

Ref: RB/5146
Your Ref: 16/02208/FUL
7th August 2017

Cheltenham Borough Council
Municipal Offices
Promenade
Cheltenham
GL50 9SA

Sent via email

Dear Sir/Madam,

Land at North Road West And Grovefield Way Cheltenham Gloucestershire

Hybrid application seeking detailed planning permission for a 5,034 sq.m of commercial office space (Use Class B1), 502 sq.m day nursery (Use Class D1), 1,742 sq.m supermarket food retail unit (Class A1), a 204 sq.m coffee shop retail unit and drive-thru (Use Classes A1 and A3), with associated parking, landscaping and infrastructure works. Outline planning permission sought for the erection of 8,034 sq.m of commercial office space (Use Class B1), together with associated car parking, landscaping and infrastructure works, with all matters reserved (except access)

I'm writing on behalf of Hinton Properties (Grovefield Way) Ltd to provide revised and further information in relation to the above proposals. We also offer comment on a number of queries received to date.

Design and Layout Revisions

Following consultation with both the Planning Officers' and consultees, the proposed layout and detailed design has been revised to address the concerns raised.

The layout design has been amended to ensure the development contributes more positively to the surrounding area, street scene and integrates more harmoniously between the proposed non-B1 uses and B1 office buildings on the site. Detailed design changes have also occurred to individual buildings to ensure they have a greater on-site presence and more active frontage to compliment the BMW showroom opposite the site. The principle changes are summarised below and set out in detail with the accompanying Design and Access Addendum and submitted plans. In summary, the changes include:

- Alterations to the building and car park layout to improve the flow of development. Inclusion of pedestrian ramps and steps to increase connectivity;
- Amendments to building designs to increase design quality and presence throughout the development;
- Landscape enhancement across the site to increase buffers and planting throughout;
- Inclusion of electric car charging points, undercover cycle parking and increase in office car parking.
- Revisions to car park lighting design to reduce light spill;



- Indicative drawings provided for office buildings 3 and 4 (submitted in outline form);
- Swept path assessments for refuse vehicles and confirmation of visibility spays.

The following documents are submitted to reflect these changes. As a result of amendments to the layout, adjustments have also been made to the drainage strategy and car park lighting design.

- Design and Access Addendum;
- Revised Plans and Site Sections (detailed in accompanying schedule);
- Aerial and eye level CGI booklet;
- Fly through animation video;
- Revised FRA and drainage strategy;
- Revised car park lighting design;
- Phasing plans and draft Unilateral Undertaking (subject to agreement between all parties).

Phasing of the Proposals

Following Officer and resident concerns regarding the delivery of B1 office units, the applicant has produced a phasing strategy to secure and promote early delivery. In summary, my client is willing to construct office 1 and all its associated road infrastructure and parking within 12 months from the date of non-office use occupation. Office 2 will be implemented as part of the detailed planning consent. The early construction of office 1 and associated infrastructure shows a firm commitment to implement B1 uses on this site. It will help facilitate greater interest in the site from office occupiers helping to speed up and deliver the remaining B1 uses on site. These measures have been set out within the accompanying Unilateral Undertaking and phasing plan.

In addition, my client is also agreeable to the submission of a reserved matters application for offices 3 and 4 within 12 months following any grant of outline consent. It is suggested that this is controlled by means of planning condition.

Given the nature of the application and uses proposed, I consider the commitments now being offered show a realistic commitment to early delivery of B1 uses on site. It is important to remember that over 5,034 sq.m of the office space proposed is in detailed application form – a significantly increased proportion than that of the non-B class uses proposed. In fact, the non-B use classes' proposed only amount to approximately 12% of the overall floorspace proposed. The application would still offer a total of 78% of B-class uses for the site.

The application format is important and reflects the current market conditions. The gestation period for office enquiries between opening discussions to delivering a completed property is typically far longer than other sectors including retail, industrial and roadside uses. One important consideration that office occupiers consider on a business park is the trade-off between a more open setting against the retail and leisure convenience that a town centre offers. Therefore, providing some on-site retail and leisure provision, as proposed, significantly minimises the impact of this making the site more attractive to office users. With no such complimentary uses on site, it would likely be a big shift in the environment for many businesses and their workforce. The complimentary uses being offered and phasing commitments for early B1 delivery are positive and will increase its attraction for prospective occupiers.

Response to Comments Received

Employment Growth in the Borough

We recognise that the Council's policy team acknowledges that the JCS Employment Land Report distinguishes that there has been a policy shift recently in relation to what constitutes 'employment development' and what is now regarded as economic growth. The ELR 2011 notes that the shift in national

plan policy has sought to no longer restrict the consideration of employment uses to the B use classes only. Accordingly, other non-B class employment generating uses were considered as part of the study – these include current key non-B Class sectors, such as retailing, and it notes that in the light of the anticipated changes in employment levels in the various non B-Class sectors, the aforementioned sectors are likely to become more dominant by 2026. The ELR report predicts that around 80% of the anticipated net increase in employment levels between 2006 and 2026 is expected to come forward in non-B class sectors. This has been recognised in the main modifications version of the JCS specifically Policy SD2. Thus, as recognised by the main modification version of JCS and its evidence base, the definition of employment land should not just be restricted to B use classes. Weight should be attributed to the non-B class uses which, as evidenced in the submitted Economic Impact Assessment in support of this application, will provide economic growth and deliver job creation.

Overall, the proposal offers an opportunity for economic growth which is a national objective and is an important material consideration set out in the NPPF.

Allocation of the site and removal from the Green Belt

We are pleased to support the proposed designation of the land at Grovefield Way (E3) as an allocation for employment development through the emerging Cheltenham Plan (Part One) 2011 to 2031. This includes the continued support for the removal of the site from Green Belt through the JCS process; the JCS Inspector has made clear there is no purpose in retaining this land as Green Belt given its relevant planning history and context. This notwithstanding, the Planning Statement submitted in support of the application clearly sets out the Very Special Circumstances associated with this proposal which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of any inappropriateness.

This approach is supported by the Council's policy team in response to the application submission stating that Very Special Circumstances for developing in the Green Belt at this location to exist by the planning inspector in 2007. Similar circumstances are considered still to exist today (as evidenced through the 2011 Employment Land Review/JCS process) and given the planning history of the site, the JCS Inspector has made clear there is no purpose in retaining this land as Green Belt. The response notes that the application presents the opportunity to address the shortfall in the availability of employment land in the Borough and the weight to be given to the opportunity for economic growth, which is a national planning objective in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.

Retail Impact

The application was accompanied by a Retail Impact Assessment which fully demonstrates that there are no suitable, available and viable sequentially preferable sites that could accommodate the proposed development. The retail offer on the site will meet a localised need which is assessed by the applicants' retail consultant at the submission stage.

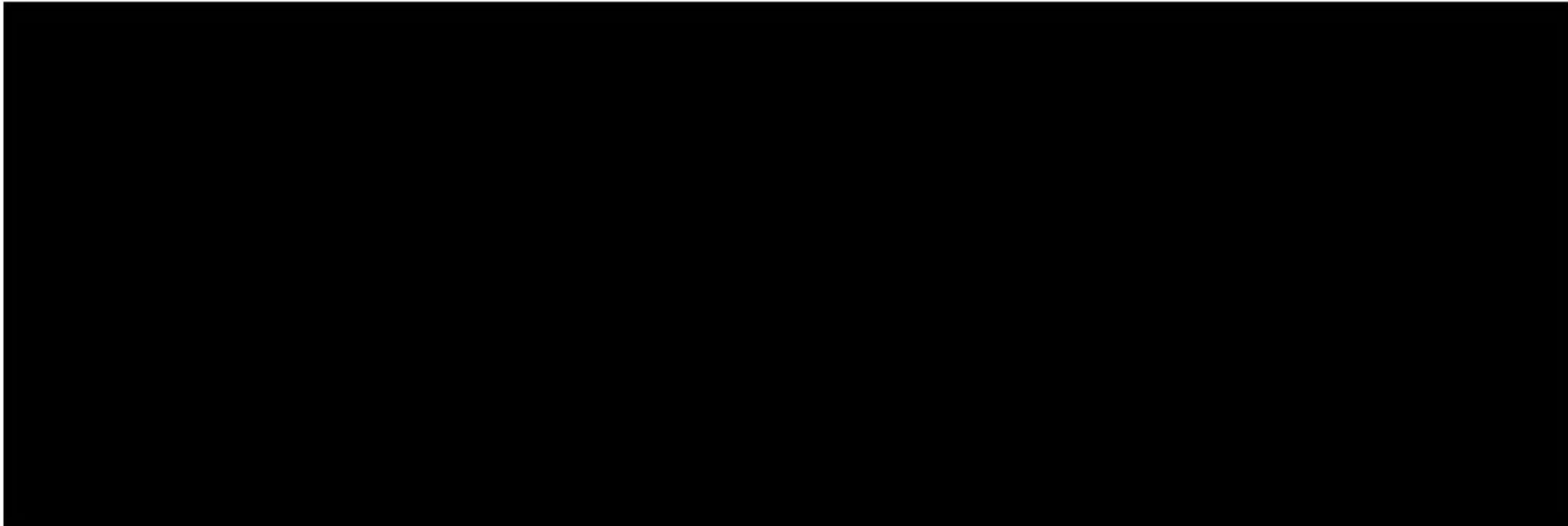
A response from Pegasus Group on behalf of ASDA Stores Ltd, objecting to the proposals, highlights the previous Morrisons foodstore proposal and regeneration scheme at North Place/Portland Street. The report and assessment prepared by the applicant has been considered by an independent consultant on behalf of the council. Specifically in reference to the Portland Street site, the report considers that further evidence would be required to demonstrate deliverability, and that the Council would be best placed to obtain such information. The Council have raised no objection or concern regarding the approach taken to the site. Morrisons have formally withdrawn from this scheme as a result of a strategic re-appraisal of their development programme and corporate priorities. As a result of this, with the supermarket chain being the anchor tenant, the major mixed use scheme has been abandoned and it is considered unlikely that the site's regeneration will, for the foreseeable future include a major food store.

The report by DPDS on behalf of the council considers that there is unlikely to be any significant adverse impacts on the vitality and viability of any centre, from the development or any cumulative impact from it.

In addition the council's policy response to the application has raised no objection or concerns regarding the assessment concluding that sufficient evidence has been provided to demonstrate limited impact on town centre and neighbourhood centre retailing arising from the scheme thus affording compliance with the NPPF (Para 26) and Policy RT7 of the adopted Cheltenham Borough Local Plan.

We trust the revised submission address the concerns previously highlighted and we look forward to your comments shortly. In the meantime if any further information or assistance is required please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



James Griffin MRTPI
Hunter Page Planning Ltd
james.griffin@hunterpage.net

Enc.