

REFERENCE: 05/00799/OUT

SITE: Land at North Road West/Grovefield Way

PROPOSAL: Outline application for B1 industrial uses

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

Following further considerations, the suggested reasons for refusal are as follows:

- 1 The proposed development is located wholly within the Green Belt as designated on the proposals map to the adopted and emerging Borough Local Plan, where only certain types of development are considered acceptable in principle. PPG2 sets out a series of acceptable uses and forms of development, providing that they do not compromise the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposed change of use and redevelopment to form 6.4 hectares of B1 industrial space is not listed as an acceptable use within the Green Belt. It is therefore inappropriate development in principle and, in accordance with PPG2, should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

The Council does not consider that exceptional circumstances exist to remove this land from Green Belt designation. The Local Plan Second Review sets out a reasoned justification for not allocating new employment land with the new plan period. A Green Belt review will be necessary as part of sub-regional work within the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy. This work is underway. The Government Office for the South West confirms that the most appropriate mechanism for reviewing the Green Belt is via the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy, and in particular its sub-regional work, currently in progress. It is through that process that the most sustainable options for meeting Cheltenham's need to accommodate growth will be determined.

PPG2 also states that changes to the boundaries should not be made unless alterations to the Structure Plan have been approved. Policy GB1 of the Structure Plan seeks to maintain the Green Belt between Cheltenham and Gloucester to prevent coalescence. The review to the Local Plan sets out that the Council does not propose to review the Green Belt boundary over the plan period. The County Council, as strategic planning authority, object the loss of Green Belt designation which would not be in accordance with the adopted Structure Plan.

At this stage, redevelopment of the site for B1 industrial purposes is at best, prejudicial to the outcome of the strategic Green Belt review as part of the Regional Spatial Strategy and at worst contrary to advice set out in PPG2: Green Belts, adopted Structure Plan policies GB.1 (1999) and SD.8 (2002), and adopted (1997) and emerging (2006) Local Plan policies CO49.

- 2 The proposed development is located wholly within the Green Belt as designated on the proposals map to the adopted and emerging Borough Local Plan, where only certain types of development are considered acceptable in principle. PPG2 sets out a series of acceptable uses and forms of development, providing that they do not compromise the openness of the Green Belt.

Grovefield Way is a significant boundary to the urban area. Although already broken by the Park and Ride and isolated dwellings, these have little impact on the rural character of the area.

The Landscape Appraisal accompanying the planning application concludes that development of the site will not affect the character of the surrounding landscape because of the site's containment by the A40(T), commercial and residential development. Not only does this ignore the lack of urbanised enclosure on the south west of the site, but it is difficult to conclude this without understanding the form and height of building likely to take place on the site.

In order to consider the impact of the proposal on the open nature of the site, further information was requested of the applicant (siting, layout of site and block heights for development). No such information has been submitted.

In the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, the Local Planning Authority considers that the direct and indirect impacts of the proposal on the character and context of both urban form and the rural fringe area will be significant. Directly, it will extend urban form across a significant and clear boundary and damage the existing rural character of the immediate area. Indirectly, it is likely to lead to further development pressures in the rural area to the south and west.

A Green Belt review will be necessary as part of sub-regional work within the preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy. This work is underway. The Government Office for the South West confirms that the most appropriate mechanism for reviewing the Green Belt is the Gloucestershire Structure Plan Third Alteration in conjunction with the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy, and in particular its sub-regional work, currently in progress. It is through that process that the most sustainable options for meeting Cheltenham's need to accommodate growth will be determined.

If the Council is to allocate a major growth area for either employment or housing or both, it would need to be done in a co-ordinated and planned fashion. Piecemeal edge of settlement development of this type will lead to ill-considered urban-form and poorly co-ordinated infrastructure provision.

The scheme is contrary to advice set out in PPG2: Green Belts, adopted Structure Plan policies GB.1 (1999) and SD.8 (2002), adopted and emerging Local Plan policies CO49.

- 3 The proposed development will generate a significant amount of traffic. The local network already exhibits a number of problems including congestion, primarily on the A40 corridor, and 'rat running' through the residential area of Hatherley. The increase in traffic from the development will exacerbate these problems. The developer has proposed no measures to address this issue, and the scheme as it stands is therefore not considered to be in accordance with policy TP127 in the Cheltenham Borough Local Plan (adopted 1997) and emerging policies CP5, CP8 and TP127 of the Local Plan Second Review, Post Inquiry Minor Modifications Draft (July 2006).
- 4 The proposed development must be accessible by a range of modes of transport in order to minimise the use of the private car. Although a travel plan has been proposed no measures have been secured to ensure that the site is accessible by a range of alternatives to the car and that occupiers are encouraged or required to use these alternatives. The proposal as it stands is therefore not considered to be in accordance with policy T.1 of the Gloucestershire County Structure Plan Second Review (adopted 1999), policies CP1, CP5 and CP8 of the Local Plan Second Review, Post Inquiry Minor Modifications Draft (July 2006) and the advice in PPG13 at paragraph 1.7.
- 5 The proposed development includes land which is required for the expansion of the adjacent Park and Ride site to 1000 spaces. The emerging Local Transport Plan sets out the requirement for this site to be expanded to a 1000 spaces and it is a fundamental part of transport policy for Cheltenham and Central Severn Vale. The proposal as it stands would therefore prevent the implementation of this proposal and would not be in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP5 of the Local Plan Second Review, Post Inquiry Minor Modifications Draft (July 2006) and policies T4 and T5 in the Gloucestershire County Structure Plan Second Review (adopted 1999).