

Site for Business Development. Local Plan policies E4, E10 and E14E13

Grove Technology Park - Grove

REVISED DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

1.0 Description of site

1.1 Grove Technology Park is situated to the west of Grove on the site of a former wartime airfield. It is accessed from Downsview Road via the roundabout junction between Mably Way, Denchworth Road and Barwell Lane, and is situated in an area of relatively flat open countryside. The envelope of the Park is about 13 hectares in total.

2.0 Local Plan background

2.1 The site was identified in the Local Plan for Wantage and Grove adopted by the Council in 1987, which included a detailed policy framework for the phased development of the site to accommodate mainly light and general industrial uses. In 1987 the site was sold to a property company who launched a high quality business park concept, marketed as Wantage Business Park. Two phases of the development envisaged in the Local Plan were given planning permission and some 2970 sq m of new speculative accommodation in small units were built. Access to the site from the A338 was improved by the construction of Mably Way, and progress with the development of the Business Park has since improved. In 1996 the site was sold on again to a new owner and re-launched as Grove Technology Park.

2.2 The Local Plan to 2011 recognised that Grove Technology Park remains the primary opportunity to secure employment-generating development for Wantage and Grove, and stated that the Council is anxious that it should be available to a range of businesses. This approach is continued in policy E4 of the Local Plan to 2011 which identifies Grove Technology Park as a location for new business development within Classes B1 (including light industrial, offices and research and development) and B2 (general industrial) of the Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order (as amended).

3.0 Local Plan to 2011

3.1 The Local Plan to 2011 explains that the A338, which runs north – south through Grove and Wantage, and the A417, which runs east – west through Wantage, are both unsatisfactory in terms of linking Wantage and Grove to the trunk road network. Until improvements are made to these roads the District Council believes that goods vehicle movements on these routes should be kept to a minimum and therefore the Plan restricts class B8 uses comprising warehousing and distribution (which would depend heavily on such movements) to a maximum of 1.6 hectares on the Park.

3.2 The Local Plan states that although policy H5 identifies the former airfield at Grove as a strategic housing site ~~where development will start after 1 April 2006~~, it is considered that land identified for business development at Grove Technology Park is sufficient to serve the Wantage and Grove area over the plan period to 2011. In this respect there is still at least 5 hectares of vacant land at the Park which is available to accommodate the needs of firms. The local employment situation and availability of business land in the area will be monitored by the District Council and if necessary a future review of the Local Plan will identify additional land for business purposes.

4.0 Site Conditions

- 4.1 There is the possibility of land contamination at the Technology Park as a result of previous activities on the former airfield site, and in this respect site investigations prior to ~~development~~ determination of any planning application will be necessary. There are no public sewers serving the site and therefore arrangements must be made by applicants to provide private drainage facilities, including foul sewage disposal, in order to avoid contamination in the area. In accordance with the requirements of DETR Circular 03/99, details of these arrangements must be submitted as an integral part of planning applications for development. Alternatively, a new pumping station will be required to deal with foul sewage disposal. The Environment Agency will be consulted in relation to drainage and potential contamination.
- 4.2 Developers will be required to demonstrate that there is adequate capacity for waste water and water supply both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure. Any developer should make early contact with Thames Water

5.0 Highway and access considerations

- 5.1 The District Council would wish to see measures introduced to further improve the A338 and A417. A traffic impact assessment will be required in relation to the proposed strategic housing site allocation west of Grove in the Local Plan, and it is expected that an Integrated Strategic Transport and Land Use Strategy will be prepared for Wantage and Grove (referred to in chapter 5 of the Local Plan). In this respect, appropriate financial contributions will be sought for measures identified in the Strategy, including public transport and a new road from Mably Way to the A417 north of East Challow the Wantage relief road scheme as referred to in the Local Plan to 2011.
- 5.2 The District Council would welcome the upgrading of Downsview Road which provides access to the Park and also to the Crown Cork and Seal site to the south east. This access road is substandard and is in need of improvement. Opportunities should be taken for measures to improve accessibility by walking and cycling from existing and future residential areas in Grove and Wantage to these two business sites. The preparation of a travel plan for the Technology Park as a whole will be appropriate to help implement sustainable transport initiatives.

6.0 Relationship to the strategic housing site to the west of Grove

- 6.1 The strategic housing site on the former airfield west of Grove identified in the Local Plan to 2011 adjoins land at Grove Technology Park. The Council is concerned that the housing development together with a range of community facilities and infrastructure west of Grove takes place in accordance with a comprehensive planning and development brief which will include amongst other things a site and landscape appraisal; the disposition and function of the built development and public open spaces, and the principles governing their design; the creation of walkable neighbourhoods and character areas; and a transport appraisal and strategy covering access and traffic management measures for the site and the surrounding area.
- 6.2 The relationship between the housing site and Grove Technology Park will need to be considered carefully in respect of the above factory, and the Council will encourage respective landowners and developers to work together in the interests of a comprehensive approach to achieve high quality sustainable development. One of the objectives will be to ensure that uses on Grove Technology Park are compatible with future residential properties in terms of safeguarding their amenities. This may be achieved by various measures including restricting uses on the eastern side of the Park to B1 uses, and the sensitive design and layout of buildings and landscaping.

7.0 Landscaping and tree planting

7.1 The countryside adjoining Grove Technology Park is included in an Area for Landscape Enhancement, covered by policy NE11 of the Local Plan. The current owner of the site has a vision of buildings in a parkland setting. In order to achieve this the District Council considers that a landscape analysis of the site, including existing trees, would be beneficial in order to produce a landscape master plan for the Park to be agreed with the District Council. This should address the relationship between the site and its surroundings, including the countryside, and views into the Park from the south and south-west in particular. Effective landscaping could also have the advantage of helping to ensure that the Park is an attractive location for firms and offers a pleasant working environment for employees and visitors. There is also the opportunity for tree planting to help frame attractive views from the site to surrounding countryside.

8.0 Protecting the site for business use

8.1 Grove technology Park is included in Local Plan policy E10, which identifies key sites for business use including strategic employment sites. The policy states that on such sites, proposals which would lead to the loss of existing business land and premises to other uses will not be permitted, unless they are for small scale ancillary uses (for example a crèche facility or café) as referred to under policy E14E13.

9.0 Advice on planning applications

9.1 Planning applications for the development of the site will be assessed against all relevant policies in the Local Plan, and Supplementary Planning Guidance. Developers are advised to refer to the Plan in detail before submitting a planning application. Advice on the relevance or otherwise of particular policies and guidance can be obtained from the District Council's ~~Environmental Services~~ ~~director~~ ~~ate~~ ~~Planning and Community Strategy Services~~ ~~Development Control Service~~.