

Application Ref: 14/00072/OUT

Proposal: Development of warehousing and distribution (B8) units with ancillary office space with a maximum total floorspace of 168,958 sq metres, together with access roads, parking, service areas, utility infrastructure, and landscaping

Site: Land at Alwalton Hill East of the A1 and South Of Fletton Parkway, Peterborough

Applicant: Mr M Eckersall
Roxhill (Peterborough) Ltd

Agent: Mr David Shaw

Site visit: 26.03.2014

Case officer: Miss V Hurrell
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Recommendation: That the proposed increase in building height be approved and the Director of Growth and Regeneration be given authority to grant planning permission subject to the signing of the S106 and necessary conditions, subject to satisfactory assessment of the Environmental Statement.

1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal

The Site and Surroundings

The application site which is some 46.30 hectares in size is located at the south western edge of the district. It is allocated for employment development in the adopted Site Allocations DPD (policy SA9 refers).

There is also an extant outline planning permission for the development of warehousing and distribution units (B8 uses) up to a maximum of 172 000 square metres, with ancillary office space, access roads, car parking, service yards, new woodland and landscaping planting

Access into the site is from junction 1 of the Fletton Parkway via the Great Haddon employment area which lies to the east/south east and which has consent for 65 hectares of employment land comprising a mix of B1 (office and light industry), B2 (general industry) and B8 (warehousing and distribution) uses.

One warehouse unit, known as the Geo Post development (application reference 13/00144/FUL) has recently been completed and this area is excluded from the application. The site includes the Alwalton Hill woodland and a couple of wildlife ponds which have been constructed as part of the extant planning permission along with some new landscaping in the southern corner. The remainder of the site is currently still in agricultural use.

Further to the east, beyond the Great Haddon Employment Area is Orton Pit a site of international ecological importance for its populations of Great Crested Newts and Stoneworts. Beyond Orton Pit is the township of Hampton.

To the north of the site is the Fletton Parkway beyond which is the township of Orton including the industrial area of Orton Southgate. To the west is the A1(M) with an associated attenuation pond in

the north west corner adjacent to junction 17. On the other side of the A1(M) is the village of Haddon. To the north west are the villages of Alwalton and Chesterton.

To the south of the site and the Great Haddon employment area are a number of existing residential properties along the Old Great North Road and the proposed Great Haddon residential area where an urban extension comprising up to 5350 homes with associated facilities including a new district centre and schools is proposed. The settlement of Norman Cross lies beyond the Great Haddon core area along with a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The village of Yaxley lies to the south east of the A15. The villages of Stilton and Folksworth are located to the south west on the western side of the A1(M) (accessed from junction 16).

The surrounding residential areas of Hampton and Orton, the existing properties on the Old Great North Road and the proposed Great Haddon core area lie within the Peterborough Unitary area. The other villages referred to (Haddon, Stilton, Folksworth, Alwalton, Chesterton and Yaxley) lie within the area administered by Huntingdonshire District Council.

The Proposal

As indicated above this site has an extant outline planning permission for up to 172 000 square metres floorspace for B8 uses (warehousing/distribution) with ancillary offices (application reference 06/00346/OUT). Approval was then given for a detailed layout (under application 09/00725/REM) which was speculative. Although this permission could be implemented the applicant has not done so as the consented unit sizes do not meet the current industry standards (please see further comments under section 5 below).

The timescale for the submission of detailed applications was controlled by the original outline permission and this time period has now expired. The applicant cannot therefore apply for an alternative site layout under the existing permission (although as indicated they could build out the consented scheme). The unit which has been constructed (Geo Post) was approved under a separate full application for this reason.

In order to meet the demands of the market the applicant has chosen to submit a new outline planning application with all matters reserved for detailed consideration at a later date. The amount of floorspace being applied for is the same as the original permission minus the area which has already been built out (so 168 958 square metres).

The original outline permission limited the building heights to no more than 14.8 metres. This application seeks to increase the consented building heights to 20 metres (except within zone 1 where the maximum height would remain at 15 metres) again to allow for greater market flexibility, based upon the industry standards, and to avoid the need to make further full applications if an occupier wants to construct a building with a maximum height of 16 or 17 metres. Building heights were only limited under the original consent to 14.8 metres as this was the height assessed in the supporting Environmental Statement.

As with the previous scheme the application also seeks consent for associated access roads, parking, servicing areas, utility infrastructure and landscaping.

The original application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement. An updated addendum to this has been prepared in support of this application.

Recommendation

As indicated, the only substantive change to this application is the increase in the building height and it is the only issue that has generated any concerns from either statutory consultees or members of the public. As such the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee is being asked to consider whether the proposed increase in building height is acceptable with authority being delegated to the Director of Growth and Regeneration to grant planning permission subject to officers finalising their assessment of the other technical matters (to which there are no objections in principle), to draft conditions and to complete a S106 Agreement. The applicant is in

the process of submitting revised information in a format which is compliant with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

This approach is being taken given the Committee timings over the election period so that the applicant can know at this early stage whether the principle of increased building heights is acceptable. Officers will then be able to progress the application in line with Committee's decision without undue delay in order that the applicant can continue to promote the site and to liaise with potential occupiers.

2 Planning History

Reference	Proposal	Decision	Date
06/00346/OUT	Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Permitted	08/09/2006
09/00725/REM	Details of siting, design and external appearance of the warehouse buildings (5 individual units with maximum of 172,000 sq metres floor space) with ancillary offices, car parking and service yards and the landscaping of the site including strategic landscaping, new woodland lakes and ponds the provision of public art (Reserved Matters to application 06/00346/OUT)	Permitted	16/10/2009
11/00966/NONMAT	Non Material amendment to planning application 06/00346/OUT - Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Comments	12/07/2011
11/00967/NONMAT	Non Material amendment to planning application 09/00725/REM - Details of siting, design and external appearance of the warehouse buildings (5 individual units with maximum of 172,000 sq metres floor space) with ancillary offices, car parking and service yards and the landscaping of the site including strategic landscaping, new woodland lakes and ponds the provision of public art (Reserved Matters to application 06/00346/OUT)	Comments	11/07/2011
11/01251/DISCHG	Discharge of conditions 13 (Ecological management strategy), 15 (Approved protection scheme), 16 (Tree felling/pruning specification), 17 (Arboricultural method statement), 18 (Landscaping) of Planning Permission (06/00346/OUT) Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 sq	Determined	26/09/2011

	metres floorspace) with ancillary office space together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding		
11/01252/DISCHG	Discharge of conditions C2 (Woodland Management Plan) C3 (Ponds) and C4 (Badger Tunnels) of planning permission 09/00725/REM - Details of siting, design and external appearance of the warehouse buildings (5 individual units with maximum of 172,000 sq metres floor space) with ancillary offices, car parking and service yards and the landscaping of the site including strategic landscaping, new woodland lakes and ponds the provision of public art (Reserved Matters to application 06/00346/OUT)	Determined	22/12/2011
11/01350/DISCHG	Discharge of condition 8(construction management plan) of planning permission 06/00346/OUT - Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 sq metres floorspace) with ancillary office space together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Determined	30/09/2011
11/01478/DISCHG	Discharge of condition C7 (flood risk/drainage) of planning permission 06/00346/OUT - Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 sq metres floorspace) with ancillary office space together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Determined	30/10/2012
11/01888/NONMAT	Non-material amendment to planning permission 06/00346/OUT - Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Comments	01/12/2011
11/02048/DISCHG	Discharge of Conditions C18 (landscaping objectives and management), C26 (details of access roads/junctions) and C27 (scheme for tying in proposed access road with public highway) of planning permission 06/00346/OUT - (Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car	Determined	14/05/2012

12/00268/DISCHG	parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding) Discharge of C12 (Off site highways works) of planning permission 06/00346/OUT- (Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding)	Determined	11/04/2012
12/00830/NONMAT	Non-material amendment to planning permission 06/00346/OUT dated 08/09/2006 (Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding) - to change the approved master plan 7640-P001 Rev E, as stated in the non-material amendment, to a revised master plan 1204/11/PL06	Comments	13/06/2012
12/01007/DISCHG	Discharge of Condition C10 (A1M improvements) of planning permission 06/00346/OUT - Development of warehouse and distribution units (max of 5 individual units with a max of 172,000 square metres floorspace) with ancillary office space, together with access road, car parking, service yards, new woodland, landscaping, lake, ponds and screen bunding	Determined	07/09/2012
13/00440/FUL	Construction of B8 Distribution Unit with ancillary offices, parking, servicing areas and landscaping, together with access road and temporary drainage	Permitted	09/07/2013

In addition to the above, a number of applications on the adjacent Great Haddon employment area are also of relevance in the determination of this application. As indicated under Section 1 there is an existing outline planning permission for employment development at Great Haddon (reference 09/01368/OUT). This limited building heights to 15m with 17m allowed on plot E7 at the south. Subsequent to this a number of detailed applications have been made including for the new access road which serves Alwalton Hill, drainage infrastructure and landscaping. An application was made in 2012 to increase the building height on plot E2.1 to allow a building of up to 35 metres in order to meet the requirements of a specific occupier, Yearsleys (application reference 12/01334/WCPP). There was no change to the consented building heights on the other plots. Following further assessment of the transport impacts approval was also given for a change in timings to the works to junction 17 of the A1(M) and junction 1 of the Fletton Parkway to allow a specified number of vehicle trips during the peak before the improvements are carried out (application reference 13/01118/WCPP).

3 Planning Policy

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Section 1 - Economic Growth

Planning should encourage sustainable growth and significant weight should be given to supporting economic development.

Section 4 - Assessment of Transport Implications

Development which generates a significant amount of traffic should be supported by a Transport Statement/Transport Assessment. It should be located to minimise the need to travel/to maximise the opportunities for sustainable travel and be supported by a Travel Plan. Large scale developments should include a mix of uses. A safe and suitable access should be provided and the transport network improved to mitigate the impact of the development.

Section 7 - Good Design

Development should add to the overall quality of the area; establish a strong sense of place; optimise the site potential; create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses; support local facilities and transport networks; respond to local character and history while not discouraging appropriate innovation; create safe and accessible environments which are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Planning permission should be refused for development of poor design.

Section 11 - Biodiversity

Development resulting in significant harm to biodiversity or in the loss of/deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused if the impact cannot be adequately mitigated, or compensated. Proposals to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be permitted and opportunities to incorporate biodiversity into new development encouraged.

Development within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest or other specified sites should not normally be permitted where an adverse effect on the site's notified special interest features is likely. An exception should only be made where the benefits clearly outweigh the impacts.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring Appropriate Assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered or determined.

Section 11 - Noise

New development giving rise to unacceptable adverse noise impacts should be resisted;

development should mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life arising. Development often creates some noise and existing businesses wanting to expand should not be unreasonably restricted because of changes in nearby land uses.

Section 11 - Light Pollution

Lighting should be designed to limit pollution on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and areas of nature conservation.

Peterborough Core Strategy DPD (2011)

CS03 - Spatial Strategy for the Location of Employment Development

Provision will be made for between 213 and 243 hectares of employment land from April 2007 to March 2026 in accordance with the broad distribution set out in the policy.

CS10 - Environment Capital

Development should make a clear contribution towards the Council's aspiration to become Environment Capital of the UK.

CS12 - Infrastructure

Permission will only be granted where there is, or will be via mitigation measures, sufficient infrastructure capacity to support the impacts of the development.

CS13 - Development Contributions to Infrastructure Provision

Contributions should be secured in accordance with the Planning Obligations Implementation Scheme SPD (POIS).

CS14 - Transport

Promotes a reduction in the need to travel, sustainable transport, the Council's UK Environment Capital aspirations and development which would improve the quality of environments for residents.

CS17 - The Historic Environment

Development should protect, conserve and enhance the historic environment including non-scheduled nationally important features and buildings of local importance.

CS20 - Landscape Character

New development should be sensitive to the open countryside. Within the Landscape Character Areas development will only be permitted where specified criteria are met.

CS21 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Development should conserve and enhance biodiversity/ geological interests unless no alternative sites are available and there are demonstrable reasons for the development.

CS22 - Flood Risk

Development in Flood Zones 2 and 3 will only be permitted if specific criteria are met. Sustainable drainage systems should be used where appropriate.

Peterborough Site Allocations DPD (2012)

SA09 - Urban Extensions

Identifies sites for B1, B2 and B8 employment uses in accordance with Core Strategy policy CS3.

Peterborough Planning Policies DPD (2012)

PP01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Applications which accord with policies in the Local Plan and other Development Plan Documents will be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no relevant policies, the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

PP02 - Design Quality

Permission will only be granted for development which makes a positive contribution to the built and natural environment; does not have a detrimental effect on the character of the area; is sufficiently robust to withstand/adapt to climate change; and is designed for longevity.

PP03 - Impacts of New Development

Permission will not be granted for development which would result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, public and/or private green space or natural daylight; be overbearing or cause noise or other disturbance, odour or other pollution; fail to minimise opportunities for crime and disorder.

PP12 - The Transport Implications of Development

Permission will only be granted if appropriate provision has been made for safe access by all user groups and there would not be any unacceptable impact on the transportation network including highway safety.

PP13 - Parking Standards

Permission will only be granted if appropriate parking provision for all modes of transport is made in accordance with standards.

PP16 - The Landscaping and Biodiversity Implications of Development

Permission will only be granted for development which makes provision for the retention of trees and natural features which contribute significantly to the local landscape or biodiversity.

PP17 - Heritage Assets

Development which would affect a heritage asset will be required to preserve and enhance the significance of the asset or its setting. Development which would have detrimental impact will be refused unless there are overriding public benefits.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010

Paragraphs 203-205 of the National Planning Policy Framework: Planning Conditions and Obligations:

Requests for planning obligations whether CIL is in place or not, are only lawful where they meet the following tests:-

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- (b) directly related to the development; and
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

In addition obligations should be:

- (i) relevant to planning;
- (ii) reasonable in all other respects.

Planning permissions may not be bought or sold. Unacceptable development cannot be permitted because of benefits/inducements offered by a developer which are not necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. Neither can obligations be used purely as a means of securing for the local community a share in the profits of development.

4 Consultations/Representations

Internal Consultations

Landscape Architect (Enterprise) (02.03.14)

No objections to the proposal, agrees with the conclusion of the Visual Assessment that the impact on landscape character would be negligible and that significant change to the visual impact would only be from one limited part of the public footpath.

Landscape Officer (10.03.14)

No objections in principle.

Conservation Officer (05.03.14)

No objections. From the supporting information there would not appear to be any adverse impact upon heritage assets.

Wildlife Officer (06.03.14)

No objection subject to a condition requiring the submission and approval of an updated Ecological Management Strategy which sets out all ecological mitigation measures, management and monitoring details.

Section 106 Major Group

S106 should be secured in line with the original permission.

Transport & Engineering Services (25.02.14)

No objections subject to conditions in respect of improvement works to junction 17 of the A1(M) and junction 1 of the Fletton Parkway. A framework Travel Plan should be submitted. This should be similar to the Travel Plan for the Great Haddon employment area as the same issues will be shared by both sites. There would be an advantage in the two sites being considered together in terms of things like bus travel.

Pollution Team

No comments received

Archaeological Officer (26.02.14)

No objections subject to a condition requiring further archaeological assessment of the sensitive areas of the site previously identified.

Drainage Team (04.03.14)

No objections subject to the submission and approval of details design. Have some comments over certain aspects of the proposal and the potential for future applications.

Minerals and Waste Officer (Policy) (19.02.14)

No objections. A substantial area of the site lies within the Waste Consultation Area associated with the west of Peterborough site W1AE. It is recommended that future occupiers are notified of this potential use of the neighbouring site.

Rights of Way Officer

No comments received

Planning Policy & Research

No comments received

Waste Management (14.02.14)

No comments

Neighbourhood Management - Cate Harding

No comments received

Passenger Transport

No comments received

External Consultees

GeoPeterborough (Designated Sites) (13.02.14)

Would request that the opportunity is made for GeoPeterborough to sample and record the underlying sediments which lie within and adjacent to the RIGS areas as development takes place.

Peterborough Local Access Forum

No comments received

The Open Spaces Society

No comments received

Ramblers (Central Office)

No comments received

Highways Agency - Zones 6, 8 & 13 (12.03.14)

No objections subject to the imposition of a condition re the timing of the works to Junction 17 and the imposition of traffic counters on the road into the site.

National Planning Casework Unit

No comments received

English Heritage (27.02.14)

Does not wish to offer any advice on this application. It should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the Council's specialist conservation advice.

Environment Agency (10.03.14)

No objections subject to the imposition of a condition stating that no development shall take place until a surface water drainage scheme for the site based upon the principles in the submitted Surface Water Management Strategy has been agreed.

Natural England - Consultation Service (04.03.14)

No objections. Satisfied with the conclusion of the revised ES that the current proposal including increased building heights will not have an adverse effect on Orton Pit SSSI/SAC or on other habitats and species taking into account the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures. The applicant should be required to submit revised Ecological Management Strategy to detail all the ecological mitigation measures to be implemented as part of the revised proposal.

Opportunity Peterborough

No comments received

Cambridgeshire Bat Group

No comments received

Campaign To Protect Rural England

No comments received

Farcet Parish Council

No comments received

Anglian Water Services Ltd (06.03.14)

No objections in principle. Request a condition requiring the submission and approval of a details drainage strategy.

The Wildlife Trusts (Cambridgeshire)

No comments received

British Telecom

No comments received

Fire Community Risk Management Group (10.03.14)

Ask that adequate provision be made for fire hydrants by way of a condition or S106 Agreement.

Cambridgeshire County Council

No comments received

Middle Level Commissioners (25.02.04)

No comments

Sport England (13.02.14)

No comments.

Yaxley Parish Council

No comments received

Orton Waterville Parish Council (20.02.14)

No comments.

Councillor N North

No comments received

Councillor D Seaton

No comments received

Councillor S Scott

No comments received

Councillor P Hiller

No comments received

Greater Peterborough Partnership

No comments received

Hampton Parish Council (26.03.14)

Object to the application. The Parish Council is concerned that the request for 20m buildings is outside the Peterborough City Council Planning Guidance which refer to a maximum height of 15m as cited in the original application approved in 2006. The only completed building Geo Post blends well with the surroundings. 15m was also agreed for the remaining buildings when the City Council approved the cold store building.

Huntingdon District Council

No comments received

Peterborough Environment City Trust

No comments received

Ramblers (Central Office)

No comments received

RSPB (Eastern England)

No comments received

Police Architectural Liaison Officer (19.02.04)

No concerns in respect of the proposal.

Sustrans

No comments received

Building Control Surveyor

No comments received

Alwalton Parish Council

No comments received

Haddon Parish Council

No comments received

Local Residents/Interested Parties

Initial consultations: 1396

Total number of responses: 5

Total number of objections: 5

Total number in support: 0

Three letters from individuals have been received in relation to this application. These raise the following issues/objections:-

* The buildings should not be any higher than 15m

* There is insufficient justification for the increase in building height. The fact is that the history of this development shows that it is unlikely to be completed in the foreseeable future. What is happening is that land is being 'cherry picked' in an attempt to develop those parts with the best vehicle access thus salvaging something from failure. The increase in building height means these buildings will dominate the formerly pleasant countryside for miles around. Meanwhile public money has been wasted on road 'improvements' to facilitate development. Residents are faced with years of uncertainty and disruption.

* Concerns about the impact of the proposed work on junction 1 to traffic turning into and out of Orton Southgate. Suggest a filter lane is added from the A1139 Orton Parkway onto the ramp on to the eastbound A1139. If this is not possible then as a minimum the proposed traffic light solution should be extended to help alleviate this issue.

A letter of objection has been received from the Norman Cross Action Group objecting to the increase in building height. It considers that the existing Geo Post building blends very well with its surroundings and that therefore the decision to limit the building heights to 15m was sound.

The Civic Society has commented that illustrative material does not significantly increase the visual prominence of the proposal. However, it considers that two important viewpoints, arguably the most important, have not been illustrated. These are the view from the north boundary carriageway of the A1(M) and from the exit slip road off Fletton Parkway. This should also take into account the widened Parkway.

5 Assessment of the planning issues

As set out under section 1 the site is allocated for employment development in the adopted Site

Allocations DPD (reference SA 9.5 and SA12). In addition there is an extant planning permission for B8 development (with ancillary office development) on this site which could be implemented in its entirety. No additional floorspace is proposed from that originally granted approval and this application takes into account that which has already been built out. As such the principle of development is acceptable.

The only substantive change to the scheme is the increase in buildings heights from 14.8 metres to 20 metres with the exception of zone 1 where building heights will remain at 15 metres.

Why an Increase in Building Height?

The applicant is seeking to increase the building height in view of the industry standards for distribution units of this nature which require certain building heights depending upon the building footprint in order to make them as operationally efficient as possible.

The original scheme was purely speculative and since permission was granted nearly 8 years ago the commercially accepted requirement on warehousing heights has changed significantly. This change is predominately due to improvements in materials handling equipment allowing items to be moved and stacked at greater heights from ground levels. This updated technology has been adopted by the main stream occupiers of warehouses in the UK.

As such, there is now an acceptance within the industry that modern warehouses will be built to a height to create greater volume, and so capacity, allowing an occupier to maximise the asset they are operating from. The applicant has advised that companies will be extremely reluctant to occupy a new building which is built to a lower height, in the same way they would be reluctant to invest in any other technology or asset which is based on a design that has been superseded. The institutions that fund many of these buildings also now require increased height to ensure that their investments are financially sustainable over time.

The applicant has, however, advised that the request for a maximum 20m building height does not imply that all the buildings which are eventually constructed at Gateway Peterborough will be built to this level; however the flexibility to provide this height will allow Peterborough to remain at the forefront of the UK as a modern, business friendly location. It will also ensure the City maximises the use of its employment allocated development land, targeting 'best in class' buildings rather than promoting secondary buildings that risk making Peterborough a secondary location for this industry.

The applicant has provided examples of buildings under construction or having been completed in the last 18 months, in locations similar to Peterborough, alongside the height of the building and the occupier, to demonstrate the importance of this issue. This illustrates that the height tends to increase with the floorspace size of the building. The building sizes are comparable to those which would be accommodated on the application site, even the largest although this would take up a substantial part of it.

LOCATION	SIZE	OCCUPIER	BUILDING HEIGHT
Aylesford, Maidstone	110,000 sq ft	Kent County Council	15.2m
Brackmills, Northampton	110,000 sq ft	Speculative Unit	16m
Warth Park, Raunds	130,000 sq ft	Airwair	16m
Central Park, Bristol	175,000 sq ft	Farmfoods	16.7m
Gateway Rugby	235,000 sq ft	H&M	16m
Magna Park, Milton Keynes	300,000 sq ft	AG Barr	19.8m
Elizabeth Way, Harlow	350,000 sq ft	Poundland	19m
Magna Park, Milton Keynes	675,000 sq ft	John Lewis	18.8m

The applicant has advised that if a potential occupier cannot get the additional height they will either have to look at a bigger footprint resulting in less efficient use of land or more likely at

alternative sites outside of Peterborough where the planning permission allows for a higher building. This is reflected in the high levels of vacancy of low rise warehouse buildings in other parts of the city.

Recommendation to Committee

As the increase in building height is the only aspect of the proposal to which any objection has been received it is the only matter which members of the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee are being asked to consider with authority being delegated to the Director of Growth and Regeneration to issue planning permission subject to satisfactory compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations (there are no objections from any statutory consultees including the Highways Agency, Natural England and the Environmental Agency), drafting of conditions and the signing of the 106 Agreement. This will be based upon the original Agreement (given there is no change in the amount of floorspace being provided) and cover matters such the Travel Plan, a bus service for employees and contributions toward green infrastructure improvements.

This approach is recommended given the timing of the submission of the application in relation to the election period and the fact that it would be unreasonable for the applicant to have to wait a number of months for a decision on this key aspect of the scheme which will impact how they market the site and the discussions which can take place with interested parties in the interim period. Delegation to officers on these other aspects will allow the application to be progressed and determined during this interim period in line with Committee's decision on the building heights.

Visual Impacts of the Proposal

The original outline application for development at Alwalton Hill was accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Assessment as part of the Environmental Statement. This assessed the landscape/visual impacts and put forward landscaping mitigation including additional woodland planting and a 15m landscaping buffer adjacent to the A1(M). The Officer's report to the Planning and Environmental Protection Committee acknowledged that the proposal would result in a significant visual impact notably from the A1(M), Fletton Parkway and the high land to the west (the A605) as the character of the site would be transformed. The visual impacts (with the proposed mitigation measures) were, however, accepted in view of the wider economic benefits of the scheme.

An updated Landscape and Visual Assessment has been submitted in support of this application. This Assessment considers any changes to the baseline environment within and surrounding the site since 2006, the significance of any effects on the character of the surrounding landscaping from the proposed increase in the maximum building height parameters and the significance of the visual effects resulting from the proposed increase in the building height parameters compared to the currently approved building heights.

As this is an outline application building locations are not fixed at this stage. The assessment is, therefore, based on the overall development area available and the building heights. Certain building footprints have, however, been assumed for the purpose of the wire frames, being the most likely layout of the site based upon the maximum building footprint specified in the parameters plan (335 metres by 170 metres). In addition the assessment assumes finished floor levels (based upon drawing number P02 Rev A) which involve cut and fill within the site to create level plateaux for the buildings.

Although the wire frames assume a certain building layout the conclusions of the assessment are based upon the overall quantum of development and would allow alternative building layouts without the need for further assessment (provided they remain within the extents and maximum parameters indicated on the parameters plan). The application still includes planting adjacent to the A1(M) and additional woodland planting. Whilst this is unlikely to screen the buildings in their entirety it will screen lower elements and help soften the impacts.

Since this original application was approved Alwalton Hill has become an allocated employment site and additional employment development has been consented at Great Haddon (which is also an allocated employment site) including a 35 metre high building on plot E2.1. As such it has been accepted that the character of this part of the city is to change completely. With the approval of the Great Haddon development the context within which the proposal has to be considered has changed significantly.

Within the site the only notable change since 2006 which is of relevance to the visual assessment is the removal of plantation woodland within the northern area of the site known as Milton Folly. Removal of this vegetation was in accordance with the original outline permission and it was not taken into consideration when the visual assessments were prepared. In addition, one or two individual trees have been removed but these were not significant in terms of the landscape character of the site.

The site is not within or adjacent any areas of best landscape.

Visibility of Increased Building Heights

A plan has been prepared which shows the zone of the theoretical visibility of the original building heights with the current proposal, factoring in the consented buildings within the Great Haddon employment area. The only notable new area of visibility would be from the south east although from this location the increased building heights would be seen beyond the consented Great Haddon buildings which are closer through gaps or as roofs above them. The views from these locations would, therefore, remain unchanged from the consented developments.

Another new area of potential visibility is indicated as being 5km from the site to the south west (south of Stockhill Lodge). However from here the buildings, if seen at all, would be seen as distant roof tops with the buildings within the Great Haddon employment area closer.

In light of this the assessment concludes that the proposal would not give rise to any increased effects on the landscape character and the effects of the increased height are assessed as negligible. This conclusion is accepted by Officers.

Impact to the East (Hampton)

The Visual Assessment considers the impact of the proposal on Hampton to the east. From this direction the Alwalton Hill buildings lie beyond Great Haddon which is itself some 700m away beyond Orton Pit. The assessment concludes that the impact of the proposal would be negligible. In light of the juxtaposition of the buildings and the separation distance this conclusion is supported by Officers. It is not, therefore, considered that the application could be resisted on this basis.

The Impact to the South (the Old Great North Road, the Great Haddon Core Area, and beyond)

The Visual Assessment includes a view point from along the Old Great North Road. Given the location of the site and the presence of the Great Haddon buildings which will be in front, the assessment concludes that overall visibility of the Alwalton Hill buildings will not change and the impact is therefore negligible. Officers are in agreement with this conclusion.

The potential impact upon Norman Cross Scheduled Ancient Monument has been considered. The assessment shows that from this viewpoint the proposed increase in building height would be barely noticeable and that the buildings would remain largely screened behind the consented Great Haddon buildings. English Heritage has been consulted on the application and raised no objection advising that the application should be determined on the basis of local conservation advice. The Council's Conservation Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection. As such the impact upon the Scheduled Ancient Monument and its setting is considered to be acceptable.

In view of the separation distance and the presence of the Great Haddon urban extension between them neither is it considered that the proposal would have any adverse impact upon Yaxley including its heritage assets.

It is not, therefore, considered that the proposal would have any significant adverse impact upon the area to the south of the site.

Impact to the West

As with the earlier applications the potential impact of this development from the west is of the greatest significance. However, in light of the previous applications and allocation of both Alwalton Hill and Great Haddon for employment uses the change in character of the landscape has already been accepted in principle.

The Visual Assessment considers the impact from the higher land of the A605 and concludes that the effect arising from the taller buildings is the same as the consented scheme. In either case there is a view looking down onto a number of large commercial buildings and the assessment concludes that the impact of the proposal is therefore negligible. Officers are in agreement with this conclusion and do not consider that the application could be resisted on this basis.

The Assessment includes a view point from Haddon village. Taller buildings would be more visible than the consented scheme but the impact is assessed as being negligible. Whilst the buildings would be slightly more visible, in view of the separation distances (approximately 400 metres to the nearest house and approximately 1km to the village itself) and the presence of the A1(M) which forms a physical barrier, it is not considered that the impact would be unacceptable.

The Assessment also includes a viewpoint from Morborne. Taller buildings would be slightly more visible but the assessment concludes that in light of the distance to the application site (in the region of three kms) there would be no material impact. This conclusion is accepted by Officers.

Impact to the North

The Visual Assessment looks at the potential impact of the development from the Oundle Road Bridge/Junction 18 of the A1(M) nearer the village of Chesterton. This shows some visibility of the new buildings and the consented scheme at Great Haddon. The assessment concludes that the impact of the increased building heights would be of low significance. This conclusion is accepted by Officers.

The Assessment also looks at the potential impact from the bridleway leading to Orton Goldhay. It concludes that the increase in building height will not be discernable given that the buildings would be seen beyond the Great Haddon development. As such the assessment concludes that the impact is negligible. Officers are in agreement with this conclusion.

Orton lies on the other side of the Fletton Parkway and Alwalton Hill is adjacent to a commercial area. It is not therefore considered that the increased building height would have any unacceptable adverse visual impact on this area.

It is not therefore considered that there would be any unacceptable impact to the north.

Conclusions

The Visual Assessment concludes that overall the proposed increase in building heights would not give rise to any significant increase in overall visibility of the development within the surrounding landscape.

The increased building heights would result in them being more visible from some viewpoints than the consented scheme although the assessment concludes that the impact is generally negligible. The view point where the increase would be most noticeable is from the A605. However, the consented development and the consented Great Haddon buildings will already be visible and the

increase in building heights would not significantly alter the view which will also be softened in the future by the landscaping.

The Visual Assessment has been reviewed by the Council's Landscape Architect who is in agreement with its conclusions and who has raised no objections. No objections have been received from English Heritage in relation to the impact on Norman Cross Scheduled Ancient Monument or the Council's Conservation Officer.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the increase in building heights will have some impacts Officers are in agreement with the conclusions of the Visual Assessment and do not consider that the proposal is unacceptable, particularly in light of the potential economic benefits which the increase in building heights would bring in terms of the marketability of the site and the ability of the developer to attract potential investors.

Response to the Objections

Two letters of public representation have been received objecting to the increased building heights along with letters from the Norman Cross Action Group and the Hampton Parish Council. These have set out that an increase in height would be contrary to the Council's Planning Guidance when the original application was approved. The only reason that the original application capped the building heights at 14.8 metres was because that was the height which the Environmental Statement was prepared on the basis of therefore it was appropriate to do so. Had the application been submitted on the basis of 20 metre buildings in the first place and found to be acceptable then this is the height limit which would have been conditioned.

The comments about the development not being completed in the future and sites being 'cherry picked' are noted. However development of this scale does take time to build out and is dependent upon the market which has been difficult for the last few years. It is the role of the planning system to ensure that sufficient land is available with the appropriate consents in place as and when the demand does arise. Investment in infrastructure is part of this. As indicated above the current application would allow greater flexibility to the applicant in promoting the site.

The Peterborough Civic Society has not raised any objection to the application but have commented that two additional illustrative viewpoints should be provided in terms of the view northbound on the A1(M) and leaving Peterborough via the Fletton Parkway. Whilst these comments are noted these additional viewpoints are not considered necessary to determine the application. Whilst the site is visible from the A1(M) travelling north drivers are doing so at speed and have only glances of the site. As such it is not considered that they will be able to discern the increase in building height. The situation is similar in respect of Fletton Parkway, drivers will be travelling at speed with glimpses of the buildings, as happens at the moment in respect of the existing commercial development at Orton Southgate. There will also still be a reasonable separation distance with the Parkway of some 20 metres minimum to the edge of the site (the separation distance to any building is likely to be greater given the need for circulation space around it) and drivers will be looking down into it. As such it is not considered that the increase in building height would have any unacceptable impact from these viewpoints.

Conditions

If members are minded to approve the increase in building height it is recommended that authority be delegated to the Director of Growth and Regeneration to write suitably worded conditions to control the maximum building heights based upon the finished floor levels indicated.

Ecological/Landscape Implications of the Increased Building Height

The increase in building height on the Alwalton Woodland and ecological features within the site and adjacent to it has been assessed as part of this application.

It is not considered that there would be any unacceptable impact on the retained woodland and new woodland planting will be secured as part of the scheme. The Council's Landscape Officer has raised no objections.

Given the separation distance with Orton Pit it is not considered that the increased in building height would result in any additional shading beyond that which has been accepted as part of the Great Haddon development. Natural England has raised no objections to the proposal.

Neither is it considered that the proposal would have any unacceptable adverse impact upon existing newt ponds within the site. Ecological mitigation measures will be secured as part of the proposal as they were with the original application. No objections have therefore been received from the Council's Wildlife Officer.

6 Conclusions

Subject to the imposition of conditions and the signing of a S106 Agreement, the proposal is acceptable having been assessed in the light of all material considerations, including weighting against relevant policies of the development plan and specifically:

- The build out of the consented scheme for this site (under outline permission 09/00346/OUT) would result in a complete change to the character of the existing site and a development which, in view of the ground levels, can be seen from outside of the site. It is acknowledged that 20 metre high buildings on the site would be more visible from some viewpoints than the consented 15 metre high buildings, however the additional impact is not considered significant. In addition, this is an allocated employment site and the National Planning Policy Guidance places strong emphasis upon supporting economic growth. There are no areas of best landscape adjoining the site and it would not result in any unacceptable harm to the Schedule Ancient Monument to the south west or surrounding Conservation Areas. The visual impact of the buildings is therefore considered to be acceptable in accordance policies CS16 and CS17 of the Adopted Core Strategy.
- The taller buildings would not result in any unacceptable impact upon Orton Pit SSSI/SAC in terms of shading. Neither is it considered that the proposal would have any unacceptable adverse impact upon any other species. It would result in some additional shading of Awalton Woodland but this is not considered to be significant and new landscaping forms part of the scheme. The development is, therefore, considered to be acceptable in accordance with policy CS21 of the Adopted Core Strategy, Section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework' and policy PP16 of the adopted Planning Policies DPD.

7 Recommendation

The case officer recommends that Committee approves the increase in building height with the Director of Growth and Regeneration be given authority to grant planning permission subject to the signing of the S106 and necessary conditions, subject to satisfactory assessment of the Environmental Statement.

Copies to Councillors S M Scott OBE. D A Seaton and N V North