

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3 November 2021

Ward: Whitley
App No.: 211347
Address: Unit B4, Worton Drive
Proposal: Change of use from B8 use to B8 and B2 use
Applicant: Canmoor Asset Management Ltd
Deadline: 16 November 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions and informatives.

CONDITIONS TO INCLUDE:

- 1) TL1 - 3 yrs
- 2) AP1 - Approved Plans
- 3) M2 - Materials to match existing
- 4) C1 - Hours of Construction
- 5) C4 - No Bonfires
- 6) DC7 - Refuse and Recycling facilities to be approved & provided before occupation (to be vermin proof)
- 7) DC2 - Vehicle Parking to be provided before occupation
- 8) DC5 - Cycle Parking to be approved and provided before occupation
- 9) N8 - Noise levels of plant to be approved and any mitigation provided before occupation

INFORMATIVES TO INCLUDE:

- 1) IF5 - Terms and Conditions
- 2) IF6 - Building Regulations
- 3) IF3 - Highways
- 4) IF7 - Complaints about Construction
- 5) IF8 - Encroachment
- 6) IF1 - Positive & Proactive.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The site is located in the EM2c: Worton Grange industrial estate South of the Basingstoke Road and Core Employment Area. The unit is currently vacant and has been since general refurbishment of the whole estate was undertaken by the current site owner in January 2021.
- 1.2 The unit was originally in light industrial use (Use Class B1c) that was approved in the early 1980s and subsequently changed use to Storage and Distribution Use Class B8 in 2011. The unit last had a previous B8 (storage/distribution) occupier. The site area measures 2117 sqm with a 1000sqm unit with car parking around the perimeter of the building.

Site Location Plan (not to scale)



Aerial photo (not to scale)



2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application is for a change of use from B8 to B8 and B2 use. The new occupier 'MasterTech' will be providing maintenance and diagnostic repairs on commercial vehicles from 3 to 44 tonnes and is expected to deal with 150 vehicles a month. No more than 15 vehicles would be on site at any one time as they also carry out off-site repairs as well as breakdowns. The company currently employs 10 staff, which will increase to around 14 employees when they move to the application site. It is proposed to maintain the existing points of vehicular access to the site.
- 2.1 No changes are proposed to the exterior of the existing building, although there would be minor internal changes to enable a new internal layout.

2.2 Submitted Plans and Documentation:

The following plans and supporting documents have been assessed:

PL004 Existing Unit B4 GA Plans

PL005 Proposed Unit B4 GA Plans Operational Layout

21081 Design & Access statement, hale, 13 August 2021

As received 17 August 2021

Duty planning enquiry email dated 17 August 2021

CIL

As received 18 August 2021

PL001 R B Site Location Plan

PL002 Rev B Existing Site plan

As received 14 September 2021

Planning statement, hale, September 2021

DOC-10-13xxxAM-20210921-Noise Impact Assessment-Rev 1

As received 22 September 2021

Transport technical note, vectos

As received 6 October 2021

PL006 Rev A Possible Vehicle Arrangement Plan

PL003 Rev C Proposed internal uses

As received 25 October 2021

2.3 Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):

In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission. No additional gross internal area (0 sqm) is proposed and so it is not CIL liable.

2.4 The application is in the Major category which means it is to be reported to your meeting.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 The following is a summary of some of the most relevant planning history:

101858 Change of use to B8. Permission 14/01/2011.

82/TP/593 Change of use from warehousing to light industrial use.

Construction of windows in north west elevation. Permission 10/9/1982.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Statutory

No statutory consultations were required given the nature of the application.

4.2 Non-statutory

RBC - Transport

Comments received raising no objections in principle, but a couple of clarifications have been sought and conditions recommended.

DC2 VEHICLE PARKING (TO BE APPROVED)

DC6 CYCLE PARKING (TO BE APPROVED)

Environmental health

The noise assessment submitted with the application (Hoare Lee 21.9.2021) which shows a very low predicted noise level at the nearest residential premises, therefore further assessment should not be required, and restrictions on operating hours should not be necessary.

Sustainability team

No comments have been received at this time.

Officer note: Should further comments be received from consultees or the applicant they will be provided to the meeting in an update report.

4.3 Public

A site notice was displayed and letters were sent to A2, A3, B4, B6, Unit 10 Worton Drive. As a Major application a press notice was also displayed.

No comments have been received at the time of writing this report.

5.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which also states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

5.2 For this Local Planning Authority the development plan is now in one document - the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019), which fully replaces the Core Strategy, the Sites and Detailed Policies Document and the Reading Central Area Action Plan. The relevant policies are:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development

Section 6 - Building a Strong Competitive Economy

Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities

Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport

Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land

Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places

Section 14 - Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change

Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan - November 2019

Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage

Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN15: Air Quality

Policy EN16: Pollution and Water Resources

Policy EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

Policy EN18: Flooding and Drainage

Policy EM1: Provision of Employment Development

Policy EM2: Location of New Employment Development

Policy EM4: Maintaining a Variety of Premises

Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities

Policy TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)
- Employment, Skills and Training (2013)
- Planning Obligations under S106 (2015)

Other Relevant Documents

- Technical Guidance to the NPPF (Mar 2012)
- National Planning Policy Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change, March 2014
- National Planning Practice Guidance: Noise, 27th July 2019

6.0 APPRAISAL

6.1 The main matters to be considered are

- (i) Principle of development
- (ii) Transport/Parking
- (iii) Environmental matters
- (iv) Design
- (v) Sustainability
- (vi) Other Matters
- (vii) S106
- (viii) Equalities impact

(i) Principle of development

6.2 The proposed uses (B2 and/or B8) are appropriate within a Core Employment Area with good access to the major road network. The closest residential dwellings are in excess of 470 metres from the building, with existing warehouses in between.

6.3 Policy CC1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (RBLP) requires a positive approach to development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which lies at the heart of the National Policy Framework (para. 11 NPPF).

6.4 The three overarching objectives defined in the NPPF, to achieving sustainable development are economic, social and environmental. With regard to the economic role, the proposal would contribute to economic activity through contributing to “*building a strong, responsive and competitive economy*” as defined in the NPPF, both through the construction period and as part of the ongoing operation of the proposed distribution and retail uses. The proposal would also enable businesses to adapt and would support economic growth (para 80. NPPF).

6.5 Policy EM4 supports maintaining a variety of premises. The site lies within the areas south of the Basingstoke Road which should maintain the overall level of storage and distribution uses which will be continued as well as the proposed B2 use.

6.6 The principle of the change of use is considered to be acceptable.

(ii) Transport/Parking

- 6.7 The unit is currently vacant and has been since 13th January 2021. Prior to this 'Hancocks Cash & Carry' operated out of the unit on a 9am-5pm basis. There are 38 car parking places associated with the site. The proposal is for the change of use to include B2 and B8 to accommodate the occupation by Master Tech who employ 10 staff, increasing to around 14 when the applicant occupies the new premises. The proposed use is for the carrying out of commercial vehicle repairs and servicing together with ancillary offices and a small element of ancillary sales.
- 6.8 The site is located in the established Worton Grange Industrial Estate to the south of Reading close to junction 11 of the M4. Access to the site is via the existing estate road, Worton Drive and existing unit access. No changes are proposed to the access arrangement to and within the site.
- 6.9 The unit will be used by Master Tech for commercial vehicle repairs and maintenance and diagnostic repairs, working on vehicles from 3 tons to 44 tons. It is stated that the business will have approximately 150 service jobs a month and no more than 15 vehicles onsite at one time.
- 6.10 The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. Typically, these areas are within 400m of a Reading Buses high frequency 'Premier Route', which provides high quality bus routes to and from Reading town centre and other local centre facilities. In accordance with the adopted SPD, the development would be required to provide a maximum parking provision of 1 space per 150sqm for B8 use and 1 space per 100sqm for B2. Based on the proposed floor space of 1,027.60 sqm (GIA), the proposed B2 use would require 11 spaces.
- 6.11 The proposals will maintain the existing number of car parking spaces on site which exceeds the Council's current parking standards for standard sized vehicles. However, the applicant has indicated that no more than 15 commercial vehicles (ranging between 3 tons to 44 tons) will be onsite at any one time. Given that the internal layout of the building cannot accommodate all of the daily vehicles at the same time, the applicant was asked to clarify where commercial vehicles will wait before/after servicing within the building ideally and this has been provided on an amended floor plan.
- 6.12 It is stated that 3no. spaces will be converted to blue badge spaces in accordance with RBC's parking standards. In addition, 1 motorcycle space and 3 cycle parking spaces will also be provided. In response to confirmation sought by transport officers the location of the disabled, motorcycle and cycle parking spaces have been illustrated on an amended proposed site plan (see below). Therefore, the applicant will be asked by planning condition to provide these spaces before occupation of the new use.
- 6.13 In terms of trip generation, a simplistic assessment has been undertaken calculating staff trips in the AM/PM peak hours due to the lack of comparable surveyed sites in TRICS for the proposed use. Based on the simplistic assessment, it is indicated that the proposed use may generate an additional 17 person trips during the AM/PM peak.
- 6.14 B2 units generally generate a higher number of trips than B8 units, even though the proposals are for a mixed use site. Whilst the B8 and B2 uses will both generate movements by goods vehicles, only a proportion are likely to

be HGV given the nature of the development and the anticipated number of commercial vehicles onsite at one time. A tracking exercise has been undertaken of a 16.5m articulated vehicle both accessing and egressing the site and is shown in Appendix B of the Transport Technical Note. All vehicles are proposed to be accommodated on site, with a swept paths analysis for a day's vehicle movements being completed.

6.15 This site is located within a Core Employment Area (**EM2c: South of Basingstoke Road**) as stated in the adopted Reading Borough Council Local Plan. These Core Employment Areas are the main location for industrial and warehouse uses, and a high proportion of the traffic using the road is commercial traffic ranging from light vans to articulated lorries. In view of this, the increase in car trips and commercial vehicles as a result of the proposal would not have a significant impact on the local highway network.

6.16 Overall as it is unlikely that the proposal would result in a material impact on the safety and efficiency of the local highway networks and solutions can be found for other transport planning policy concerns.

(iii) Environmental matters

6.17 Noise - Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development should not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties including, but not solely, with respect to artificial lighting and noise. The nearest residential dwellings to the development site lie to the east at a distance in excess of 470m away at the closest point. Due to the distance between the site and the nearest residential housing, in addition to its location in an industrial estate with units providing similar vehicle services, light industrial and storage provision, the development is not considered to create a harmful impact on the environment in terms of noise or odour. The change of use will be subject to Building regulations and if relevant, Control of Substances Hazardous to Health COSHH safety guidelines.

6.18 In terms of noise generating equipment and the requirement for plant noise level to be at least 10db below the existing background noise (Policy EN17) the submitted Noise Assessment confirms that the maximum noise levels would be 10.2db. Only noise break-out from the building during night time periods was assessed at the worst scenario, no HGV movements are proposed. This has been calculated before the works are in situ. A condition for a revised pre-occupation noise assessment to be agreed with the Local Authority once the internal refurbishments are completed to assess whether any reductions in noise generation is possible to reduce noise levels by 0.2db is recommended.

(iv) Design

6.10 RBLP Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm, requires all development to be of a *“high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.”* Design includes layout, landscape, density and mix, scale: height and massing, and architectural details and materials. Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context”.

- 6.11 No changes are proposed to the external building elevations and the proposed change of use is not considered to have any adverse impact on the function or setting of Unit B4 Worton Drive and would accord with Policy CC7.

(v) Sustainability

- 6.12 There are several policies within the local plan which are relevant to new development and sustainability. The newly adopted Supplementary Planning Document ‘Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)’ also emphasises the need and importance of securing positive environmental improvements as part of any new major development.
- 6.13 The overarching sustainability policy CC2 requires proposals for new development including the refurbishment and redevelopment of existing building stock, to reduce the consumption of resources and materials and includes that *“All major non-residential developments .. meet the most up-to-date BREEAM ‘Excellent’ standards, where possible”* and that *“Both residential and non-residential development should include recycling greywater and rainwater harvesting where systems are energy and cost effective.”*
- 6.14 The supporting text (para 4.1.4) accepts that *“some types of development, such as industrial uses, warehouses and schools might find it more difficult to meet these standards. In these cases, developments must demonstrate that the standard to be achieved is the highest possible for the development, and at a minimum meets the BREEAM ‘Very Good’ standard.”*
- 6.15 Policy CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change, requires that *“all developments demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change.”*
- 6.16 Policy CC4: Decentralised Energy states *“Any development of more than 20 dwellings and/ or non-residential development of over 1,000 sq m shall consider the inclusion of decentralised energy provision, within the site, unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is not suitable, feasible or viable for this form of energy provision”*. Supporting text in para. 4.1.19 states that this policy would mainly apply in Central Reading.
- 6.17 Policy CC5 requires minimisation of waste during construction and the life of the development.
- 6.18 The proposed change of use involves minimal internal changes including the installation of operational equipment and the reallocation of internal space to create a separate lobby, office, tearoom, and tool room within the warehouse shell. As such a condition on sustainability targets is not required due to the small scale works proposed.

(vi) Employment & Skills Plan

- 6.19 In accordance with Policy CC9 and TR2, the following obligation has been considered:
- Employment, Skills and Training - construction and end user
- 6.20 Due to the continued provision of employment and the existing use of the site in B8 and B2 use, in this instance it is not considered reasonable to

