

RALEIGH
(Woodbury)

08/0160/MFUL

Target Date: 30:05:2008

Applicant: Mr G Pateman

Location: Unit G (May Gurney Ltd), Greendale Business Park
Woodbury Salterton

Proposal: Change of use of agricultural land to employment, expansion of existing employment site and erection of buildings

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

Most of the site appears to lie outside of the development boundary of Greendale Barton Business Park as indicated in the EDDC Local Plan, and therefore it must be largely a planning matter as to whether or not this is a suitable location of this type of development.

While it is acknowledged that the site lies adjacent to an existing business park, the location of the park is remote from any urban settlement and therefore approval of this application would compromise sustainable transport objectives, in that virtually all trips to the site would be made by private vehicles.

I would expect a development of this scale and nature to be supported by a full Transport Assessment and Travel Plan (not just two sheets of A4). The impact of the development on the main Greendale Barton Access (from the A3052) would have to be assessed, as would the impact at the Clyst St Mary and Junction 30 (M5) roundabouts.

As the application stands I am minded to recommend refusal of the application for the reasons given below.

Recommendation:

THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMY AND CULTURE, ON BEHALF OF DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL, AS LOCAL HIGHWAY AUTHORITY, RECOMMENDS THAT PERMISSION BE REFUSED FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:-

1. The location of the proposed development is likely to create the need for additional travel by private vehicles due to its location and the lack of suitable access to alternative means of travel contrary to Policies TR2 and TR5 of the Devon County Structure Plan.
2. Adequate information has not been submitted to satisfy the Local Planning Authority that the proposal is acceptable in terms of traffic impact, access and meeting sustainable transport objectives contrary to Policies TR2, TR5, and TR10 of the Devon County Structure Plan and to advice given within PPG13.

Economic Development officer

Support. Summary, full comment held on file:

May Gurney is a nationally important infrastructure services provider, across a wide range of industries. Their current operations at Greendale Barton sustain the employment of some 170 people. 55 of these are based permanently at Greendale with remainder working from there but committed to project implementation off-site.

May Gurney currently operate from a series of temporary offices located adjacent to a dedicated storage compound and parking area within the Greendale campus. Planning application 08/0160/MFUL is an expression of the company's commitment to creating a purpose built operations centre for the South West at Greendale Barton that would include the development of dedicated staff training facilities and the creation some 50 additional jobs.

The proposal cannot be wholly accommodated within the boundaries of the Greendale Barton Business Park as defined by the East Devon Local Plan and involves a 5,330 square meter extension into low quality agricultural land.

In my view the proposal is entirely consistent with the provisions of Local Plan Policy E6 which seeks to facilitate the expansion of established businesses on sites within or adjoining built up area boundaries:

Where the proposed buildings are of a form, bulk and design that is in keeping with their surroundings, building style and material;

Where there will be minimal or no adverse impacts on wildlife, landscape or historic interests or the amenity of nearby residents and other land users;

Where road access and services are adequate and the site accessible to public transport, cycling and walking.

During the pre-application presentation to Members I have referred to, it was apparent May Gurney have given careful consideration to the availability and suitability of alternative sites in and around Exeter for the substantial investment they now propose.

Environmental Health

Based on the current database of potentially contaminative and landfill sites and because the proposed development is within 250m of a landfill site, a phased investigation and remediation condition is recommended

PARISH COUNCIL

Members expressed concern over breaking the development area line and considered that this should be addressed before allowing further development. Concern was also raised as height and colour of the proposed building. Provided the development line is moved before approval is given, the parish could then support the proposal.

WARD MEMBER(S)

No comments received at the time of writing the report

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections

10 letters have been received raising the following points:

- Development is outside the designated employment boundary for Greendale and is on a greenfield site
- Other sites within Greendale could be used for this expansion of an existing business (for example the two sites proposed for the Weddle Swift operations)
- Development would result in additional light and noise pollution
- Lack of screening of the existing facilities which would be exacerbated by the proposal
- Concerned that clearance and site preparation has already commenced

- Discrepancies in terms of traffic generation and the number of staff sought at the enlarged development
- Insufficient parking provision for the office development
- Loss of hedgerow has already taken place
- Visual impact only affecting walkers and not local/neighbouring residents is erroneous and with the visual assessment choosing specific points only.
- Application does not meet the requirements of Policy E6 of the adopted East Devon Local Plan.
- Dust from the park is believed to affect the health of local residents
- Development would spoil the character of the area
- The agricultural land has been stripped of topsoil in preparation for the development reducing its agricultural quality.

Support

No letters have been received

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App.No:	Proposal	Decision	Date
07/2309/HRN	Hedgerow removal	Approved	24.09.07
05/1937/FUL	Additional Offices	Approved	01.09.05
04/P2420	Additional Parking	Refused and dismissed at appeal	11.11.04
04/P2419	New Training Facilities Using New Steel Prefabricated Cabin Units By New Space To Replace Existing	Approved	11.11.04
02/P2883	Renewal Of Permission For Portacabin For Training Purposes	Approved	11.02.03
02/P0603	Erection Of Additional Office Building & Link Corridor	Approved	23.04.02

PLANNING POLICIES

Government Guidance

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Devon Country Structure Plan (2001-2016)

Policy ST1 - (Sustainable Development)
Policy ST5 - (Development Strategy)
Policy C01 - (Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness)
Policy CO6 - (Quality of New Development)

East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy S5 - (Countryside Protection)
Policy D1 – (Design and Local Distinctiveness)
Policy EN16 – (Contaminated Land)
Policy E1 – (Provision of Employment Land)
Policy E6 – (Small-scale Employment Development in Rural Areas)
Policy TA1 - (Accessibility of New Development)
Policy TA7 - (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access)

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

Greendale Barton Business Park, is an important and successful employment facility in the rural area to the north of Woodbury Salterton. The site has expanded in recent years to utilise the space available and provide employment opportunity. The site the subject of the application is located on the eastern fringes of the main site. While the site the subject of the application is agricultural land it has already been cleared with topsoil removed to provide for the proposed development. The agricultural land was formally divorced from the park by a hedgerow although this hedgerow has been removed following the successful application for a hedgerow removal notice last year. Screening trees and remaining hedgerows exist to the north and east of this field, but due to the elevated nature of the land is visible from public roads surrounding the business park and public rights of way. Located within the field and predominantly agricultural in nature is a series of pieces of equipment in various states of repair. This appears to have remained as a residue from a previous attempted reuse of the land when a Devon County Waste application was refused for the use of the site for storage of waste crushed materials. At that time the then applicants were served with an enforcement notice which has been complied with.

BACKGROUND

Greendale Business Park site has tightly drawn employment boundaries which in the past have reflected the size and nature of operations within the park. These boundaries have traditionally attempted to reflect natural defining features to enable the site to be contained and any growth therefore managed through a controlled local plan process. Land to the west of the site has been and continues to be used as a land fill site and this has been a catalyst for a series of temporary permissions for other waste matters including stone crushing and wood chipping. As referred to above, the land to the east, despite now being devoid of its original hedge boundary, remains agricultural. This is despite previous attempts being made to use the land for both car parking provision for T J Brent (the predecessors of May Gurney) and later as a waste storage site for crushed stone and concrete. While the latter was refused by Devon County Council, the car park application was refused and dismissed at appeal – a copy of this decision and the relevant plan is attached as an appendix to this report.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the extension of both the storage and office facilities currently used by May Gurney into the land immediately to the east of the existing compound. This would result in the approximate doubling in size of the storage compound (with half being located beyond the former hedge boundary) and the provision of office and conference style facilities in a new purpose built complex. The building would be an inverted T shaped configuration with a ground floor and lower ground floor arrangement to account for the land contours which fall away to the south. The main section of the building (single floor only) would measure 36m x 16m, while the head section of the “T”, would also measure 36m x 16m. These two sections would be linked by a glazed corridor at ground floor only, allowing a route for vehicles to pass below, thereby linking the two areas of car parking proposed. The building would be finished in horizontal and vertical cladding with all details to be agreed in the event that planning permission is granted.

As alluded to above, parking would be located around the perimeter of the extended site with a total of 48 spaces.

Landscaping around the edge of the development is also proposed.

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

The main issues with the application concern the principle for development within the location proposed and the impact on the character and appearance of the area, the economic benefits arising from the proposal, the highway movement to and from the site and the issues of noise, light and dust pollution which have been raised by neighbouring residents.

Principle and impact on the character of the area

In terms of principle, while a small part of the site is located within the existing defined employment boundary for Greendale Business Park and was historically to the west of the hedge line, the majority is located to the east. Development beyond the former hedge line, would result in development which is outside the defined employment boundary for Greendale Business park and therefore in the open countryside. While policy seeks to permit intensification on existing business sites, and expansion of existing small scale employment uses, neither category is considered appropriate in this instance given the size and scale of the business park and the May Gurney enterprise itself, and the fact that there is a defined employment boundary in place to assist in the management of development spread.

As recognised in the introduction, development within this field has twice before been considered, most significantly when an application for car parking was considered at appeal. While the application was considered before the local plan was adopted, the Inspector chose to give it moderate weight as it had reached an advanced stage. With the Plan now adopted, its policies, together with those of the Devon Structure Plan provide the guidance against which this application should be considered. Their weighting has therefore only increased following adoption. Within the Inspectors statement, he noted that the breach of the hedgerow and the necessary change in levels within the field would result in the loss of a logical boundary for the employment site. Further, he recognised that “when the field is restored to its natural state it will return to being an attractive part of the wider landscape. I am in no doubt that hard surfacing and parked vehicles would intrude into this scene and be detrimental to the appearance and character of the countryside”.

Since the appeal was heard the hedgerow has been removed and the land regraded. The loss of the hedgerow is to be regretted but this was subject to a formal hedgerow removal notice and it was considered that there were no means available to prevent its loss. The regrading of the land (to reduce levels and enable the development proposed here to take place) is also regretted and technically needs planning permission as it is considered an engineering operation. However change in land form is limited and in itself is not considered significantly harmful. The change in use as proposed with the current application would result both in significant visual intrusion and physical intrusion of built development into the open countryside and harm its character and appearance, particularly as a buffer between the existing residential properties to the east, the road, public access point and the rest of the existing business park. Therefore despite the hedgerow being removed, the application represents development that intrudes in the open countryside and is considered contrary to policy.

Economic and employment opportunity

It is recognised that employment and business opportunities are important and extremely valuable to the local economy and therefore, where possible, should be supported. Support for this application has arisen from the Councils own Economic development Officer and it is understandable that such an application is seen as beneficial. However it is imperative that

economic development and employment facilities are located in appropriate locations in terms of access, surrounding operations and particularly the natural environment. In this instance and despite economic support, it is considered that the breach of the employment boundary and the resulting intrusion into land designated as open countryside is too significant to be outweighed by the economic benefits that arise. Unless there are clear mitigating circumstances, development should be located within existing built up area boundaries or employment area and applications determined in accordance with the adopted Local Plan.

Site Access

The Local Highway Authority have advised that although the site is adjacent to an existing business park, it is remote from any urban settlement and therefore approval would compromise the sustainable transport objectives in that virtually all trips to and from the facility would be made by car. Further concerns are also raised that the development is not accompanied by sufficient travel and transport assessments given the scale and nature of the proposed development. While it is considered that the sustainable transports aims would indeed be further undermined by this development, it is considered difficult to substantiate these on appeal given the on going and permitted intensification of the allocated park area immediately adjacent to this site.

However the lack of evidence to support the application in terms of Transport Assessments and Travel Plans is a significant flaw within the application. These are essential to enable a full consideration of the impact on the surrounding road network, particularly the A3052 which is already a busy route.

Other Matters

It is noted that local residents have raised specific concerns regarding pollution, including noise, dust and light. While much of this is unfortunately associated with any industrial estate, mitigation can be provide in the form of conditions controlling the type of illumination erected and the hours of operation. In the event that Members are minded to permit this development conditions on these aspects should be considered.

Further Members are advised that due to the position of the proposed development outside the defined area boundary, it would need to be treated as a departure in the event that it is permitted. This would require the further advertisement of the application as such, before referring the entire scheme to the Government Office for the South West advising them that the Council is minded to approve. It would then rest with the Government Office as to whether to 'call in' the application or to allow it to proceed to the final issuing of a decision.

CONCLUSIONS

The application proposes the significant expansion of an existing business into a field which despite having its physical boundary removed and land regraded, represents open countryside. Such intrusion into this area would harm the character of the area, through both the visual appearance (despite the loss of the existing hedgerow) and the physical characteristics of the site. Such development would fail to accord with countryside protection policies and is not outweighed by the economic benefits that would result from such development. Further the application is not accompanied by sufficient information concerning the access and traffic movements to and from a development of significant scale. In this regard, the application is therefore recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE for the following reason(s)

1. The proposed development would result in a significant intrusion into land which is outside a defined employment boundary resulting in significant intrusion into the open countryside. Such development would harm the character and appearance of the land as well as provide a built form and significant physical presence in land, which is considered agricultural. The application is therefore considered contrary to aims within National guidance (PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development and PPS7 - Sustainable Development in Rural Areas), Policies C01 (Landscape Character and Local Distinctiveness) and CO6 (Quality of New Development) of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 - 2016 and Policies S5 (Countryside Protection), D1 (Design and Local Distinctiveness) and E6 (Small-scale Employment Development in Rural Areas) of the Adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995 – 2011.

2. Adequate information has not been submitted to satisfy the Local Planning Authority that the proposal is acceptable in terms of traffic impact, access and meeting sustainable transport objectives contrary to advice given within PPG13, Policies TR2 (Co-ordinating Land Use Travel Planning), TR5 (Hierarchy of Modes), and TR10 (Strategic Road Network) of the Devon County Structure 2001 – 2016 Plan and Policies TA3 (Transport Assessments/Travel Plans) and TA7 (Adequacy of Road Network and Site Access) of the adopted East Devon Local Plan 1995 - 2011

List of Background Papers

Application file, consultations and policy documents referred to in the report.