

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
DM15 Biodiversity

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (2014)

Development Strategy

At the meeting of Full Council on 19 November 2015 it was resolved to withdraw the Development Strategy. Preparation of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan has begun. A substantial volume of evidence gathered over a number of years will help support this document. These technical papers are consistent with the spirit of the NPPF and therefore will remain on our website as material considerations which may inform further development management decisions.

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 February 2004

CB/14/00389/REG3 Extension to office car park for 146 car parking spaces

Approved: 04 April 2014

Representations:

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

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

- Rather than 77 new parking spaces for Priory House, this money would be better spent on improving public transport services along the A507 corridor to provide a viable transport option to Priory House, benefitting both Council employees AND the community.

- The existing 200 bus between Flitwick/Amphill and Biggleswade (stops near Priory House) is not regular enough or has long enough hours for anyone to use to commute to work. If this was improved, Priory House employees could access Priory House from Flitwick or Biggleswade stations, as well as from villages along the A507 corridor. This would open up employment opportunities at the Council to residents of Cent Beds who don't drive or have access to a car.
- Campton, Chicksands and Chicksands military base (behind Priory House) is particularly poorly served by public transport. A significant improvement in the 200 bus would provide these residents the ability to use public transport to commute and get better access to the Health Centre (2 miles away), the leisure centre at Flitwick, and if the 200 route was slightly extended, the new retail park in Biggleswade.
- I have gathered evidence about the adverse affect of the inadequate public transport on non-driving members of the military community at Chicksands, including isolation (particularly when personnel are deployed) and limitations on the opportunities for teenage children of serving personnel. I would be happy to provide this.
- If viable transport options to Priory House are not addressed, the parking requirement is only going to increase. Why not do something sustainable and that benefits all of Central Beds?
- Increased traffic in this area would not only be harmful to wildlife but also cause congestion at peak hour when school children are travelling to Shefford and Campton, as well as staff going to work on Chicksands Camp and residents leaving for work in the local area.
- This tiny road is already congested and trying to get onto to the A507 via the Chicksands roundabout at peak hour is already difficult without encouraging an additional 70+ vehicles to the site.
- A better option would be to make the site better serviced by public transport which would not only make it more accessible and convenient for council staff to use but would reduce pollution and congestion as well as improving services for local residents and those who need to access the council building but may not have access to their own vehicle.
- Although I am fully aware of the difficulty in parking here due to having a need to do so for work on

- previous occasions, I am also increasingly aware of the lack of regular & reliable public transport in the area, which could go some way to eradicate some of the parking issues should employees have access to other means.
- Improving the local public transport routes & timings would have a positive affect on people in the whole community creating further opportunities for employment for teens & adults, better access for educational purposes, have an incredible value to the mental health of local residents giving them much more freedom to venture out if not for work purposes but for errands, visit GP, collect prescriptions, access to the train stations and in the main, improve well being.
- I feel a utilitarian approach is necessary when considering such funds and whereas as parking at the council offices is an issue, when looking at the greater picture there is a much more beneficial area of focus
- I believe the funds for this project would be better utilised to improving the public transport services to Chicksands. This would not only benefit the employees of the council offices at priory house but also the families and civil servants of MOD Chicksands and residents of Chicksands estate who all struggle with poor and unreliable public transport to the area.

Consultee responses:

Internal Drainage Board No objection subject to condition

Environment Agency No objection

Pollution Control No objection

Ecology The Ecological Scoping Assessment find that 'On completion, the project has potential to result in a slight gain to the Site and local area's biodiversity if measures to incorporate planting to attract insects and bats to the Site and implemented.' However, the survey was undertaken in February which is outside of the appropriate botanical survey season hence it is inaccurate to make this statement. No acknowledgment is made to the site's current value for invertebrates due to all the wildflower planting which was already undertaken and the sensitive management ongoing in other areas, notably at the front of the Council offices.

The previous extension to the car park CB/14/0389 was mitigated through a landscaping scheme which

incorporated significant ecological enhancements together with a management plan under condition 4 of the permission. Much of these enhancements are now proposed to be lost as a result of the current proposal and it is not clear how this negative impact will be mitigated. The NPPF looks for development to deliver a net gain for biodiversity and in its current form the scheme falls far short of this with such a detrimental impact on wildflower grassland and is therefore contrary to National policy.

Trees Officer

The proposal will require the removal of a number of areas of trees and shrubs identified as either as scrub, ruderal or sapling trees in the supplied Landscape Impact statement, this is undoubtedly accurate but these features are providing established screening to parking areas from adjoining properties etc, as such it is a shame that they will be removed and replaced with parking and then require additional planting to establish and provide screening. However space for this additional parking is limited and as such the loss will be justified.

Proposed planting detail is a little lacking and simply mentions replacement planting as a like for like basis, no detail of sizes, densities or what species is intended for where.

I would suggest that the proposed planting to screen new parking spaces close to the A507 would be better provided as some form of native shelter belt along that frontage to provide screening of the increased parking and also the parking spaces that exist along the access road that are readily visible from the A507.

Highways

The travel plan is out of date and should be assessed, and if needed revised each year to alleviate discrepancies such as (Dec 2013 point 5.3.2) 'maximum capacity of desk space, maximum availability of 450 desks'; (Feb 2017) 'theoretical capacity of 685 which is an occupancy rate of 75%'.

The submitted information states it is not currently feasible to organise a travel survey, the following paragraph states, a travel survey will be carried out? The survey should be completed prior to any increase to ascertain and overcome any issues prior to their occurrence. A 'worse case scenario' of required parking provision could be calculated by including the additional staff that will possibly be using Priory House.

It would be beneficial if a basic survey could be completed each year to find if the sustainable transport measures are being effective and if the car parking provision is not over subscribed.

In principle the proposal is acceptable, however some further information is required;

- The current refuse storage area is 4 times the size of the proposed area. Where will the additional paladins, trailers and other paraphernalia be stored
- Tracking diagrams should be provided to show that the refuse vehicle can access the refuse storage area, and leave the site in forward gear. Currently the refuse vehicles reverse to the refuse storage area, which requires very little manoeuvring other than a straight path

Please also note that the smoking shelter does not appear to be shown on drawing no. 1002. Also the parking provision in this area is very tight and should have 6.0m in front of the bays. This area currently only works with vehicles parking overhanging the footpath adjacent to the council chamber, and vehicles on the grasscrete pulling right to the rear of the parking area.

Sustainable Drainage

We consider that planning permission could be granted to the proposed development and the final design and maintenance arrangements for the surface water system agreed at the detailed design stage, if the following recommendations and planning conditions are secured.

- Where the use of permeable surfacing is proposed, this should be designed in accordance with the 'CIRIA RP992 The SuDS Manual Update: Paper RP992/28: Design Assessment Checklists for Permeable/Porous Pavement'.
- The final detailed design including proposed standards of operation, construction, structural integrity and ongoing maintenance must be compliant with the 'Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems' (March 2015, Ref: PB14308), 'Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage Guidance' (Adopted April 2014, Updated May 2015), and recognised best practise including the Ciria SuDS Manual (2016, C753).
- We require detailed plans and drawings showing the proposed drainage system in its entirety, including location, pipe run reference numbers, dimensions, gradients and levels (in metres above

- Ordinance Datum). This shall include all elements of the system proposed, including source control, storage, flow control and discharge elements.
- The Council does not, and is not required to, adopt any SuDS feature. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the surface water drainage system, in its entirety, will be effectively maintained in the long-term. We therefore expect confirmation of the proposed arrangements for maintenance to be provided with the final detailed design, including the future maintenance and operational needs and the responsible bodies for undertaking maintenance (for all public and private drainage components).
- We will expect that any components that require replacement and/or maintenance will be designed to be accessible without undue impact on the drainage system and adjacent structures or infrastructure.

Condition 1: No development shall commence until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include provision of attenuation for the 1 in 100 year event (+40% allowance for climate change) and a restriction in run-off rates. Any revisions to the agreed strategy shall be fully justified and approved before the development is completed and shall be managed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the agreed management and maintenance plan. Details of how the system will be constructed including any phasing of the scheme, and how it will be managed and maintained after completion will also be included.

The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved final details before the development is completed, and shall be managed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the agreed management and maintenance plan.

Sustainable Transport

The proposal to add 77 parking spaces at the CBC offices at Priory House has been subject of recent discussion between facilities, assets and sustainable travel. The travel plan submitted in support of the last phase of car

parking expansion (14/00389) has been delivered in part, and as such an addendum to this report to support this application is acceptable.

This focuses on the areas that aim to deliver the most benefit in terms of trip reduction considering the location and options available to staff. The aim of a travel plan is not only to promote travel options but also to be used as a tool to manage future parking demand. This will be particularly important as it is stated in the addendum that ideally parking provision would need to be increased by 140-150 spaces to accommodate potential relocated staff, and this application is only for up to 77.

As discussed at the pre-application stage, recent survey data is lacking, this is further confirmed by the supporting figures, postcode mapping etc. which is a resubmission of the 2013 information.

With this in mind it will be imperative to capture the travel preferences of relocated staff prior to their arrival at Priory House so it is suggested that a survey is carried out prior to the intensification of the use of Priory House, to ascertain how many extra staff will be using Priory House as their main base and this commitment is updated in this supporting document.

Along side this, the ongoing implementation and monitoring of the actions within the travel plan and addendum will need to be secured via an appropriate condition, wording below:

‘This development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the terms and of the submitted and approved Travel Plan (prepared by WYG and dated December 2013) and the corresponding Travel Plan Addendum (prepared by CBC Assets and dated February 2017) unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: to ensure the site continues to respond to the Council's sustainable travel objectives and to manage current and future parking demand.'

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.

The applicant has explained that the building currently provides accommodation for 515FTE staff. Because of planned office closures in Bedford and Ampthill, a further 174FTE staff are likely to be based at priory House in the future. As a result, a further 77 car parking spaces are required.

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 planning application submitted for an increase in the number of parking spaces at the site in 2014 was accompanied by a comprehensive Travel Plan. This application has been supported by an Addendum to that Plan, which sets out what measures have been implemented since that time.

It sets out that the Council's objectives are to:

- To reduce single occupancy vehicle trips;
- To increase usage and awareness of sustainable travel modes;
- To reduce the costs of business mileage; and
- To alleviate pressures on limited parking capacity

These objectives will be achieved through:

- Promoting and encouraging 'Smarter Working';
- Reducing the overall need to travel;
- Encouraging car sharing; and
- Providing improved travel information

Since 2014, the following measures have been introduced:

- The relocation of the smoking shelter to make the cycle storage facilities at the site more attractive to potential users
- Improvements to showering and changing facilities
- Removal of 'short-stay spaces'
- Segregation of visitor and disabled spaces

Given the comprehensive nature of the 2014 Travel Plan, its aims and objectives remain relevant to this application. The various methods to seek to reduce single car trips should continue to be explored and implemented where appropriate and testing has found them to be successful.

Potential methods to reduce single car trips include:

- The creation of a Sustainable Travel Steering Group
- A car sharing scheme
- Increased information to staff of sustainable transport methods

The Council's Sustainable Transport Team are satisfied that continued compliance with that Travel Plan (and its Addendum) would be appropriate in this case and no objection has been raised to this application.

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 it is hoped and anticipated that adhering to the Travel Plan will reduce single car trips over time.

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 acceptable because of the existing commercial character of the site, where additional hard standing would not appear out of context.

Whilst the loss of some landscaping is undesirable, it has been justified and the key strategic landscaping along the northern and southern boundaries of the site would not be undermined to an extent that it would fail to serve its purpose as useful screening of the site and the car park.

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.

5. Drainage

Details of drainage to accommodate the additional car parking spaces would be secured by condition.

6. Ecology

Limited details have been provided in respect of the protection and enhancement of 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. This is particularly important in this case because existing landscaping would be removed to facilitate the development. A planning condition would require the submission of a scheme for biodiversity protection and enhancement at the site.

Recommendation:

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

- 1 The development hereby permitted 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 and of the submitted and approved Travel Plan (prepared by WYG and dated December 2013) and the corresponding Travel Plan Addendum (prepared by CBC Assets and dated February 2017) unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: to ensure the site continues to respond to the Council's sustainable travel objectives and to manage current and future parking demand in accordance with Policy DM3 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009).

- 3 **No development shall commence at the site before a scheme for mitigating harm caused to biodiversity and for providing a net gain in biodiversity at the site together with a timetable for completing that scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme.**

Reason: To ensure that biodiversity at the site is properly protected and opportunities are enhanced in accordance with Policy DM15 of the Central Bedfordshire Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009) and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012.

- 4 **No development shall commence at the site before a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include provision of attenuation for the 1 in 100 year event (+40% allowance for climate change) and a restriction in run-off rates. Any revisions to the agreed strategy shall be fully justified and approved before the development is completed and shall be managed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the agreed management and maintenance plan. Details of how the system will be constructed including any phasing of the scheme, and how it will be managed and maintained after completion will also be included.**

The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved final details before the development is completed, and shall be managed and maintained thereafter in accordance with the agreed management and maintenance plan.

Reason: To ensure the approved system will function to a satisfactory minimum standard of operation and maintenance and prevent the increased risk of flooding both on and off site, in accordance with para 103 NPPF.

- 5 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 1001, 2001, 2002, 2003, Priory House Travel Plan and appendices (December 2013), Travel Plan Addendum (February 2017), Landscape Impact Statement, Ecological Survey, Design and Access Statement

Reason: To identify the approved plan/s and to avoid doubt.

INFORMATIVE NOTES TO APPLICANT

1. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts and does not include any consent or approval under any other enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.
2. As the site is of long historic use there may be unexpected materials or substances in, on or under the ground. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to ensure safe and secure development, so a watching brief for signs of contamination is advised and any indications of potential contamination problems should be brought to the attention of the Local Planning Authority for advice.

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 - Part 6, Article 35

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) Order 2015.

DECISION

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