

Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:

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Date: 11th May 2017

Application No: 17/03417/OUT
Proposal: Outline Planning for the Erection of up to 1,000,000sq. ft. of Class B8 (storage and distribution) Employment Space and Associated Infrastructure.
Site Address: Land South-East of Junction 17 of M4 Motorway, Kington Langley, Chippenham, Wiltshire,
Case Officer: Lee Burman

Reference:

Design & Access Statement '2502 Chippenham Gateway'(dated 4th April 2017), Planning Statement April 2017.

Policy and guidance:

Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 57 'Ensuring high quality design and place shaping' and related: Core Policy 41 'Sustainable Construction; Core Policy 50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity'; Core Policy 51 'Landscape'; National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 7 and National Planning Practice Guidance 'Design'.

This planning application is for the principle of development as described above together with access to the development. Planning Statement 4.3 indicates that all other matters would be subject to a Reserved Matters Planning Application 'as the individual requirements of all occupants are not yet confirmed'. The supporting Illustrative design information including the Design & Access Statement is accordingly relatively vague, open ended and non-committal on matters of layout, scale (height and massing) form and appearance of buildings, and landscaping (including building envelope and external surface materials & finishes)

Two layout versions are included in this outline application as indicative of just two examples of possible different forms that may emerge for the overall development. These would appear to be largely as presented with the pre-application stage consultation with the planning office: in 2014 (a site layout showing a large 'Distribution Shed' and two smaller buildings with a pre application report outlining a possible form, appearance and setting of these), and in 2016 16/08834/PREAPP- a site layout showing five separate buildings).

On the above basis I defer making a recommendation in regard to Core Policy 57: for a realistic assessment of the design and place shaping quality of the proposed development in regard to Core Policy 57 the above Reserved Matters would need to be considered and collectively in the round for the overall site. The supporting design information with this outline planning application including the Design & Access Statement should therefore be afforded only limited weight in any Outline Planning approval.

I have the following observations on the supporting design information:

The Design & Access Statement indicates that the building design i.e. form, appearance and facing materials and colours of each building (and external areas) will be tailored to the requirements of each occupier. This has the potential for an inconsistent and non-descript appearance to the development as a whole to emerge particularly with a possible gradual uptake of individual building plots and subsequent appearance of individual buildings coming forward as a series of Reserved Matters unless a set of limited common and unifying design parameters are proposed to guide the design and submitted with an application for the overall site. This would need to cover each Reserved Matter and be universally adhered to in the proposed detailed design for each plot and its building(s).

The current Design & Access Statement does not suggest there would be firm commitment or significant application of design matters raised in my consultation responses dated 20.10.2016 and 12.08.14 on these pre-applications. Notably there would appear to be: no strong articulation of the roofscape to lessen the appreciable bulk, utilitarian and monolithic appearance in the immediate and wider setting; no significant reflection of the defining character of local built form i.e. stone facings (for example selectively to prominent corners, office elements, site entrance and road boundary); and the opportunity would not be taken for the majority of the expansive roofscape to make a substantial contribution towards renewable energy and biodiversity (Wiltshire Core Strategy Core Policy 41 and Core Policy 50 respectively). Suitably incorporating the above design matters could in line with Core Policy 57 appreciably: respond to local character... (NPPF Policy 58); promote local distinctiveness (NPPF Policy 60); and address the integration of the development into the natural, built and historic environment (NPPF Policy 61).

The photograph precedent examples of Storage & Distribution buildings in the Design & Access Statement would appear to suggest the design of the building envelope could be essentially limited to a variation in the profile, orientation and colours of metal or composite sheet cladding and trim rather than a substantive recognition in form and facing materials of the topographic context and setting of the application site. The supporting information indicates the site can be seen in distant views over the countryside from the north, east and south whereas a number of these photographs also show substantial white and other light coloured façades which could uncomfortably stand out in these settings.
