

## **SUT/19470 – Rosemound Developments Ltd.**

**Mixed use re-development comprising up to 9360sq.m. of Class B8 Storage and Distribution: 830 sq.m. of Class B1 Offices, 2436sq.m. of retained workshop/storage buildings and external storage areas for Amey: Residential development and associated car parking and landscaping. Amey Construction Group, Appleford Road, Sutton Courtenay**

### **1.0 The Proposal**

- 1.1 The Amey site is situated on the eastern edge of the village of Sutton Courtenay, on the Appleford Road. This is an outline application for the partial redevelopment of the site for housing (0.5 hectares equating to 15 dwellings), a new development of Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) units (8908 sq metres), a new two storey office block of 929 sq metres and the retention of two existing buildings on the site totalling 2436 sq metres for the Amey company. The amount of open storage on the site would be significantly reduced with the land to the south of the new Class B8 units being taken out of industrial use and landscaped. Additional landscaping is also shown around the proposed housing site. All matters are reserved for future consideration apart from access and siting. The application involves the demolition of over 6,500 sq metres of building on the site.
- 1.2 The application site comprises approximately 6.89 hectares of land and is bounded to the west by residential development and open countryside, to the north by the Appleford Road with open countryside beyond, to the east by a tree belt next to a private road leading to the Hanson mineral works with open countryside beyond and to the south by the Parish's Millennium Park. The existing site has three accesses onto the Appleford Road. A site location plan is attached at **Appendix 1**. Extracts from the Applicant's Planning Statement supporting the application are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.3 Although until recently only the most easterly access was used by Amey, all three accesses are considered to be lawful. The application proposes to serve the housing development from the most westerly access, the retained Amey business from the middle access and the new Class B8 development from the easterly access.
- 1.4 Amey, a company that provides specialist support services to Network Rail and other sectors of the transport industry, has occupied the site for over 30 years. Over recent years the scale of the business activity at the site has diminished and at the present time approximately 150 employees work at the site.
- 1.5 The site has a number of existing buildings which cover about 50% of the site and these are located principally in the north western half of the site. The remaining half is mainly undeveloped and is used for open storage (approximately 35,500 sq metres).
- 1.6 There are approximately 9000 sq metres (97,500 sq ft) of floorspace available in the existing buildings. Half of this provides office accommodation and the rest is used for covered storage and service and maintenance of the company's fleet of vehicles, plant and machinery. The office buildings are single storey and are located in the north western part of the application site. The storage and maintenance buildings are larger warehouse structures located more towards the centre of the site. The largest building in this group has a ridge height of approximately 9 metres.
- 1.7 A 1980's office block '2morrow Court' is located on the north eastern edge of the site. This is not included within the application site but the offices are accessed via the eastern access.
- 1.8 The application is brought to Committee because four letters of objection have been received to the proposal.

## 2.0 **Planning History**

- 2.1 There have been many applications submitted which relate to the application site but the most relevant to this proposal is the Certificate of Lawful Use or Development (CLUED), which was granted in February 1993. This regularised a number of uses on the site including Class B1 office use, workshops, open and covered storage and a civil engineers contractors yard. A copy of the Certificate is attached at **Appendix 3**.

## 3.0 **Planning Policies**

- 3.1 Policy H1 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan sets out the amount and distribution of housing in the county and states that in small settlements and villages, housing development will be limited to that required to meet local needs and support balanced communities. The importance of maximising the development of previously developed land is also highlighted. Policy H3 states that development should be at a density of at least 30 dwellings to the hectare. Policy H4 provides a framework for the provision of affordable housing in the county.
- 3.2 Structure Plan Policy E1 requires employment development to be located in existing concentrations of employment with good accessibility, provide a range of accommodation and not give rise to heavy traffic on local roads. Policy EN1 states that development should protect and where possible enhance the landscape. Development should not be permitted if it harms the landscape.
- 3.3 Policy H5 of the adopted Local Plan is relevant. This requires new housing development in Sutton Courtenay to be limited to infill or minor development of a scale and character compatible with the village, on sites within the built up area of the settlement or ones which form a natural completion of the village.
- 3.4 In villages such as Sutton Courtenay, Policy 10 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan (as modified) allows for new development of up to 15 dwellings (0.5 ha) on sites within the built up area of the village provided the scale, layout, mass and design would not harm the character of the village. Policy E13 of the draft plan states that development on the Amey site that would lead to the loss of existing business land will not be permitted and redevelopment proposals will only be permitted if the resultant overall use is as sustainable as the existing use regarding vehicle movements, the effect on character of the area, the number of jobs and improved access to the site.
- 3.5 Policy NE11 seeks to enhance the landscape in this Amey area and states that new development should not further erode or damage the character of the landscape.
- 3.6 The application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan. This requires the application to be forwarded to GOSE should it be resolved to permit the proposal.

## 4.0 **Consultations**

- 4.1 The Parish Council has commented on the application and their letter is attached at **Appendix 4**.
- 4.2 The County Engineer has no objections to the proposal subject to conditions relating to the improvement of the existing access junctions, the provision of satisfactory cycle and disabled parking and the provision of a new footpath from the housing access junction to meet the existing footpath in front of the existing residential properties on the south side of Appleford Road.
- 4.3 The County Development Funding Officer has requested contributions for education, library, fire and rescue, waste management, county museum store, and social and health care totalling £43,367 (this relates to the proposed housing provision on the site)

- 4.4 The Environment Agency has objected to the application but the applicants are currently in negotiations with EA officers and are confident that this will be favourably resolved. Updated comments will be provided at the meeting.
- 4.5 Thames Water has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of a foul and surface water drainage condition.
- 4.6 County Ecologist – no objection subject to the recommendations of the water vole survey being adopted. (These are two-fold, the first that outfalls from the site should be located in the ditch on the eastern side of the site if possible and if not, that their location on the southern ditch (where evidence of water vole has been found) is agreed in consultation with a qualified ecologist, and that the development should ensure that an area of at least 5 metres from the edge of the southern ditch remains free from trees and scrub.)
- 4.7 County Archaeologist – requests PPG16 condition be attached to any permission.
- 4.8 Drainage Engineer – a full drainage strategy will need to be conditioned.
- 4.9 Housing Officer – As the application is in outline it is difficult to provide detailed comments, but there is an affordable housing need in Sutton Courtenay particularly for smaller rental units.
- 4.10 Environmental Health – suggest Condition MC34 (contamination and remediation survey)
- 4.11 6 letters of objection have been received, summarised as follows: surrounding road network and junction inadequate to cater for the proposed development, in particular Abingdon Road; there is already traffic chaos at rush hour times; traffic should be required to travel through the private roads east of the site to access the A34; HGV's using the ancient bridges on the Abingdon Road is unacceptable; will the storage and distribution units be used 24 hours a day? It is a brownfield site but any development should include a 40 metre landscaped boundary running east west between the existing residential property at 44A Appleford Road and the new housing area to protect its amenity; will this new area of housing lead to more on the site later? Noise, visual and light pollution should be minimised; the Council should ensure that industry does not impose further burden on the Parish; concern that a large plot of land at the centre of the site remains undeveloped.

## 5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 As described in the introduction, the Amey site is a large area of industrial land situated in a very sensitive location immediately adjacent to Sutton Courtenay. Whilst it is acknowledged as an important employment site for the district, it is also recognised that its proximity to Sutton Courtenay and Appleford, and the relatively poor road network in the local area, means that the use of the site has a considerable impact on the local environment. In addition, the site is in an area proposed for landscape enhancement in the Council's local plan and has a lot of untapped potential to enhance the character of the local landscape.
- 5.2 As the use of the site by Amey's has reduced, the owners have been investigating its upgrading and redevelopment and this has involved lengthy discussions with Officers, about which the local ward Member has been kept informed. The principal concern of Officers in these discussions is the potential for any redevelopment scheme to significantly increase the amount of vehicular movements to and from the site, including HGV's. Whilst the 1993 CLUED establishes a range of lawful uses over the whole of the site, a significant amount of these do not use the land in an intensive manner, for example the single storey office buildings and the open storage areas. Therefore, the redevelopment of this substantial site has the potential to considerably alter the manner in which the site is used, its visual impact and its traffic generation.

- 5.3 It must be acknowledged that the site is an important employment site, protected by emerging policy, with an established use and thus officers have attempted to negotiate a balance of uses on the site which retains employment levels, does not increase the level of traffic generation, particularly from HGV's, and enhances the landscape.
- 5.4 The package of proposals the subject of this application attempts to address all these issues. It involves an element of housing which, while in accordance with the scale of development that is allowed in villages such as Sutton Courtenay (15 dwellings/0.5 hectares), is located on a site which may not be considered to be within the built up envelop of the village. As a result, the application has been advertised as a departure from the development plan because it potentially conflicts with housing policies in both the adopted (and emerging) local plan. The remainder of the site is to be used primarily for employment purposes (retaining existing employment levels) with the exception of the south east corner which will be taken out of employment use and landscaped. This has the potential to significantly improve the landscape quality of the site.
- 5.5 The application is in outline, but with access and siting to be considered at this time. The new housing site is to be located immediately adjacent to the existing houses on Appleford Road. The size of the area of land allocated allows for no more than 15 new dwellings in line with emerging policy and, for clarity, it is recommended that a condition be attached to state that no more than 15 dwellings will be permitted on this part of the site. In accordance with emerging planning policy, 40% of these dwellings will be required to be affordable and this would be achieved through a Section 106 agreement.
- 5.6 The housing site is shown to be well landscaped on its boundaries to ensure that it has limited impact on the existing housing and to provide a good buffer with the retained Amey premises. Access to the new houses will be via the existing western access point. The highway authority is satisfied that this access is acceptable but require it to be improved. They also consider that there is sufficient distance between this access and the Appleford/Abingdon Road junction to maintain adequate highway safety.
- 5.7 The issue of the use of all three accesses on the site has caused concern locally and under normal circumstances the highway authority would prefer to see as few accesses serving the site as possible. However, in this instance, they do not consider it appropriate to bring residential traffic through an employment site and hence, as all three accesses are lawful, the highways authority considers that it has no grounds to object to them.
- 5.8 The central portion of the site retains two existing buildings and will be retained for Amey. A new B1 office building is proposed to replace the demolished buildings single storey offices. This part of the development will be served by the central access which is the best of the three accesses in terms of visibility. To the south of this area a ten metre band of new planting is proposed which extends into the eastern corner of the site.
- 5.9 The eastern part of the site is proposed to be redeveloped with Class B8 storage and distribution units. These will be no more than 10 metres in height, the same as the adjoining 2morrow building. Access to these units will be from the eastern access. Officers did request that industrial uses other than Class B8 be considered as part of this development, but the Applicant's do not consider that there is a market for these uses on this site (see supporting statement at Appendix 2).
- 5.10 On balance, Officers consider that the proposal results in an acceptable form of development despite the inclusion of a small area of housing. It allows for the redevelopment of the site in a manner which will not increase traffic and HGV movements (as required by Policy E13), retains employment levels and enhances the landscape of the site and the local area. It will also deliver a small number of affordable housing units.

## 6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 *That the application be referred to the Secretary of State with a resolution to permit subject to (i) the Environment Agency withdrawing its objection, (ii) a Section 106 agreement covering contributions to the improvement of the local highway network, education, library, fire and rescue, waste management, museum, social and health care, and affordable housing and (iii) the following conditions:*

- 1 OL3
- 2 MC34
- 3 LS11

*And further conditions relating to the following:*

- *Works to improve the visibility of existing accesses.*
- *The provision a footpath from the western (housing) access along the site frontage to join the footpath in front of the existing properties fronting Appleford Road*
- *The provision on site of cycle and disabled parking.*
- *Implementation of water vole mitigation scheme.*
- *Details to be submitted regarding foul and surface water drainage.*
- *The provision of a routing agreement.*
- *No more than 15 dwellings to be provided on the housing site.*
- *The new Class B8 buildings to be no more than 10 metres in height.*
- *The size of the eight proposed storage and distribution units shall only be provided in accordance with the floor areas shown on approved drawing no. 02059:041 and shall not be amalgamated into one another without the prior written consent of the District Planning Authority.*