

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Main List of Applications 11th January 2018

CH/2017/2015/RC

Case Officer: Mr Mike Shires
Date Received: 27.10.2017 **Decide by Date:** 25.12.2017
Parish: Amersham **Ward:** Amersham On The Hill
App Type: Regulation 3 - Chiltern District Council
Proposal: Proposed alterations to provide additional car parking including adaptation of existing highway vehicular entrance, formation of new vehicular exit and associated works
Location: Chiltern District Council
 King George V House
 King George V Road
 Amersham
 Buckinghamshire
 HP6 5AW
Applicant: Chiltern District Council

SITE CONSTRAINTS

Article 4 Direction
 Adjacent to Unclassified Road
 Community Assets/ CDC Owned Land
 Within 500m of SINC NC1
 Thames Groundwater Prot Zone GC9
 Area for Business, Storage, Distribution

CALL IN

This application has not been called in by a Member but is referred to the Planning Committee, in accordance with the Council's Constitution, as the District Council is the applicant and the proposal is on Council owned land.

SITE LOCATION

The application site comprises the existing District Council offices in Amersham. The U-shaped office building presently has car parking to the south east and south west of the building, along with two smaller sections of basement parking. The car park is currently served by a vehicular access taken from King George V Road.

To the south east of the application site is an existing residential building containing flats for the elderly (Kings Lodge). To the south west are the Police Station, Health Centre and Law Courts. Opposite the site entrance, across King George V Road, is the library car park and King George V playing fields.

THE APPLICATION

Planning permission is sought for the alterations to provide additional car parking including changes to the existing car park entrance, formation of a new vehicular exit and associated works.

The existing entrance/exit will be altered to become the entrance only. It will be narrowed in part and the existing barrier will be positioned closer to the road, allowing two cars to wait off the road before the barrier, instead of the current four. Four new parallel parking bays will be formed just beyond the barrier. A further four parallel parking bays will be formed as the internal access road turns to the right within the site and a new vehicular exit, with an exit barrier, will be formed to King George V Road, between the office building and the existing entrance. A small landscaped area is proposed either side of the new exit and six existing spaces would be lost in this area. A street lighting column would need to be taken down or moved for the new exit to be formed, although this is not a planning matter.

To the south west of the Council offices, between the existing building and the Police Station, a large proportion of the existing paved open space will be replaced by a new row of parking spaces. This would entail the removal of three spaces to allow access to the new area, and a new row of 17 spaces would be formed (including three spaces for Blue Badge holders). Various small trees and raised brick planters would be removed in this area.

The proposal would result in a net gain of 17 parking spaces.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None directly relevant to this proposal.

TOWN COUNCIL

Amersham Town Council has no objections to the proposal.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at time of drafting report.

CONSULTATIONS

District Building Control:

"The proposed work should comply with Approved Document M - Access to and use of buildings."

Buckinghamshire County Council Highway Authority:

"The application seeks planning consent to reconfigure the existing car park to provide 17 additional parking spaces, including 4 dedicated disabled spaces. The proposal includes the adaptation of the existing highway vehicular entrance, and the formation of new vehicular exit onto King George V Road to create a one way in and out system.

In terms of the proposed site layout, I can confirm that the proposed parking spaces are of the appropriate dimensions, and there is adequate space for vehicles to manoeuvre within the site.

It is proposed to alter the existing vehicular access to make it an 'in only' access, which includes narrowing of the access within the site curtilage to reduce the access to single width. The existing barrier entry system is proposed to be relocated closer to the entrance in order to facilitate additional parallel parking spaces along the access road into the site. Currently, the barrier system affords space for four vehicles to queue clear of the highway while waiting to enter the site. By relocating the barrier, the queuing capacity would be reduced to only two vehicles. Having visited the site during the morning peak hour, it is apparent that at numerous times during the morning rush, queues are exceeding two vehicles. Therefore, the proposed new arrangement

would result in vehicles queuing out onto King George V Road. This situation would be further exacerbated by the proposal to locate parallel parking spaces so close to the entrance, as if a vehicle is manoeuvring in/out of these spaces, another vehicle entering the site would be forced to wait for longer.

The proposed barrier entry arrangement would lead to delays to vehicles leaving the highway and has the potential for vehicles to only partially clear the main road before suddenly stopping at the risk of collision from behind. This is detrimental to Highway safety and convenience and the Highway Authority would look to resist any development that could increase this risk. Notwithstanding this, I am satisfied that this concern could be overcome by condition. The applicant could address this either by revising the proposed site layout plan to retain the barrier in its existing location and removing parallel parking bays marked 1 and 2. Alternatively, a different method of parking control could be proposed, such as ANPR or permits, and the barrier system removed.

The application also proposes a new access onto King George V Road to provide an 'exit only'. Adequate visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m in both directions can be achieved commensurate with the speed limit, provided any boundary planting/fencing is kept below 0.6m in height. I am satisfied that this can be secured by condition on any planning permission granted. It is also noted that the location of the proposed new access would require the relocation of the existing street lamp; these works would form part of the S184 process.

To avoid driver confusion, signage and lining to enforce the one way system would be required, which can also be secured by condition.

The site is in a sustainable location only a short walking distance from the railway station and Amersham town centre. In line with the overarching aim of the NPPF to promote sustainable development, some cycle parking spaces should be provided, as the provision of additional cycle parking may encourage more people to travel by alternative modes. I am satisfied that this can be secured by condition.

The reconfiguration of the car park will cause disruption during the construction phase and as such, the applicant is required to submit a Construction Management Plan (CMP). The Highway Authority has concerns that during construction there will be a loss of parking available at the site, which will have a detrimental impact on the surrounding area. In view of this, it is expected that the applicant makes adequate provisions to minimise disruption during the construction phase. As part of the CMP, the applicant would need to provide details of timescales and, where possible, how the maximum amount of car parking will remain undisrupted. Where a loss of parking cannot be avoided, an indication of any potential alternative locations where parking may take place should be provided. Details should also be submitted of how users of the car park will be made aware in advance of works to minimise the impact.

Mindful of the above, I have no objection to the proposed development subject to conditions and informatives."

District Tree and Landscape Officer:

"The site plan shows numbers for the trees, suggesting that a tree survey has been carried out, but no such survey has been submitted with the application. The Council Offices were opened in 1986 and many of the existing trees were planted as part of the landscaping scheme around that time.

There is a line of whitebeams about 8m in height between the current access drive and the apartments at Kings Lodge. The application proposes the removal of a low laurel hedge and the construction of some additional parking spaces on the Kings Lodge side. The External Works Layout plan shows no-dig construction for these spaces, which would be appropriate to reduce root damage.

Two trees T25 & T26 about 10-12m in height are shown for removal for an additional parking space.

The application also shows an additional line of parking spaces in front of the police station. This would require the loss of a raised planting bed, various trees and many shrubs. The tree loss includes three birches about 15m in height and a cherry about 12m in height in addition to a number of smaller trees. I am concerned about the loss of the raised planter and the three birches, which are good trees and have a significant effect in softening the character of the area. I have previously commented that I would prefer a solution that retains the raised planter and the birches. This could be achieved by having a layout with several small side-bays from the main access road with maybe four or five parking spaces on each side.

In conclusion I have some concerns about the tree loss and would prefer a layout that allows the retention of the three birch trees in front of the police station."

POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Core Strategy for Chiltern District - Adopted November 2011: Policies CS4, CS20, CS25 and CS26.

The Chiltern Local Plan Adopted 1 September 1997 (including alterations adopted 29 May 2001) Consolidated September 2007 & November 2011: Saved Policies GC1, GC3, GC4, E3, TR2, TR3, TR11, TR15 and TR16.

Sustainable Construction and Renewable Energy SPD - Adopted 25 February 2015.

EVALUATION

Principle of development

1. The site is located within the built up area of Amersham and comprises a local authority owned ancillary car park adjacent to the existing District Council offices. It is located within a defined area for business and storage or distribution development are defined on the Proposals Map, where development for such uses is acceptable in principle, subject to a site specific assessment in relation to the impact on the character of the area, amenity of neighbouring properties, highway issues and any other relevant considerations.

2. Recent capacity studies undertaken in Amersham town centre have identified an increasing demand for parking spaces, to serve the needs of both shoppers and rail commuters. This pressure for space was most evident at both Sycamore Road and King George V Road facilities and predictions showed that additional parking will soon be required to meet expected growth. In response and to address this demand, the existing Amersham multi storey car park at King George V Road is currently being enlarged. However an increase in parking facilities for staff at the District Council offices (as proposed) would further help this situation, by alleviating the need for some staff to park in the multi-storey car park. It is further noted that Paragraph 40 of the NPPF states that local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking in town centres so that it is convenient, safe and secure.

Impact on the character of the area

3. The NPPF emphasises that the Government regards the design of the built environment as important. Good design is seen as a key aspect of sustainable development. Local authorities should seek to secure high quality design and it should contribute positively to making places better for people.

4. Policies GC1 and CS20 refer to the design of development at a local level and require that it should reflect the design and character of the surrounding area. The proposed changes to the car park entrance/exit are not considered to adversely alter the character of the street scene, as the site is already an existing car park with access to King George V Road. The area between the offices and the police station is largely contained by the surrounding buildings and not visible in the wider area. This section of the site adjacent to the police station is currently paved and contains various trees and raised planters. However the area is not a formal public open space, nor does it serve a particularly important community function, as it serves as a walkway between the Health Centre (from the direction of the town centre) and the Law Courts. A pathway would be retained in this location, alongside the police station, so pedestrian permeability through the area would not be materially affected. The existing raised planters, seats and paved area towards Chiltern Avenue would also be unaffected. The Tree and Landscape Officer regrets the potential loss of some of the raised planters and the three birch trees next to the police station, which have an effect in softening the character of the area. It is indeed regrettable that the three birch trees in particular in front of the police station are to be lost, however, it is noted that there is some opportunity for new planting around this area, albeit more limited in extent, including . On balance, it is considered that, subject to requiring some new planting, which can be secured by condition, the impact on the character and appearance of the area is acceptable. It is also considered necessary to require a "no-dig" construction method, as proposed, for the alterations and new parking bays around the existing car park entrance, to ensure the health of the row of whitebeam trees.

Residential amenity

5. Policy GC3 requires development proposals to achieve good standards of amenity for the future occupiers of development and to protect the amenities enjoyed by the occupants of existing and adjoining neighbouring properties.

6. The only nearby residential properties are the flats for elderly people in Kings Lodge. The majority of the works would be set away from these properties and the flats already face onto the existing access and car park. The four additional bays would be closer to the flats than the existing parking spaces, however traffic movements in this area would be reduced as this access would be the entrance only, and not for entrance and exit, as is currently the case. The whitebeam trees near to the flats would also be retained. Therefore the proposal is not considered to significantly affect the amenities of these flats.

Highway implications

7. Buckinghamshire County Highway Authority has been consulted and their response is copied in full above, under the Consultations section of this report. The visibility from the new exit from the car park is acceptable. It is noted, however, that concerns are raised regarding the new entrance layout, as the barrier will be located closer to the road, with space for two cars to wait off the road while the barrier opens, rather than the current four cars. The Highway Authority has concerns that this could cause queueing and impact on the highway network. However, it is important to note that the relocation of the entrance barrier could take place without requiring express planning permission. This is because it forms part of the means of enclosure of the site and as it is under 2m in height, and not adjacent to the highway, it could be positioned anywhere on the access road, providing it was not adjacent to the highway. As this element of the proposal does not in itself require planning permission from the LPA, it would not be reasonable to require the changes suggested by the Highway Authority. A condition restricting any barriers closer to the highway than shown is considered reasonable and would represent a highway gain, as no such restriction exists at present. The comments relating to signage and a Construction Management Plan are noted and conditions are considered necessary in respect of these matters.

Conclusions

8. Having regard to all matters above, it is considered that the scheme accords with policies contained in the Development Plan and national guidance set out in the NPPF.

Working with the applicant

9. In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Council, in dealing with this application, has worked in a positive and proactive way and has focused on seeking solutions to the issues arising from the development proposal.

Chiltern District Council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by;

- offering a pre-application advice service,
- updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application as appropriate and, where possible and appropriate, suggesting solutions.

In this case, Chiltern District Council engaged in constructive informal discussion prior to the submission of the application.

10. The following recommendation is made having regard to the above and also to the content of the Human Rights Act 1998.

RECOMMENDATION: Resolve to recommend Council to approve own development

Subject to the following conditions:-

1 C108A General Time Limit

2 The new parking spaces shall not be brought into use until the new vehicular exit onto King George V Road has been formed and the existing access and access road have been altered in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the highway and of the development.

3 The new car park exit to King George V Road shall not be brought into use until visibility splays have been provided on both sides of the access between a point 2.4 metres along the centre line of the access measured from the edge of the carriageway and a point 43 metres along the edge of the carriageway measured from the intersection of the centre line of the access. The area contained within the splays shall thereafter be kept free of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height above the nearside channel level of the carriageway.

Reason: To provide adequate intervisibility between the car park access and the existing public highway for the safety and convenience of users of the highway and of the access.

4 Prior to the new layout being brought into use, details of car park signage and markings to highlight the one way entrance and exit system shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved system shall thereafter be implemented as approved and thereafter maintained.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the car park and of the highway.

5 Prior to the commencement of the development, a Construction Traffic Management Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. The Plan shall include:

- Details of construction timescales;
- Details of where parking lost during construction will take place;
- Details of staff information to be provided in advance of works;

The development hereby permitted shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved Construction Management Plan.

Reason: To minimise danger and inconvenience to car park and highway users.

6 The new areas for parking and manoeuvring shown on the submitted plans shall be retained for those purposes and shall not thereafter be used for any other purpose.

Reason: To enable vehicles to draw off, park and turn clear of the highway to minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to users of the adjoining highway.

7 The new parking spaces annotated as spaces 1-4 on the approved site plan shall only be laid out and constructed within the root protection area of the row of whitebeam trees using a method of construction that does not involve the removal of the original ground surface or any damage to tree roots.

Reason: To minimise damage to the roots of the existing established trees and hedgerows within and around the site that are proposed to be retained.

8 C406 Landscaping Scheme to be Submitted

9 C407 Landscaping Scheme to be Implemented

10 Before any new hardstanding is laid out, named types or details of the surfacing materials for the new areas of hardstanding shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the development is not detrimental to the character of the locality.

11 No gates or barriers shall be erected closer to the road than those hereby approved across either of the vehicular entrance and exit points to King George V Road.

Reason: To ensure adequate visibility is maintained between the car park accesses and the highway, and to ensure sufficient space is retained for vehicles waiting to enter the car park prior to gaining access through the entrance barrier, for the safety and convenience of users of the highway and of the access.

12 AP01 Approved Plans

INFORMATIVES

1 **INFORMATIVE:** The applicant is advised that a licence is required from Bucks County Council for any works affecting the highway. Furthermore, the new and altered accesses should be constructed in accordance with Buckinghamshire County Council's guide note "Commercial Vehicular Access Within Highway Limits" 2013. In addition, a lamp post will need to be removed/relocated to form the new car park exit and this should be discussed with the County Council. The off-site works will need to be constructed under a Section 184 of the Highways Act legal agreement. This Small Works Agreement must be obtained from the Highway Authority before any works are carried out on any footway, carriageway, verge or other land forming part of the highway. A minimum period of 3 weeks is required to process the agreement following the receipt by the Highway Authority of a written request. Please contact Development Management at the following address for information:-

Highways Development Management
6th Floor, County Hall
Walton Street, Aylesbury,
Buckinghamshire

2 INFORMATIVE: The applicant is advised that, pursuant to Conditions 8 and 9 above, it will be expected that additional landscaping should be incorporated around the new exit onto King George V Road and in the areas annotated for new landscaping on the approved site plan, including in front of the Law Courts. Where possible, suitable tree planting should be incorporated.

3 INFORMATIVE: The applicant is advised that it is an offence under S151 of the Highways Act 1980 for vehicles leaving the development site to carry mud onto the public highway. Facilities should therefore be provided and used on the development site for cleaning the wheels of vehicles before they leave the site.

4 INFORMATIVE: The applicant is advised that no vehicles associated with the building operations on the development site should be parked on the public highway so as to cause an obstruction. Any such wilful obstruction is an offence under S137 of the Highways Act 1980.

The End