

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P14/V0051/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	8.1.2014
<b>PARISH</b>	CHILTON
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Margaret Turner Reg Waite
<b>APPLICANT</b>	McCluskey Equipment Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	Upper Farm Road Chilton Didcot, OX11 0PJ
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Extension of existing storage yard and associated landscaping. (as amended by drawing no 3762LO_002 and agents letter received 3 March 2014.)
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	yes
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	448516/185858
<b>OFFICER</b>	Miss S Green

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is located immediately to the south of Upper Farm Road in Chilton. It is a storage and distribution yard. A lawful development certificate was issued in 2007 for the use of the site for general commercial storage as defined with Class B8 of the Use Classes Order. A location plan of the site is **attached** at Appendix 1.

The site is enclosed on three sides by a hedge. Along the northern, roadside boundary there are a number of containers and sheds sited next to the access to the site, which are visible from the road. To the north of the site, on the other side of Upper Farm Road, are Chilton Primary School and the Chilton Fields housing development, which is under construction. To the north-east are a small number of houses along Upper Farm Road, and Chilton Garden Centre. To the south is open land and, towards the south-east, the A34. A public footpath runs along the eastern boundary of the site.

- 1.2 The site is within the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The application comes to committee because Chilton Parish Council objects.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks permission for the extension of the existing yard up to the public footpath to the east, and for additional landscaping around the new extension. The existing yard is approximately 0.13 hectare in area. The proposed extension represents an increase in area by approximately 35%. Following advice from officers the applicant had agreed to improve the appearance of the northern roadside boundary of the site as part of this application. The existing metal shed will be removed and the existing storage containers will be moved away from the roadside to the southern boundary of the site. A new mixed species hedgerow will be planted along this northern boundary, with the fence located behind it. Copies of the existing and proposed plans are **attached** at Appendix 2. The full application can be viewed on the council's website.

- 2.2 The applicant's justification is that the additional yard area is required to allow for the more effective operation of the business. Given the recent commercial success of the business, the current space is not sufficient and causes operational difficulties in the way vehicles and equipment are stored and manoeuvred on site.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team
- No objections
- Forestry Team (Vale of White Horse)
- No strong views, subject to conditions regarding planting and management
- Landscape Architect (Vale of White Horse)
- Locally visually prominent corner site; a number of visually unattractive storage containers located abutting the security fencing and Upper Farm Road. Site creates an urban landscape character;
  - Careful design of the site could considerably improve the landscape character and visual appearance of the area and reduce the impact of development in the local area; Re-design of proposals could address AONB issue – relocating storage containers into site, creation of substantial mixed native hedgerow along north boundary would considerably improve the appearance of the site
- Highways Liaison Officer (OCC)
- No objections
- Drainage Engineer (Vale of White Horse District Council)
- No objection subject to condition
- Chilton Parish Council
- Object
  - Inappropriate activity in AONB for following reasons:
  - Increase in commercial use will increase existing harmful impact of current B8 use
  - Loss of agricultural land albeit limited in size is unacceptable in such circumstances
  - Doesn't include changes or improvements to the existing totally inadequate access. Resultant increase in traffic will be harmful to road safety
  - Use is inappropriate activity close to a school
  - Will bring about additional visual harm to AONB, cannot be regularised by additional plantings
  - Village shop outlet was refused at Garden Centre a being inappropriate in the AONB. This is more inappropriate.
- North Wessex Downs AONB unit
- Object
  - Expansion of existing use will not conserve or enhance the character and landscape of AONB and is contrary to purposes of designation of AONB; expansion onto greenfield site will result in further erosion and an industrialisation of this part of the AONB when seen from wider countryside and street scene. Recommended if site no longer meets needs of user then an alternative more suitable site should be found

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 **P11/V2509** - Withdrawn (12/12/2011)

Retrospective application for a tarmac surface to existing track

P07/V0496/LDE – planning permission (30/07/2007)

Certificate of lawfulness for the existing use as general commercial storage

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC1 - Design

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

NE6 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

E9 – New development on sites not identified in the local plan

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework was published in March 2012 and replaced previous national planning guidance. Relevant policies of the adopted local plan are given weight according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main considerations are the following:

Principle

6.2 The NPPF sets out that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable new development. The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas should be supported (para 28 NPPF). Policy E9 of the adopted local plan, which restricts the size of new employment development within the villages and the countryside, and places emphasis on local linkages, is not consistent with the approach now taken within the NPPF. Consequently, the policy now has little weight and the council must be guided instead by the NPPF.

6.3 The application has set out that the existing business has already expanded its turnover and the relatively small physical expansion of its premises is required to be able to store and manoeuvre equipment and vehicles better within the site. The principle of supporting expanding businesses is acceptable, subject to it being able to comply with the criteria set out in the following paragraphs.

Landscape and AONB

6.4 The site is within the North Wessex AONB and as such great weight should be given to conserving its landscape and scenic beauty (para 115 NPPF). Currently, when viewed from the road, the site has an unattractive appearance, with storage containers sited up to the boundary. The other boundaries of the site are marked by hedgerows which provide screening from other views. The area which is the subject of the application is currently laid to grass and hardstanding. It is fenced off and is not accessible to the public.

6.5 The existing site arrangement, and its frontage to Upper Farm Road, results in a distinct commercial appearance which is at odds with its more rural surroundings. The application includes the planting of a new hedge along the southern boundary along with further screen planting. The proposal is that the existing hedge along the eastern boundary would be replanted along the south. The forestry officer agrees that the replanting the existing hedge would be acceptable in principle but the success of this will depend on the preparation, transfer and aftercare being carried out in accordance with best practice. This can all be the subject of a planning condition. The mix of trees

suggested for the additional screening along the south is welcomed as well as the use for some evergreen to provide year round cover. Again a management plan can be conditioned to ensure appropriate aftercare.

- 6.6 The existing hedge along the footpath to the east is dense enough to sufficiently screen the site when it is in leaf. It would be beneficial to add some evergreen species to this side to help provide some year round screening. This could again be included within the landscaping condition and management plan.
- 6.7 Taken all together these measures will ensure the site is well screened from the south and the east and will address concerns over the potential visual impact.
- 6.8 With regard to the northern boundary, the proposal has been amended following advice from the council's landscape officer. The storage containers along the frontage are proposed to be relocated to a much more discrete location the on the southern boundary of the site, and the metal shed is proposed to be removed. The applicant has agreed to create a new mixed native hedge of a minimum 2m in depth with hedgerow trees within. The existing security fencing will be relocated to behind this hedge so it will not be visible from the road. These changes will make a substantial improvement to the visual appearance of the site on its most prominent roadside elevation. The species and size of plants etc can be conditioned to be subject to the approval by the forestry and landscape officers.
- 6.9 Policy NE6 sets out that proposals in the AONB will only be permitted if the natural beauty of the landscape will be conserved or enhanced. Policy DC6 requires for development to include landscaping measures designed to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site and its surroundings. The scheme does result in the extension of the yard. However additional screening is proposed to mitigate against any visual impact. The scheme also has the additional benefit of significantly improving the visual appearance of the northern boundary of the site, which would be a substantial enhancement.
- 6.10 Members need to carefully assess the economic benefits of the proposed expansion of the yard against the impacts to the AONB. Overall, bearing in mind the relatively limited scale of the expansion, it is considered it would not result in harm to the landscape character of the AONB.

#### Highways

- 6.11 The parish council have commented that the existing access to the site is inadequate and unsuitable for the current use and does not allow for all vehicles to enter and leave the site safely. The resultant increase in traffic, in their view, would be harmful to road safety. The proposals have been carefully reviewed by the county highways officer and he has no objection to the proposals. The applicant has confirmed that the purpose of the application is to create a more efficient use of space within the site for storage and vehicle movements. It will not necessarily mean there will be an increase in traffic from current levels and the highway officer has commented that, in his experience, such increases do not necessarily result in an increase in the amount of larger HGV movements. Given the opinion of the county highways officer it would be difficult to sustain any objection on highway grounds to the proposal.

#### Neighbouring uses

- 6.12 The proposal will extend the site closer to residential properties to the north east however it is not considered that it would necessarily result in an increased level of disturbance for these properties. The nearest property is over 36m away from the edge of the site. Additional screening is to be provided along the frontage with Upper Farm

Road which will help screen the site. The council's environmental protection team have no objections to the development.

6.13 Opposite the site is the primary school and the parish have commented that it is inappropriate to have such a use close to a school. Whilst it may not be ideal to have such a use in close proximity to a school, the fact is that the use of the site for general B8 commercial storage is lawful and will remain so, whether it is this company or another. This application offers the opportunity to better organise the site and significantly improve its visual amenity which will be of benefit to neighbouring sites in the long term.

6.14 The drainage engineer has recommended that a sustainable drainage scheme for surface water is implemented to ensure additional water run off is dealt with appropriately and does not cause problems off site. This is reasonable.

#### 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposal is considered to be supported by the NPPF. Improvements to the visual amenity of the site especially along its prominent northern boundary have been sought and, overall it is considered it would not result in harm to the landscape character of the AONB.

#### 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **Grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

- 1) **Commencement of development – 3 years**
- 2) **List of approved plans**
- 3) **Landscaping scheme submission – to include all hard and soft landscaping, schedules of new trees and shrubs and planting scheme, implementation and management plan, method statement for replanting existing hedge**
- 4) **Landscaping scheme to be carried out in accordance with approved implementation and management plan. Any trees which die, become seriously damaged or diseased within 5 years shall be replaced.**
- 5) **The storage containers and metal shed shall be removed/relocated in accordance with the approved plan.**
- 6) **Prior to commencement of development a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme for the development shall be submitted and approved.**

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