

East Area Planning Committee

8th January 2014

Application Number: 13/02607/FUL

Decision Due by: 6th January 2014

Proposal: To construct in two phases a single storey Test Track weather resistant enclosure adjacent the existing railway lines.

Site Address: BMW UK Manufacturing Ltd, Garsington Road, Oxford (**site plan: appendix 1**)

Ward: Lye Valley

Agent: Mr Darren Whittle

Applicant: BMW Manufacturing Ltd

Recommendation:

The East Area Planning Committee is recommended to approve planning permission for the following reasons:

Reasons for Approval

- 1 The proposal would seek to make an efficient use of land in order to improve the quality of the test track at Plant Oxford as part of the aim to add value to the long-term viability of the plant through improving facilities throughout all levels of the plant. The proposal would be acceptable in design terms and would not create any adverse highway, biodiversity, drainage, or contamination impacts and any possible impact could be successfully mitigated by conditions. The development would accord with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework, and the relevant policies of the development plan. No third part comments have been received.
- 2 The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.

Conditions

To include the following

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Samples of materials
- 4 Proposal to adopt Sustainable Urban Drainage techniques
- 5 Contaminated Land Watching Brief

Principal Planning Policies:

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

CP1 - Development Proposals

CP6 - Efficient Use of Land & Density

CP8 - Design Development to Relate to its Context

CP9 - Creating Successful New Places

CP10 - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs

Core Strategy

CS18_ - Urban design, town character, historic environment

CS28_ - Employment sites

Other Planning Documents

National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Planning History

The site has been the subject of a number of planning applications, none of which are of particular relevance to this application.

Public Consultation

Statutory Consultee

- Network Rail: No objection in principle to the proposal, subject to the necessary licence agreements from Network Rail being in place prior to any works taking place on site.
- Environment Agency Thames Region
No objection subject to a condition requiring a watching brief for unexpected contamination
- Thames Valley Police
No objection. Development should use secured by design principles
- Thames Water Utilities Limited
No objection

Oxfordshire County Council

- Highway Authority: No objection. The site is within the confines of the plant, and therefore there will be no transport or traffic implications
- Transport: No objection

- Economy: No objection
- Minerals & Waste: No objection
- Drainage Authority: No objection. The development should use SUDS principles.

Third Parties

No third party comments have been received.

Officers Assessment:

Background to Proposals

1. The site lies within the confines of the BMW MINI Plant Oxford which is located between Horspath Road to the north, Eastern Bypass to the west, and Garsington Road to the south (**appendix 1**)
2. The site comprises the existing plant test track which is situated in the southern sector of the plant and runs alongside the railway line that serves the plant and is at the southern end of Roman Way.
3. There have been a series of planning applications submitted in the past few years for Plant Oxford as BMW (UK) Manufacturing Ltd has undertaken an overhaul of its existing building stock in order to create more flexible structures and improve its infrastructure as part of the aspiration to support long term future manufacturing at the plant.
4. The application is seeking to construct a single storey weather resistant enclosure to the existing test track. The enclosure would be a lightweight steel frame construction of portable, modular components which would enable the canopy to be dismantled. The project will be undertaken in two phases with phase 1 providing a canopy over the existing test track which would then be relocated in phase 2 over the new test track which is to be constructed alongside the railway line.
5. The purpose of the canopy is to enable cars to be tested in an enclosed environment over long distances to establish any production faults and this cannot be achieved effectively if the external environment is raining, hailing or snowed in as the test track becomes redundant.
6. Officers consider that the principal determining issues to be:
 - Principle of development
 - Site Layout and Built Form
 - Transport
 - Drainage
 - Biodiversity
 - Contamination

Principle of Development

7. The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] seeks to promote sustainable development and identifies three roles which the planning system needs to

achieve this; economic, social, and environmental. The economic role is defined as 'contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation'.

8. The NPPF has a core principle to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development, and make every effort to identify business needs for an area and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. It also encourages the efficient use of previously developed land.
9. The Oxford Core Strategy identifies Plant Oxford as a Key Protected Employment site. Policy CS28 makes clear that permission will be granted for the modernisation of any employment site if it can be demonstrated that new development secures or creates employment to Oxford's local workforce; and allows for high density development that makes an efficient use of land; and does not cause unacceptable environmental intrusion or nuisance.
10. The application forms part of a series of works which are underway within Plant Oxford so that BMW can maintain its status as a world leader in car manufacturing. The planning statement makes clear that although a relatively small scheme within the context of the plot, it would add value to the long-term viability of the plant while contributing to the aim to make the most efficient use of the site by improving facilities throughout all levels. The general principle of development would therefore accord with the aims of national advice to support economic development.

Site Layout and Built Forms

11. Policy CS18 of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 requires development to demonstrate high-quality urban design that responds appropriately to the site and surroundings; creates a strong sense of place; attractive public realm; and high quality architecture. The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 requires development to enhance the quality of the environment, with Policy CP1 central to this purpose. Policy CP6 emphasises the need to make an efficient use of land, in a manner where the built form and site layout suits the site's capacity and surrounding area. Policy CP8 states that the siting, massing, and design of new development should create an appropriate visual relationship with the built form of the surrounding area.
12. The enclosure would be formed from a lightweight steel frame of portable, modular components. In section the frame would be approximately 3.85m wide and 3.6m high and have a flat roof. The frame would be enclosed by galvanised steel mesh fencing, while the roof would have a single ply membrane with cladding forming the eaves. The enclosure would run the length of the test track in both phase 1 and phase 2.
13. In visual terms the enclosure would be set within part of the plant which is not viewed from the public realm and would be set against the backdrop of an industrial context which is set by significant sized buildings of Plant Oxford and also Unipart to the south. While the enclosure would follow the length of the test

track it would be entirely appropriate within its local context and so there would be no reason to object to the proposal on design grounds.

Transport

14. The development is within the confines of Plant Oxford and is only seeking to enclose the existing test track. As such there would be not traffic or transport implications as a result of the proposal.
15. There is a section of the existing test track on Network Rail land. Network Rail has raised no objection to the proposal, and are in the process of agreeing a licence with the applicant to enable the works on their land.

Drainage

16. The Oxfordshire County Council Drainage Authority have raised no objection to the proposal, but suggested that sustainable urban drainage techniques in dealing with any increase in surface water.

Biodiversity

17. The proposal would not have any adverse impact upon the flow of water to the Northfield Brook, which is designated as a Site of Local Natural Importance for Nature Conservation.

Contamination

18. The Environment Agency have recognised that the scale of the development is unlikely to have an impact in terms of land contamination, but have recommended that a condition be attached to any permission requiring a watching brief on the construction to deal with any unsuspected contamination that is identified through this process.

Conclusion:

19. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of the relevant policies of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026, and the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016, and therefore officer's recommendation is to approve the development.

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and freedoms

of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is therefore justifiable and proportionate.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

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Date: 30th December 2013