

Full Council

Title:	Land North of Rycote Lane Thame OX9 2BY
Date:	22 June 2021
Contact Officer:	Graeme Markland, Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Officer

Reserved matters following outline permission (P17/S4441/O) for appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. The erection of up to 180,000 square feet (up to 16,722 square metres) of B2/B8 with ancillary B1(a) and B1(c) together with parking, drainage, landscaping (structural and incidental) and highway works.

Background

1. Members will recall that planning application P17/S4441/O was discussed at the Full Council meeting of 16 January 2018. As the main site sits within the parish of Great Haseley, it was decided to submit comments only to the District Council.
2. The comments of Thame Town Council were made around traffic, employment, planning policy, landscaping, parking and sustainability. This application, P21/S1632/RM, is seeking to sign off a mixture of reserved matters and planning conditions from that outline application.

Proposal

3. The applicant is seeking to provide 14 units in B2 and B8 (general industry and warehousing) use, with ancillary, small offices. In line with planning conditions relating to the outline permission, only three of the units will be above 1,500 sq. m. in area, being of 1,866, 3,075 and 4,756 sq.m. respectively. Eight units if the remaining 11 units will be below 500 sq.m.
4. It is proposed there will be 201 car parking spaces on the site and 51 covered, secured bicycle parking spaces. Access to the scheme will be as reported at the Town Council's Planning and Environment Committee, 25 May 2021. The existing cycle/footpath on the south of Rycote Lane will be continued from the Moreton Lane junction to the eastern boundary of the site. The cycle/footpath is then continued on the north side of Rycote Lane, with a traffic island providing some shelter for pedestrians. The road itself will be subject to a relatively minor realignment, with westward travelling vehicles turning into the site using a right-turn ghost island.
5. Landscape buffers are present around the boundary.

Traffic

6. The Town Council's original comments on traffic generation were that the increase in vehicle movements were concerning given existing traffic levels on this narrow road. Particular concern was given to the vehicles turning, and the potential for impact on the junction of Rycote and Moreton Lanes.
7. The Highways Authority has yet to respond to the application covering off-site highways details. As it is believed this full application was submitted to cover matters raised by the County Council Highways Team it is probable that these proposals will be acceptable, possibly with some minor amendments. It is suggested that the realignment and widening

of the road, plus clear provision for pedestrians and cyclists overcomes concerns regarding safe access including that of vehicles turning.

8. The turn at Moreton is now proposed to be retained in its current engineered form. The extended cycle path provision will be made on highways land and will follow the existing radii of the junction. No other work impacts directly on the junction.

Employment

9. The Town Council requested that permitted development rights be removed from the buildings. Although permitted change of uses normally have some time-bound restrictions, the Outline permission has conditions removing any right of change of use from B1a (office) to residential, or B2/B8 to light industry, research or development or office space that would normally be permitted. These conditions are believed valid, even after the recent changes to the use classes orders.
10. Another relevant concern was the potential for employment uses to creep westwards along the A329 corridor. The grant of permission for a new cattle market on the adjacent site may help mitigate against this.

Planning Policy

11. The application is a windfall site. In granting the outline permission, the District Council took into account representations received from the District's own Economic Development Team, local businesses and the Oxfordshire Industrial Strategy. In complying with the condition to ensure that a mix of small and medium sized units were provided, the development is in conformity with new Local Plan Policy EMP2.
12. The development was placed before the Inspector at the Examination of the Local Plan 2035 and has, therefore, been taken into account when setting the employment land allocation for Thame. The land cannot, however, be counted against Thame's need for at least a further 3.5ha of employment land as the site is not within Thame parish.

Parking

13. The Town Council felt that the parking provision was inadequate, although it was not suggested what an appropriate level might be. The original Transport statement showed an indicative provision of some 271 spaces, or one per 55 sq.m. The revised plans show some 201 spaces (1 per 83 sq.m.), 22 of which would be for use by the disabled. Secure, covered bicycle parking space for 51 bikes will be spread across the site. No reason has been given for the difference in provision between the Outline and Reserved Matters applications. The overall floorspace has been slightly increased (by around 150 sq. m., gross external area).

Sustainability

14. The Town Council noted that it would not be easy to walk to or cycle to the site. The proposal to extend the existing foot/cycle path network to the new junction would represent an improvement. It is noted that internally, a 2 metre wide footpath will be provided along both sides of the main internal road which should help promote active travel to the site.
15. It is uncertain if, because of the earlier outline permission, Local Plan Policy DES10 which requires a 40% reduction in carbon emission compared to 2013 Building Regulations can be applied. Twenty electric vehicle charging points are proposed for the development. A condition from the Outline application specifically seeks provision for charging points. It is assumed that the relevant team at the District Council will discuss the adequacy of the proposed provision.

Design and landscaping

16. Most of the 14 units are aligned north to south, with the exception of Units 9, 10 and 15. Most are sited either side of a central access road, with the exception of units 9 and 10 which adjoin and run the width of the site's northern end. Units 1 – 6 share a frontage with Rycote Lane together with the parking area for Unit 15.
17. The western boundary is proposed to have a 10 metre wide wooded belt composed of native trees and shrubs adjacent to a 10 – 15 metre wide area of species-rich grassland beside it. Within this will be two visible water retention swales and two buried attenuation tanks to hold and slowly release rainfall run-off. Native species hedgerows are also proposed for the north and eastern boundaries, with another grass belt adjacent to the hedge on the northern boundary. Five log piles and a single owl box will be provided within. It is also proposed to place 10 bat roosting and 8 bird nest boxes at suitable locations on buildings and around the landscaped areas.
18. Units 1 – 6 are all approximately 10 metres in height. Unit 15 is the same height as Unit 7 on the opposite side of the access road, at 12.8 metres high, but the three units behind step back down again to approximately 10 metres. Units 9 and 10 at the rear are the tallest units, around 14.5 metres high. Due to the natural slopes of the site and the need to provide a level base for the units, the eastern part of the relatively tall units 10 and 15 will end up some 2 – 2.5 metres lower than current ground level, while the ground will be raised between 0.5 and 2m to accommodate the western units. It does not appear that ground level will be raised above that of the adjacent Rycote Lane at any point within the site.
19. The units will be clad in a mix of subdued greys and silvers with blue or darker grey colours to features such as entrances and fascia. The colour changes will either occur at natural breaks in the architecture, or at certain points to help reduce the visual impact of the buildings. There will be a clear, unifying theme to the design and colour choices and that should help link the smallest units with the largest.
20. HGV turning circles, bicycle and bin stores and unit signage are all clearly indicated on the plans and a landscape management plan covering existing and proposed natural features has been submitted. The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment has submitted a declaration that they will be providing a biodiversity offsetting service to mitigate against the harm to biodiversity the scheme may cause.

Flood risk and drainage

21. Alongside the attenuation tanks under the western grassed area, a further 5 tanks will be provided under car parks to Units 7 – 10 and Unit 15. Surface water from the car parks and rooves will be directed to these tanks and the two swales and be held and released into the existing drain that crosses the site from east to west. The system has been designed to cope with a one-hundred-year rainfall event, plus an allowance for climate change of an extra 30%. During extreme events, beyond the design capacity, levels have been designed to discharge extra water onto the adjacent road network rather than any natural feature.

Other matters

22. Both the Construction Environmental Management Plan and the Construction Traffic Management Plan state that the hours of operation for noise-generating activities will be limited to the hours of 8am – 6pm, Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays.

Recommendation

23. This proposal is on land in Great Haseley Parish. It is recommended that the Town Council submits comments on matters it believes either relevant, or helpful.