

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P13/V1139/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	23.5.2013
<b>PARISH</b>	MILTON
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Bill Jones Michael Murray
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Spen Hill Developments Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	Former Esso Research Centre Milton Hill Oxfordshire, OX13 6AE
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Construction of: A Class B8 home deliveries (Dot Com) centre, with vehicle maintenance building, gatehouse, vehicle fueling and washing facilities van and staff parking, service yard, revised access from A4130, emergency access from Featherbed Lane, landscaping and associated infrastructure.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	None
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	447391/190391
<b>OFFICER</b>	Mark Doodes

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is the 4.8 Ha former Esso Research Centre campus on Milton Hill. The site has been disused for a number of approximately 13 years.
- 1.2 Of note is the 2006 outline permission for a mixed use development for offices, general industrial and storage as well as parking etc. This permission was extended in 2011, and therefore remains extant.
- 1.3 The food retailer Tesco, wish to occupy the unit, to relieve pressure on stores where home deliveries are currently from. This application is in direct response to a surge in online food shopping that is increasing by 15% a year. The proposal is essentially a food supermarket but without members of the public present, customer orders are picked, packed and shipped in a semi automated and highly organised operation that has been based on similar operations in Reading and Croydon. Tesco seek to serve homes within a 45 minute drive of the new centre, covering much of the Vale, South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- 1.4 Copies of the site location plan can be found **attached** at appendix 1.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The applicant seeks full planning permission for a B8 home delivery centre, to accommodate mezzanines and the degree of automation a taller structure is required than a regular warehouse.
- The proposals are for a 120m wide, 83m deep building and with a ridge height of 18.5m (eaves of 15m). Parking will be provided for staff and delivery vans (typically of a "Transit" van size), in the form of 260 cars, disabled parking, 18 motorcycle bays and 48 motorcycles. There is a separate parking area for 193 vans serving 28 parking bays. A separate vehicle maintenance building (garage workshop) has been proposed to service and repair the fleet of vans (Tyres, brakes, exhaust, servicing etc). A jet-washing area is also proposed in the car park. Of key note is that half of the site, roughly, will remain undeveloped by these proposals. The illustrative masterplan shows an office-style development, however Councillors should be aware that this is not

proposed in this application.

Detailed plans can be found **attached** at appendix 2.

- 2.2 Based on the information provided, such an operation will employ 750 people into 500 Full Time Equivalent posts. These staff will work one of three 8 hour shifts, meaning that the operation will run 24 hours a day. As is the case with regular supermarkets, many of the new positions will be part-time and almost all will be shift work. Due to the nature of the work, practically all these posts are expected to be new positions.
- 2.3 Emergency access is proposed on Featherbed lane, to the rear. 9% of the power required to run the operation will be generated on-site by use of Photo Voltaic cells.
- 2.4 The site falls within the Lowland Vale landscape zone and within a designated employment site (Milton Hill Business and Technology Centre). There are no listed buildings nearby and the site is not within a conservation area.

### 3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Milton Parish Council – Mixed views. The parish welcome the new jobs but have concerns over traffic generation. No objection overall.

Hugh Coddington – OCC Archeologist – Holding Objection - Recommend an onsite invasive study – Updates to be provided at committee.

Environment Agency - No objection

Oxfordshire County Council – Object on Archeology and highways grounds. Highways matters have since been agreed.

Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team - No objection

Waste Management Officer - No objection

Highways Authority – No objection

Drainage Engineer - No objection, subject to conditions

Landscape Architect - Vale of White Horse DC - No objection

Neighbour Object (11) – Main objections relate to traffic, noise, road safety, construction noise and visual impact.

Infinium UK (neighbouring commercial business) – Objection signed by staff citing 1) Proposed traffic movements to/from A4130, 2) Safety on the access road, and 3) Noise.

### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 [P12/V0649](#) - Approved (18/05/2012)  
Change of use from offices (Class B1) to use for, or in connection with, public workshop ( Class D1), with associated extensions.

[P12/V0368](#) - Approved (16/05/2012)  
Single Storey Extension to the East Elevation

[P11/V2565/EX](#) - Approved (22/12/2011)  
Application to extend the time limit of Outline Planning Permission 06/01200/OUT, for

'Redevelopment of site involving demolition of all buildings, removal of hardstandings and remediation of the site, for 280, 957 sqft/26,102 sqm of floorspace comprising 134,333 sqft/12,480 sqm B1 office, 144,624 sqft/13,436 sqm B2/B8 industrial, warehousing and distribution. Associated supporting facilities including a 2,000 sqft/186 sqm A3 cafe, A1 shop and associated car parking spaces.'

[P06/V1200/O](#) - Approved (07/11/2006)

Redevelopment of site involving demolition of all buildings, removal of hardstandings and remediation of the site, for 280, 957 sqft/26,102 sqm of floorspace comprising 134,333 sqft/12,480 sqm B1 office, 144,624 sqft/13,436 sqm B2/B8 industrial, warehousing and distribution. Associated supporting facilities including a 2,000 sqft/186 sqm A3 cafe, A1 shop and associated car parking spaces.

[P03/V0915](#) - Approved (04/12/2003)

Development of Technology Centre, blending plant ancillary accommodation, roads and car parking.

Pre 2003 – Much history relating to the Esso centre, which has been removed in the interests of brevity and (lack of) relevance. Full history is available online.

## 5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

### 5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC1 - Design

DC10 - The Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Development

DC12 - Water Quality and Resources

DC13 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

DC14 - Flood Risk and Water Run-off

DC20 - External Lighting

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC7 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

E12 - Large Campus Style Sites

NE9 - The Lowland Vale

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

## 6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### 6.1 The key issues with this application are;

- 1) Comparing this scheme with the 2011 extant permission.
- 2) Traffic and highways issues
- 3) Landscaping issues relating to this scheme.

### 6.2 Dealing with the extant permission firstly, this scheme proposes a smaller distribution footprint than that which permission exists for, namely 144,000 square feet of distribution space. This scheme proposes 119,000 square feet. The extant permission proposed some retail offering and office space, which the agents argue could still be provided in the future as part of a "*phase II*". The principle of development is reinforced by the sites status as an employment area as designated in the local plan. Although the style of employment may have been originally intended to be high-value "head quarters" style employment, the site has remained undeveloped for over a decade, showing the demand for such office space in this location to be limited. The proposals will provide employment for 750 people in the area, most of the posts will be accessible to a range of people, and will suit people seeking part-time flexible work. The clear

positive ramifications for the local economy, along with the prospect of a presently derelict site being regenerated make the case stronger for this applications planning merits.

- 6.3 In highways terms (policy DC5), no objection is raised from OCC, guided largely by the intensity of the extant permission. Work has been undertaken to analyse the safety of the key junction at the A4130, including its suitability for HGV movements and “*transit van*” movements. Of note is that the internal road is a private one. S106 and S278 legal agreements are in progress, members will be updated at committee by the case officer. Contributions towards public transport and Science Vale UK have been sought and agreed by County, and off-site highways works agreed and a monitoring fee. County officers have analysed the traffic projections, the sustainable transport proposals and the off-site matters and have raised no objection to the scheme.
- 6.4 Landscaping (policy DC6) is critical in this scheme, this is since the proposals are for a taller structure than originally approved in 2006/2011 and the site is on an elevated location within the AONB. The key concern in this scheme is the long and wide views of the site, rather than the closer views, which would be taken within the context of the commercial employment site and are more informed by local lower level planting and screening. Such screening and planting is considered to be acceptable. In terms of the wider views, policy NE9 seeks to protect the long open views of the lowland vale. This policy test has a relatively high threshold, in that the LPA must be able to demonstrate a clear impact on the wider area that is harmful. In this instance, the mitigating factors of distance from nearby residents, distance from the ridgeway, and the landscaping scheme proposed along with the structures design and colouring, all lead the case officer to the conclusion that the works would have a measurable but small impact on the area. The site will be assessed within the context of the commercial and business area and whilst some issues have been highlighted along the Featherbed Lane and south western internal boundaries, such matters are not considered compelling enough to warrant refusal and are the subject of ongoing discussions. No objection was made overall by landscaping officers, but several recommendations were made.
- 6.5 Conflicting uses (Policy DC9) – The site is part of an allocated employment site, with a consent for a large distribution element, so analysis must be tempered within this context. The closest two businesses are the Devere Venues Hotel and the Infinium UK offices which are located immediately abutting the site to the south. Both nearby uses require different considerations. Firstly, the Hotel is a “pseudo-residential” use, so the potential impact of noise, vibration and activity on the application site is an important consideration. It is noted that the nearest occupied hotel rooms are some distance away from the application and some natural screening exists in the form of tall trees and mature planting. This will screen much of the potential light pollution and will reduce the noise, principally by virtue of the distances involved. The applicants have proposed a highly energy efficient building, built to BREEAM “very good” standards and will effectively be airtight. These two factors will greatly mitigate the noise impact of the day-to-day internal noise from the building to an acceptable standard. Environmental Health raised no objection to the scheme. This leaves traffic movement and in particular HGV movement. The HGV movements to the site are expected to be 16 per day, or circa 1 per hour. The HGV circulation bay and “docking” bays have been designed to ensure that the minimum of reversing and manoeuvring is required, which typically are the most disturbing element of HGV movements. A tall acoustic screen has been proposed to deflect mid and high frequency noises back into the site, which is considered to be a sensible solution. The higher standards of sound insulation in modern hotel rooms and the presence of air conditioning at the hotel rooms has also been an informing factor in this conclusion.

Impact on Infinium UK – Infinium are the primary objector to this scheme challenging many aspects of the works from the principle of development, highways and amenity impact. As discussed elsewhere, such views, however well intended and eloquently argued have been viewed within the context of the extant permission and the commercial nature of the area in question. The Infinium UK offices will overlook over the “transit” van car park, with a separation of around 25-30m, the low-key uncovered refuelling station and the jet wash area. From discussions with agents the transit van fleet will consist exclusively of new vans which will generate a noise level identical to that of the modern family cars which share the same engine. Therefore, the van parking area itself is not considered to pose an unreasonable level of disturbance to the commercial office building. In terms of overall movements from staff, Tesco's run a car-pool scheme which will help offset some movements, provide cycle bays and are contributing to the local bus network financially. The movement of staff will also be driven by the shift patterns which will likely be changed during off-peak traffic hours for operational efficiency reasons. The vehicle maintenance yard is some distance away at a distance of around 90 metres, and is not considered to pose undue conflict. The key test in assessing such impact, is that of reasonable expectation. Would one reasonably expect, all things being equal, that a mid-level distribution hub could co-exist within close proximity to a B1 office. The conclusion that officers reach is that such range of uses are reasonable and compatible and that provided site specific matters are controlled and considered then such potential disturbance is considered acceptable. A number of issues were raised by Infinium which County officers are satisfied have been either mitigated or lack substance to warrant refusal or reasonable objection. Therefore, having weighed up the various factors, the application is considered to comply with policy DC9 of the local plan.

- 6.6 Policies DC13 and DC14 seek to protect the sensitive surface and foul water systems from the impact of development. The site does fall within flood zone 1, the lowest of the flood plain categories. The site's elevated position means that the site itself is unlikely to flood, however the large area of high run-off roof space proposed, demands that a SUDS scheme is necessary to release water steadily into the surrounding water table, thereby overcoming potential problems down stream. The Vale Drainage engineer has examined the proposals for a SUDS scheme and has made no objection, subject to standard pre-commencement conditions.
- 6.7 Archaeology – A holding objection has been raised by OCC concerning the need for invasive surveys in the area, over and above a desktop survey as some evidence of Bronze Age remains exist in the area. Such an assessment is taken in full knowledge of the brownfield nature of the site. The agent has confirmed that such trench works are underway however no results are likely to be reported for a number of weeks. Officers at the district are comfortable that such matters can be controlled by condition, and should not unduly delay the project, unless ancient remains are found, of course.
- 6.8 Employment (Policy E12) – Corporately, the Vale is committed to growing jobs and employment opportunities in the area. The addition of 500 FTEs into the local economy, with the knock-on secondary gains such employment will bring are a strong feature of this application, and the locally accessible, lower skilled, flexible work that this application brings will provide opportunities suitable to a range of applicants seeking non-traditional 9 to 5 employment. The scheme as submitted allows for a 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of employment development to take place on the site in the future, and the works proposed does not prejudice such development in the future. This application meets the employment criteria set out in the local plan and strategic aims of the Council, including policy E12.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposals are located within a designated employment site, and an extant permission exists for a large 15m structure on the same site. The proposals will generate employment for 750 people locally, and despite some concerns regarding the scale and massing by officers, the positive aspects of this scheme outweigh the disbenefits. Highways officers are satisfied that the junction with the A-Road are satisfactory, provided various off-site works are undertaken, which are the subject of legal agreements.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

**That following a S278 and S106 agreement with the County, Planning Permission be granted, subject to the following conditions;**

- 1 : Commencement 3 yrs - Full Planning Permission
- 2 : Approved plans \*
- 3 : CN12 - Access for Archaeological Investig. (Full
- 4 : LS2[I] - Landscaping Scheme (Implement) (Full)
5. Drainage – SUDS scheme – surface water and sewage – prior to occupation
6. Archeology – Watching Brief, unless otherwise agreed in writing.
7. Materials – submission
8. Contamination Clause – where further pollution is discovered
9. Contamination – water courses

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