

## EAST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

5 July 2017

**Application Number:** 17/00923/FUL

**Decision Due by:** 21st August 2017

**Extension of Time:** n/a

**Proposal:** External alterations of the former Royal Mail Sorting Office building including alterations to the existing building facade and changes to the layout and levels of the existing service yard and car park.

**Site Address:** Royal Mail 7000 Alec Issigonis Way Oxford

**Ward:** Lye Valley Ward

**Agent:** Mr Philip Brown

**Applicant:** Plumbing Pensions (UK) Ltd

**Reason at Committee:** Major application

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### 1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1. East Area Planning Committee is recommended to:

**(a) approve the application for the reasons given in the report and subject to the required planning conditions set out in section 10 of this report and grant planning permission;**

**(b) agree to delegate authority to the Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services to finalise the recommended conditions** as set out in this report including such refinements, amendments, additions and/or deletions as the Head of Planning, Sustainable Development and Regulatory Services considers reasonably necessary;

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1. This report considers a proposal for external alterations of the former Royal Mail Sorting Office building including alterations to the existing building facade and changes to the layout and levels of the existing service yard and car park.

2.2. The key matters for assessment set out in this report include the following:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on character of the area
- Neighbouring amenity
- Transport
- Trees and landscaping

- Other matters

### 3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1. The application site is located in the north-western corner of the Oxford Business Park which was formed from the former Cowley Motor Works. The site is bordered by the residential properties of Hollow Way and Fern Hill Road to the north; to the west by Hollow Way and the residential properties contained within the Listed Buildings of the former Nuffield Press buildings beyond; Garsington Road (B480) lies to the south; and the rest of the Oxford Business Park to the east.
- 3.2. See site location plan in Appendix 1.

### 4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1. The application proposes external alterations to the building's elevations, and changes to the layout and levels of the service yard. The proposal includes the provision of an acoustic fence within the service yard, and the provision of new cycle storage.
- 4.2. Officers note that the floor plans indicate a division of the site into two units. Such a change is not considered development; planning permission is not sought for this.

### 5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 5.1. The table below sets out the relevant planning history for the application site:

Application Reference	Description of Development	Decision
95/00150/NF	Alterations to ground level. 2 buildings for Royal Mail: B8, 8330.5 sq. m & B2, 1014.5 sq. m. Staff parking for 154 cars, 40 motorcycles & 75 cycles. Servicing & circulation areas. Ancillary facilities, fence & landscaping. (Amended plans).	Approved 1st August 1995
16/00177/FUL	Demolition of former Royal Mail Sorting Office (B8) and Vehicle Maintenance Depot (B2) and the redevelopment of the site with the Use Classes B1(c), B2 and B8 and ancillary offices (B1(a)).	Approved 20th March 2017 Not yet implemented

## 6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

6.1. The following policies are relevant to the application:

Topic	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	Local Plan	Core Strategy	Sites and Housing Plan	Other Planning Documents
Design	Paras 56- 68	CP.1 CP.8 CP.10	CS18		
Conservation/ Heritage	Paras 126- 141	HE.3			
Commercial	Paras 18 - 27	EC.1	CS27 CS28		
Natural Environment	Paras 109- 125, 142 - 149	CP.11 NE.15	CS11 CS12		
Transport	Paras 29 - 41	TR.3 TR.4			Parking Standards SPD
Environmental	Paras 93 - 108	CP.22 CP.23	CS10		
Misc	Paras 42 - 46			MP1	

## 7. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

7.1. Site notices were displayed around the application site on 2 June 2017 and an advertisement was published in the Oxford Times newspaper on 1 June 2017.

### Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultees

#### Oxfordshire County Council (Highways)

7.2. No objection subject to conditions.

7.3. The application relates to proposals for alterations to the existing building façade and to the layout and levels of the service yard and car park. It is noted that the application does not propose a change of use from the permitted B8 warehousing use of the site and it is not considered that the proposals would lead to significant highways or transport impacts.

7.4. Due to the site's location adjacent to key strategic and public transport routes, Construction Traffic Management Plan is required by condition.

## Oxfordshire County Council (Drainage)

- 7.5. There are no changes proposed to the overall hard surface area on the site and the County Council's Drainage Engineers have no additional comments to make on the application.

### **Public representations**

- 7.6. None received

## **8. PLANNING MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 8.1. Officers consider the determining issues to be:

- i. Principle of development
- ii. Design and impact on character of the area
- iii. Neighbouring amenity
- iv. Transport
- v. Trees and landscaping
- vi. Other matters

### **i. Principle of development**

- 8.2. The site, part of the key protected employment site of the Oxford Business Park, was formerly as a Royal Mail sorting office and has been vacant for some years. The development would not result in a change of use and constitutes minor physical alterations to the site which are intended to improve the marketability of the site. The proposal is therefore consistent with policies CS27 and CS28 of the Oxford Core Strategy that support the modernisation of employment sites and resist their loss.

### **ii. Design and impact on character of the area**

- 8.3. The NPPF requires that local authorities seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. It suggests that opportunities should be taken through the design of new development to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 of the Oxford Local Plan, together with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy in combination require that development proposals incorporate high standards of design and respect local character.
- 8.4. Policy HE3 (Listed Buildings) of the Oxford Local Plan applies because the Grade II listed Morris House and Oxford Military College (now flats) lies on the opposite side of Hollow Way from the site.
- 8.5. The external alterations would use materials that match those of the existing building, and therefore would not significantly alter the overall appearance of the building. A condition is recommended to ensure matching materials are used.

- 8.6. The minor nature of the alterations to the facades, and in particular to the north-west façade that faces the listed building, means that there is not considered to be any material change to the setting of the listed building.

### **iii. Neighbouring amenity**

- 8.7. Forty car parking spaces are proposed to be located in the north-eastern area of the site, but there is a separation of approximately seven metres between the parking spaces and the end of the long gardens in Fern Hill Road, as well as tree planting. This situation is considered an improvement in terms of residential amenity compared with the existing loading bay activity along the north-eastern side of the building.
- 8.8. An acoustic fence is proposed to provide reduce noise impacts for Fern Hill Road properties. A condition is recommended regarding the maximum height of the acoustic fence. Overall, the proposal is considered to have a net benefit for neighbouring amenity.

### **iv. Transport**

#### Transport impacts

- 8.9. The application does not propose a change of use and therefore the potential traffic impacts would be unchanged. It is not considered that the proposals would lead to significant highways or transport impacts.

#### Cycle parking

- 8.10. Forty cycle parking spaces in four covered shelters are proposed in convenient locations close to entrances. This would exceed minimum standards for the floor area of a building of this type and is therefore considered acceptable.

#### Car parking

- 8.11. Officers concur with comments from the Highways Authority in terms of the net loss of 19 car parking spaces and around 40 operational parking spaces. This is proposed in order to accommodate around 12 HGV parking spaces. While the level of car parking on the site is still above the standards for B8 warehousing use set out in the Adopted Parking Standards SPD, the reduction of parking on site is considered acceptable taking into account the nature of the application which is for alterations to an existing site and not a redevelopment or change of use of the site.

#### Access

- 8.12. Access to both the HGV parking / loading area and the car parking areas are to be altered. The swept path analysis indicates that HGVs would be able to safely enter, turn and exit the HGV parking and loading area of the site in a

forwards gear. The two car parking areas would be accessed via an on-site service road with a width of around 6m, which would be sufficient to enable easy access to those areas.

- 8.13. It would appear that pedestrian and cycle access can be taken from Hollow Way, near to the south-western corner of the building. This would be convenient for those travelling from the Hollow Way or Cowley directions. The Highways Authority has recommended a safe, direct and logical pedestrian route for those arriving from the east of the site; an appropriate informative is proposed to be added should permission be granted.

#### **v. Trees and landscaping**

- 8.14. The scheme involves the loss of 15 individual trees, including 6 'B' quality category, 6 'C' quality category, and 3 U quality category trees (dead).
- 8.15. Construction of the proposed new access and parking alterations in the east and southeast of the site, the removal of 6 'B' quality category trees; T77, T83, T84, T89, T99 and T100 (Common lime), 6 'C' quality category; T78 (Common lime), T81, T82 and T85 (Whitebeam), T101 and T102 (Red oak) are required.
- 8.16. Officers consider that this would result in a minor impact to the landscape in the street scene of Garsington Road from the loss of 6 'B' quality category early mature trees. However, this impact is considered to be mitigated through replacement tree planting. Providing that appropriate tree protection measures, secured under planning conditions, are implemented there should be no significant adverse implications on retained trees.
- 8.17. Officers therefore consider the application to be acceptable in relation to Oxford Local Plan Policies CS18, CP1, CP11 and NE15 relating to trees and good landscape design, subject to the conditions recommended for tree protection measures and further details of landscaping proposals and an associated landscape management plan.

#### **vi. Other**

- 8.18. Biodiversity: The site is covered in large areas of hardstanding and is of poor value for biodiversity. The proposals for the site offer opportunity for improving its value for biodiversity in accordance with policy CS12. A condition is recommended to provide bird nesting devices.
- 8.19. Flooding and drainage: Although no objections have been raised by officers or statutory consultees with regard to flood risk and drainage, because some areas of the service yard are being altered, a sustainable drainage condition is recommended.
- 8.20. Land quality: The submitted phase 1 desk study concludes that no further assessment is necessary as long as the site remains in commercial use. Further investigations would also be required if the site was to be redeveloped

or any groundworks undertaken. Whilst this proposal would involve groundworks, they would only go as deep as existing sub-bases and the conclusions of the phase 1 report are likely to remain valid. A condition is recommended requiring action should unexpected contamination be encountered on the site.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1. The proposal seeks alterations that would be in-keeping with the design of the existing building, and which would not result in harm to residential amenity or visual impact, subject to recommended conditions. The objective of the proposal would accord with Council policies regarding the modernisation and retention of employment uses.
- 9.2. It is recommended that the Committee resolve to grant planning permission for the development proposed subject to the recommended conditions.

## **10. CONDITIONS**

1 The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2 The development permitted shall be constructed in complete accordance with the specifications in the application and approved plans listed below, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To avoid doubt and to ensure an acceptable development as indicated on the submitted drawings in accordance with policy CP1 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

3 The external materials to be used in the new development shall match those of the existing building.

Reason: To ensure that the new development is in keeping with existing building(s) in accordance with policies CP1 and CP8 of the Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

4 The cycle storage shall be installed in accordance with the details hereby approved before the development is first occupied and shall remain in place thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of promoting sustainable methods of transport and for the amenities of the occupants of the units in accordance with Oxford Local Plan Policy CP1 and TA4.

5 Prior to the development being first occupied, details of the refuse storage for the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and

approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The storage shall be installed in accordance with these approved details before the development is first occupied and shall remain in place thereafter.

Reason: For the amenities of the occupants of the units in accordance with Oxford Local Plan Policy CP1 and Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS10.

6 Landscaping proposals shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority before first occupation of the site (excluding construction). The details shall include scale drawing(s) detailing all proposed tree and shrub planting (including nursery stock type, sizes, planting pit design, numbers of plants and planting densities where applicable), treatment of paved areas, and areas to be grassed or finished in a similar manner.

Reason: To ensure a high quality landscape design for private and public spaces; in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies CP1, CP11 and NE15 of the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016.

7 The landscaping proposals as approved by the Local Planning Authority shall be carried out upon substantial completion of the development and be completed not later than the first planting season after substantial completion.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance with policies CP1 and CP11 of the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016.

8 A landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than small, privately owned domestic gardens, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of the development or any phase of the development, whichever is the sooner, for its permitted use. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: To ensure a high quality landscape appearance in the interests of public visual amenity in accordance with policies CP1, CP11 and NE15 of the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016.

9 The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved tree protection measures contained within the planning application details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect retained trees during construction. In accordance with policies CP1, CP11 and NE16 of the Adopted Local Plan 2001-2016.

10 Prior to the commencement of the development, details of biodiversity enhancement measures including at least 12 x bird nesting devices shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved measures shall be incorporated into the scheme and be fully



constructed prior to first use of the building following the approved development and retained as such thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of improving the biodiversity of the City in accordance with NPPF and policy CS12 of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026.

11 Any ground resurfacing shall be SUDS (sustainable urban drainage systems) compliant.

Reason: To avoid increasing surface water run off and thereby attenuating flood risk in accordance with policy CS11 of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026.

12 Prior to the commencement of the development a Construction Travel Management Plan (CTMP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the approved CTMP at all times.

This should identify;

- The routing of construction vehicles and management of their movement into and out of the site by a qualified and certificated banksman,
- Access arrangements and times of movement of construction vehicles (to minimise the impact on the surrounding highway network),
- Details of wheel cleaning / wash facilities to prevent mud, etc from migrating on to the adjacent highway,
- Contact details for the Site Supervisor responsible for on-site works,
- Travel initiatives for site related worker vehicles,
- Parking provision for site related worker vehicles,
- Details of times for construction traffic and delivery vehicles, which must be outside network peak and school peak hours,
- Engagement with local residents, including the adjacent care home.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to mitigate the impact of construction vehicles on the surrounding network, road infrastructure and local residents, particularly at peak traffic times in accordance with policies CP1, CP19, CP21 and TR2 of the Adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

13 Any contamination that is found during the course of construction of the approved development shall be reported immediately to the local planning authority. Development on that part of the site affected shall be suspended and a risk assessment carried out by a competent person and submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Where unacceptable risks are found remediation and verification schemes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These approved schemes shall be carried out before the development (or relevant phase of development) is resumed or continued.

Reason: To ensure that any soil and water contamination is identified and adequately addressed to ensure the site is suitable for the proposed use in accordance with the requirements of policy CP22 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

## Informatives

1 In accordance with guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council tries to work positively and proactively with applicants towards achieving sustainable development that accords with the Development Plan and national planning policy objectives. This includes the offer of pre-application advice and, where reasonable and appropriate, the opportunity to submit amended proposals as well as time for constructive discussions during the course of the determination of an application. However, development that is not sustainable and that fails to accord with the requirements of the Development Plan and/or relevant national policy guidance will normally be refused. The Council expects applicants and their agents to adopt a similarly proactive approach in pursuit of sustainable development.

2 The applicant is encouraged to investigate the creation of a safe, direct and logical pedestrian route for those arriving from the east. This could potentially take the form of a new pedestrian and cycle access on to Garsington Road.

3 The presence of European protected species, such as bats, is a material consideration in the planning process and the potential impacts that a proposed development may have on them should be considered at all stages of the process. Occasionally European protected species, such as bats, can be found during the course of development even when the site appears unlikely to support them. In the event that this occurs, it is advised that the developer stops work immediately and seeks the advice of the local authority ecologist and/or the relevant statutory nature conservation organisation (e.g. Natural England). Developers should note that it is a criminal offence to deliberately kill, injure or capture bats, or to deliberately disturb them or to damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places (roosts). Further works may require a licence to proceed and failure to stop may result in prosecution.

4 Scrub, trees and buildings on site offer suitable habitat for nesting birds. All wild birds, their nests and young are protected during the nesting period under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and I therefore recommend the following informative is included if minded to approve. Removal of vegetation and demolition of buildings shall be undertaken outside of bird nesting season. This is weather dependent but generally extends between March and August inclusive. If this is not possible then a suitably qualified ecologist shall check the areas concerned immediately prior to the clearance works to ensure that no nesting or nest-building birds are present. If any nesting birds are present then the vegetation or buildings shall not be removed until the fledglings have left the nest.

5 Please note that the responsibility to properly address contaminated land issues, irrespective of any involvement by this Authority, lies with the owner or developer of the site.

## **11. APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1 – Site location plan**

## **12. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT 1998**

- 12.1. Officers have considered the implications of the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to refuse this application. They consider that the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8/Article 1 of Protocol 1 is justifiable and proportionate for the protection of the rights and freedom of others or the control of his/her property in this way is in accordance with the general interest.
- 12.2. 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.

## **13. SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998**

- 13.1. 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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