem with cars at night parking up beside the recycle bins, one evening resulted in the bins & fences being set alight. When police asked for the CCTV footage, they were told the camera was not working ? I personally have had a push bike stolen & was told the same thing. ( A neighbour had a car vandalised same story )

Please can you make sure they are working & NOT pointed near the windows of the houses as all the MOD house have their bedrooms at the back

### **Traffic**

Volume of traffic is a serious worry, as a resident we only have one entry in & out and share this entry with the MOD & Priory House staff & visitors, along with school busses. How can we assure this access is not blocked up with many MORE visitors to the council building? This is always a BIG issue when you have meetings on, especially the one regarding the new traveller's sight where the photographs ended up at the local newspaper. Could you do a "park & ride" from Shefford seeing as car share does not work ? (the facilities manager is fed up with the residents and nothing seems to be done to cars that park dangerously & illegally).

### **Consultee responses:**

Internal Drainage Board      No objection subject to condition

Environment Agency          No objection

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) Soil investigations have already identified isolated areas of slightly elevated contaminants to the natural soils and this material should be dealt with appropriately, with re-use off site if possible as it is understood there will be significant arisings which cannot stay on-site.

Trees and Landscape No objection

Highways In a highway context there is no technical capacity or safety reason to oppose the development. The additional car parking is remote from the public highway and the roundabout junction onto the A507 leading to the overall site is appropriate for the level of traffic already associated with the current level of development and significant neighbouring developments. The proposed layout and construction details are satisfactory and given the remoteness of the site from the public highway there is no need to impose conditions relating to construction traffic routing, parking or wheel wash .

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

The frontage, approach to Priory House / Central Beds Council should be of the highest quality design; an exemplar of civic / urban design, presenting a strong sense of place, down to detail design, use of materials and landscaping, and setting the standard expected of other developments within the CBC authority. Unfortunately such design ambitions are not evident in the current proposals.

I realise the need for additional car parking but having studied the supporting documents and site it is disappointing that there is no over all concept plan particularly describing the proposals in relation to site as a whole and incorporating SUDs, landscape and planting features linked to landscape / ecological enhancement and habitat creation.

At present the views from Chicksands residential areas to Priory House are quite exposed in places, with limited or no planting to screen views, eg. JF Kennedy Drive, Orchard Drive, Eisenhower Place. The opportunity to screen views on to car parking via landscape and planting needs to be considered further along with enhancement of existing planting screens to the general site boundary.

A number of existing trees will be removed to accommodate the additional / new car parking areas - this loss needs to be offset on site; trees which provide shade to assist in urban heat island effects, trees which contribute to the management of rain water/ surface water run off, enhance biodiversity, screening and aesthetics. Meadow / wetland grasses would contribute to water attenuation, site character and biodiversity.

The D&A describes the use of block paving with grit between gaps on a stone base within the new car park areas; further information on materials, construction techniques and drainage performance are required including access crossing the existing swale.

It is of note the plans indicate additional lighting columns in the car park extension at 6ms high; details on lighting levels, control of light direction and timing controls are required especially regarding potential impact on adjoining

residents and biodiversity.

The amenity value of space in and around the site could also be reconsidered especially regarding the provision of outdoor communal areas with seating for staff.

The extension of the car parking area could be an exciting opportunity to include more subtle areas for water attenuation, eg wetland habitat areas, linked to bioswales, gravity fed. Whilst realising that budgets are highly restricted the depths and profiles of some or all of the existing swales could be reviewed and linked more effectively with additional SUDs features and wider wetland areas on site. Robert Bray Associates Ltd. (Sustainable Drainage Consultants and Landscape Architects) carried out a SUDs Audit at Priory House in September 2013 with the Audit Report recommending a number of measures to improve performance of existing on site SUDs along with social, biodiversity and landscape benefits but these recommendations do not appear to have been fed into the proposed car park design.

### **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:

- Appoint a Travel Plan Co-ordinator
- Set up a Priory House Travel Plan Steering Group
- Internally market sustainable travel options
- Display travel notice boards
- Induct new staff in sustainable transport best practice
- Make use of the Council's website and intranet
- Segregate visitor parking and parking for disabled drivers/passengers
- Issue parking permits to staff
- Introduce a parking code of conduct
- Properly enforce car sharing bays and pool car bays
- Remove short-stay bays
- Increase the number of car sharing parking spaces
- Create a car sharing database
- Regularly communicate car sharing initiatives
- Provide a guaranteed journey home to a car sharer in the event of an emergency
- Provide pool cars
- Look to increase frequency of bus services that come near to the site
- Provide a discount for staff using public transport
- Invest in existing bus stops on Priory Road
- Provide enough safe cycle storage
- Form a bicycle user group
- 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 ensure that existing cycle and motorcycle parking provision was retained and enhanced by way of five hoops adjacent to the building.

### 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.

Concerns have been raised over anti-social behaviour in the car park after hours and this is a corporate matter for the applicant to consider.

### 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 soak away 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 soak aways is not likely to be compatible with this site.

The Internal Drainage Board is satisfied with the details of storm water design provided and have recommended a planning condition controlling compliance with those details.

### 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 The existing covered cycle/motorcycle shelter at the site shall be retained. The five cycle hoops shown on drawing 3110 rev A shall be provided within two months of the commencement of development and shall be permanently retained thereafter.

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

- 6 The storm water design shall be constructed in accordance with the details shown on drawings 9157-02 T4, 9157-06 T6, 9157-07 T4 and 9157-08 T4.

Reason: To ensure that storm water provision at the site is acceptable.

- 7 The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in all respects in accordance with the access siting and layout illustrated on the approved plan and defined by this permission and, notwithstanding the provision of the Town and Country Planning General Permitted Development Order 1995, (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order) there shall be no variation without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the development of the site is completed insofar as its various parts are interrelated and dependent one upon another and to provide adequate and appropriate access arrangements at all times.

- 8 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers [001C, 003A, 3110 rev A Design and Access Statement (January 2014), Priory House Travel Plan (December 2013), 9157-02 T4, 9157-06 T6, 9157-07 T4 and 9157-08 T4].

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.

**DECISION**

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