

SUT/12063/21-X - RWE NPower

Erection of building for storage and distribution warehouse (class B) or employment (class 2) use, gatehouse and sprinkler tank, formation of access, HGV parking, car parking and structural planting. Land West of Didcot Power Station, Didcot

1.0 The Proposal

- 1.1 This is an outline application for the erection of a building at Plot 4A, Land West of Didcot Power Station for Class B8 use (Storage and Distribution) or Class B2 use (General Industrial). The site lies on the eastern side of Sutton Courtenay Road, north east of Milton Park and south of the nature study reserve. To the east of the site lies the Asda warehouse site, where planning permission was granted in February 2004. The site is well screened from the Sutton Courtenay Road by a thick, tall tree hedge and a disused covered reservoir occupies part of the southern half of the site.
- 1.2 As part of the current application, all matters are reserved for future consideration apart from access and landscaping. Notwithstanding this, a building of 7,953 sq. m is referred to in the text accompanying the application and is shown on the illustrative plans. Access to the site will be from the northern service road.
- 1.3 The application comes to Committee because of the objections received from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council.
- 1.4 A site location plan and illustrative layout plan are attached at **Appendix 1**.

2.0 Planning History

- 2.1 There is no specific planning history relating to this site. However, the site is brownfield, and is covered in the most part by a large area of hardstanding which is used for the open storage of cars in conjunction with adjoining land. The site also houses a small number of portacabins and a polytunnel.

3.0 Planning Policies

- 3.1 Approximately half the site is allocated for Class B1 (Business) and Class B8 (Storage and Distribution) uses under Policy E11 of the adopted Local Plan. This policy requires the re-routing of traffic away from Sutton Courtenay and Milton Park. Policy E6 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan allocates the same area for Class B1, B2 (General Industrial) and Class B8 uses. This policy also makes reference to the need for traffic to be routed away from Sutton Courtenay and Milton Park, and adds that development of the site will attract the need for appropriate contributions to improve/upgrade the local highway network.
- 3.2 Policy NC2 of the adopted Local Plan seeks to protect protected species and habitats and policies NE1 and NE5 of the Second Deposit Draft Local Plan ensure that development proposals on ecologically sensitive sites are accompanied by an ecological appraisal and that protected species are not adversely affected in line with advice contained within PPG9.
- 3.3 Under the adopted Oxfordshire Structure Plan and Policy G1 and the general strategy of the Deposit Draft Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2016, Didcot is identified as a preferred location for newdevelopment.

4.0 Consultations

- 4.1 Sutton Courtenay Parish Council strongly object to the proposal. Their comments are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.2 Milton Parish Council object to the application on the grounds that 'this will increase traffic on the

A4130 Milton Interchange and the A34 where traffic is already above acceptable levels.’

- 4.3 The County Engineer has no objections to the proposal, subject to a Section 106 regarding contributions to the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy, a travel plan with targets and penalties, an HGV routing agreement and conditions relating to a new kerb island at the entrance to the site and improved visibility at the road junction into the site.
- 4.4 English Nature has no objections, subject to appropriate mitigation measures in respect of great crested newts being carried out.
- 4.5 The County Ecologist has no objection as long as mitigation measures have been agreed by English Nature.
- 4.6 The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust is concerned that the impact on protected species in the area (Great Crested Newts) should be looked at strategically in this area. The mitigation strategy outlined is acceptable, but will only be effective if strictly adhered to. It is also considered important to assess the impact on newts in conjunction with other proposals in the vicinity.
- 4.7 Oxfordshire County Council as the strategic planning authority raises no objection subject to the permission being subject to a legal agreement to secure contributions to local transport measures.
- 4.8 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has no objections to the proposal, subject to a condition requiring the investigation/remediation of contaminated land.
- 4.9 The Environment Agency has no objections to the proposal subject to a condition requiring the provision of surface water source control measures.
- 4.10 The Council's Landscape and Arboricultural Officers have no objections to the proposal.
- 4.11 The Council's Drainage Engineer requires a condition relating to the submission of a proposed drainage system.
- 4.12 The County Archaeologist has requested a pre-determination archaeological field evaluation of the site because of its considerable archaeological potential with extensive prehistoric Roman and Anglo Saxon activity within close proximity.

5.0 **Officer Comments**

- 5.1 The main issue in the consideration of this application is the principle of development on the site. Approximately half the site is allocated for employment purposes in the adopted and second deposit draft Local Plans, whilst the remaining part of the site has an established industrial use. As such, the unallocated part of the site would result in the redevelopment of an existing employment use on brownfield land. In this context, no policy objections have been received to the proposal from the County Council and the principle of development on the site is considered acceptable. A plan attached at **Appendix 3** shows the extent of the allocation in relation to the illustrative plan.
- 5.2 The site is well screened from Sutton Courtenay Road with existing vegetation and this will be retained and strengthened to as part of the landscaping scheme for the development.
- 5.3 The site is sensitive in terms of its ecology and potentially sensitive in terms of its archaeology because of the location of a scheduled ancient monument to the west of Sutton Courtenay Road. The County Archaeologist has asked for a pre-determination field evaluation of the site and this forms part of the Officer recommendation below.
- 5.4 The application has been accompanied by an ecological assessment and English Nature, along

with the County Ecologist and local Wildlife Trust, has agreed that the mitigation measures proposed are acceptable in respect of Great Crested Newts. The mitigation measures involve providing a replacement habitat for the newts to the east of the main breeding pond. The applicants have agreed to the long term protection of this new habitat through a legal agreement.

- 5.5 Sutton Courtenay Parish Council and Milton Parish Council as the adjoining Parish have both objected to the proposal. Sutton Courtenay's objections are attached and centre on an extreme concern that about the potential impact of traffic generated by the proposal on the village. To address these concerns, the County Engineer will be requiring a travel plan and routing agreement. The travel plan would have targets and penalties and would form part of the Section 106 agreement.

6.0 **Recommendation**

- 6.1 *It is recommended that the decision to grant planning permission to be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and / or Vice Chair of the Development Control Committee, subject to an archaeological field evaluation of the site being carried out prior to decision notice being issued; a Section 106 agreement relating to contributions to the local highway network, a HGV routing agreement and travel plan, ecological mitigation measures, and conditions relating to the submission of reserved matters, highway improvements, parking, materials, surface water control, drainage details, contaminated land and timing of landscaping.*