

Planning Reference No:	11/0551C
Application Address:	Saxon Cross Motel, Holmes Chapel Road, Sandbach, CW11 1SE
Proposal:	Demolition of existing hotel on the site, change of use from a category C1 development to a mixed use of category B1 and B2. Construction of a single storey office building a small security building and warehouse building, new hard landscaping associated with the proposed development including relocation of vehicular access
Applicant:	Bolshaw Industrial Powders
Application Type:	Full Planning
Grid Reference:	376887 362264
Ward:	Congleton Rural, Sandbach
Earliest Determination Date:	23 rd March 2011
Expiry Dated:	11 th May 2011
Date of Officer's Site Visit:	8 th March 2011
Date Report Prepared:	9 th March 2011
Constraints:	Open Countryside

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

MAIN ISSUES

- **The impact upon the character and appearance of the site and the wider Open Countryside**
- **The impact upon neighbouring amenity**
- **The impact upon highway safety**
- **Parking provision**
- **The impact upon protected species**

REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application has been referred to the Southern Planning Committee as it involves development of over 1000sq.m.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is located on the western side of Holmes Chapel Road within the Open Countryside. The site is currently occupied by the former Saxon Cross Motel which now stands derelict. The Saxon Cross Motel is a mainly single storey flat roofed building with a small two storey section to the front of the site. The site is surrounded by open fields with the M6 to the rear. The site includes a number of trees of varying quality most of which are located towards the sites boundaries.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the erection of a single storey office building to the front of the site that would have a length of 35 metres, a width of 12 metres, an eaves height of 3.4 metres and a ridge height of 6.1 metres.

To the rear of the site the application includes a warehouse which would have a length of 48 metres, a width of 21 metres, an eaves height of 6.2 metres and a ridge height of 9 metres.

The application includes the relocation of the access to the south of the site and an area of car parking to the north-east corner of the site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

No relevant planning history

POLICIES

Development Plan policies

Local Plan policy

PS8 – Open Countryside

GR1 – Design

GR2 – Design

GR4 – Landscaping

GR6 – Amenity and Health

GR7 – Amenity and Health

GR9 – Accessibility, Servicing and Parking Provision

E5 – Employment Development in the Open Countryside

NR1 - Trees and Woodlands

NR2 – Statutory Sites

NR3 - Habitats

Regional Spatial Strategy

DP1 – Spatial Principles

DP2 – Promote Sustainable Communities

DP4 – Make the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure

EM1 – Integrated Enhancement and Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets

MCR4 – South Cheshire

National policy

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health: Conditions requested in relation to pile driving, hours of construction, travel plan and contaminated land.

Strategic Highways Manager: The existing use-class on this site is for a hotel/motel facility with conference rooms. The site suffers from a sub-standard access which does

not meet current design standards. This development proposal is supported by a clear Traffic Statement which identifies traffic generation for the existing use and for the proposed development use. The figures contained within the report have been validated and accepted. These figures demonstrate that the proposed use would show a 20% reduction in traffic generation when considered against the potential for the existing use-class. In addition, the development proposes the construction of a new access to provide for the necessary turning movements and to improve visibility to a standard acceptable under the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges. The provision of parking within the site is designed to meet the required standards and is acceptable. The Strategic Highways Manager recommends that a condition in relation to the formation of the access and an informative be attached to any permission which may be granted.

Highways Agency: No objection. Travel Plan condition required.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

A letter of objection has been received from the occupants of Nutwood, Holmes Chapel Road raising the following points;

- Increased traffic generation
- The site would operate for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Early morning starts of the HGV's

PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL

Sandbach Council: No objection however, Sandbach Town Council hope that the rural aspect of the site will be maintained through the planting of natural screening to improve the visual impact. Concern was expressed at the potential for HGV traffic increasing to unacceptable levels over time and Members highlighted the necessity for improving the M6 Jct 17; numerous new businesses, such as this, are proposed in Sandbach and surrounding areas which Members believe will greatly increase use of the busy junction and add to the existing safety and congestion issues.

Brereton Parish Council: No comments received

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning, Design and Access Statement (Produced by Architectural Design and dated 1st February 2011)

- The Saxons Cross Motel was built in the early 1970's and has been vacant since 2008 when it ceased to trade
- The site was purchased in 2010 by Bolshaw Industrial Powders who wish to move Bolshaw Industrial Powders Distribution from its current location at Harrop House Farm, Rainow, Macclesfield to the Saxons Cross site. This is to enable a more sustainable and economical distribution of their bagged lime products mainly to agricultural customers
- The existing hotel has a footprint of 2002sq.m and the proposed buildings would have a footprint of 1439sq.m. This is a reduction in the footprint of the buildings on the site by 562sq.m
- The proposed office building runs north to south and is set parallel to the road with its main entrance facing the interior of the site

- The warehouse runs east to west away from the line of trees to the north of the site with hardstanding to the south and west
- The operation of the warehouse is masked by the positioning of the office building to the east of the site
- The office and warehouse building have been designed to work in tandem with the ridge height of the office at the same height as the eaves height of the warehouse. This in conjunction with the new landscaping is intended to reduce the impact of the warehouse building
- The proposed scheme has been designed to sit comfortably in its rural location and to 'signpost' its industrial use. It promotes and enhances the rural landscape.
- The proposed new access is to be relocated 48m to the south of the existing access providing 160m visibility in both directions. This is far greater visibility for vehicles turning right into the site than for the existing situation.
- The proposed development will utilise the local and national road infrastructure and will reduce transport times for Bolshaw Powders

Transport Statement (Produced by Singleton Clamp & Partners dated 20th January 2011)

- The proposed redevelopment of the Saxons Cross Motel would result in a reduction in traffic movements at the site access. Notwithstanding this benefit a revised access is proposed for the site which would bring about further significant benefits to the safety of the site access arrangements. For these reasons there are no highway, traffic or transport reasons to resist the proposed development.

Ecological Appraisal (Produced by FPCR and dated February 2011)

- The buildings on the site were considered to have a low potential for use by roosting bats due to the lack of substantial roosting features and the light and draughty internal conditions. No evidence of use by bats was found internally or externally during the building inspection.
- A total of 5 trees were considered to have a low bat roost potential
- No evidence of Badger setts or foraging activity was noted anywhere within the survey area
- No ponds were recorded within or adjacent to the survey area. However two wet ditches were present along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. The eastern ditch is considered to be unsuitable breeding habitat. The recently cleared northern ditch may have provided suitable habitat prior to vegetation clearance given the size and nature of this feature and the signs of recently cleared material giving indication that the ditch had contained marginal bankside vegetation.
- No evidence of Water Vole such as tracks, droppings or feeding signs was recorded
- Anecdotal evidence of barn owl was recorded with a total of nine regurgitated bird pellets were found within this building during a second site visit undertaken on 16th March 2011. During this visit the pellets were confirmed as barn owl although there was no evidence such as white wash caused by repeated droppings or the accumulation of large numbers of pellets which could suggest the use of the building for breeding. It is therefore likely that a single barn owl has used this building for feeding/roosting over the past few months.
- No evidence of potentially suitable habits for any other protected, rare or notable species were recorded.

Arboricultural Statement (Produced by Cheshire Woodlands and dated 2nd February 2011)

- This arboricultural statement rates the trees on the site as follows;

- Three trees of high value retention category
- Four trees of moderate retention category
- Two trees of low value retention category
- One group of trees of moderate retention category
- One group of trees of moderate/low retention category

Phase 1 Desk study Report (Produced by CC Geotechnical Ltd)

A Phase 1 Contaminated Land Assessment has been produced. This is available to view on the planning file.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The application site stands on the western side of Holmes Chapel Road, in close proximity to Junction 17 of the M6. The application site is located within the open countryside. Policy E5 allows for the redevelopment of an existing employment site where the proposal is for a business enterprise appropriate to the rural area.

Policy EC10.1 of Planning Policy Statement 4 states that Local Planning Authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Policy EC10.2 provides a list of impact considerations that the application should be considered against; these include accessibility and design considerations.

In consideration of this it is considered that the development would consist of the redevelopment of a derelict business site within the open countryside, the development would therefore comply with Policy E5 and PPS4.

Amenity

The nearest residential property would be a residential property known as Nutwood which is located to the south of the site. Given that there would be a distance of approximately 80 metres from the nearest point of Nutwood to the application site and due to the fact that the property is within close proximity to the M6 it is considered that the proposed development would not have such a significant impact upon residential amenity as to warrant the refusal of this planning application.

The B1 use class is a use that can be carried out without detriment to the amenity of any residential area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit. As a result it is considered that the use of the site for a B1 use is acceptable.

The B8 use class relates to storage and distribution and this could potentially impact upon residential amenity. However, due to the separation distance, the proximity of the M6 and due to the fact that the Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the development. It is considered that the development would not have any detrimental impact upon the adjacent residential properties.

Given the size of the proposed units and the level of vehicular movement from the former motel it is not considered that any increase in vehicle movements resulting from the proposed development would cause a level of disturbance to local residents that would be sufficiently detrimental to amenity as to warrant the refusal of this application.

Design

The proposed development includes two buildings. The smaller office building would be located to the front of the site. This building would have a simple rectangular form with a pitched roof. It is accepted that the building would face into the site. However when viewed from the south and the new access road the southern gable would include a fully glazed gable. This gable would guide visitors to the rear courtyard where access would be gained to the building. The front elevation would include a number of windows which would help to break up its bulk and a new hedgerow would be planted along the road frontage. This would help to screen the proposed building. The building is to be finished in metal cladding. Provided that an appropriately dark colour is chosen such as green or grey, it is considered that it will blend in with the rural scene.

The warehouse building is of a utilitarian design and would have a pitched roof with roller shutter doors to its southern elevation. It is considered that this building would have an appearance of a modern agricultural building and would not appear out of character in this rural area. It should also be noted that the taller warehouse building is located behind the more interesting office building which would help and screen it from view.

As a final point it is considered that the proposed development would improve the visual appearance of the site as the existing Motel is of no architectural merit and lies derelict following a spate of vandalism.

Highways

This application proposal is supported by a Traffic Statement which identifies traffic generation for the existing use and for the proposed development use. The figures contained within the report have been validated and accepted by the Strategic Highways Manager. These figures demonstrate that the proposed use would show a 20% reduction in traffic generation when considered against the potential for the existing motel. In addition, the development proposes the construction of a new access to provide for the necessary turning movements and to improve visibility to a standard acceptable under the requirements of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Concern has been raised over the increased vehicular movements on the site upon highway safety. However as part of this application the Strategic Highways Manager has been consulted and raised no objection. As a result it is not considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon highway safety.

Ecology

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places,

- in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment

and provided that there is

- no satisfactory alternative and
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range

The UK implements the Directive in the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 which contain two layers of protection

- a requirement on Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the Directive’s requirements above, and
- a licensing system administered by Natural England.

Circular 6/2005 advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of protected species on a development site to reflect EC requirements. “This may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission.”

PPS9 (2005) advises LPAs to ensure that appropriate weight is attached to protected species “Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm [LPAs] will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative site that would result in less or no harm. In the absence of such alternatives [LPAs] should ensure that, before planning permission is granted, adequate mitigation measures are put in place. Where ... significant harm ... cannot be prevented or adequately mitigated against, appropriate compensation measures should be sought. If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.”

PPS9 encourages the use of planning conditions or obligations where appropriate and again advises [LPAs] to “refuse permission where harm to the species or their habitats would result unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm.”

The converse of this advice is that if issues of detriment to the species, satisfactory alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

The submitted ecological survey identifies potential for both bats and great crested newts to be present at this site. To establish the presence/absence of these species the submitted survey report recommends detailed surveys are undertaken. As both of these species are European protected species it is essential that their presence/absence is established prior to the granting of planning consent. It is therefore essential that the applicant undertakes detailed surveys for both of these species and that reports of the results of these surveys along with any mitigation required is submitted to the LPA prior to the grant of any consent. This issue will form a reason for refusal.

The assessment of the impacts of the development on Barn Owls is acceptable. It appears unlikely that Barn Owls are breeding at this site and the conclusion that the site has been used for brief periods by a single bird is reasonable. Consequently, the proposed development would not have a significant direct impact on Barn Owls. The loss of minor roosting sites has however been shown in the past to have a knock on effect of the success of breeding pairs of Barn Owls. It is therefore essential that the

site retains some potential for barn owls. The applicant's suggestion of the provision of barn owls boxes on site is adequate to meet this need and this could be secured by condition.

Trees

Part of the site accommodated the motel complex although the section to the west remained open undeveloped grassland. There are sections of hedgerow of varying species composition around the periphery of the site. The hedgerow to the north is native species, the hedgerow to the south is partly *Leylandii* and the roadside hedgerow includes a mixture of native and ornamental species. A substantial length of the south western boundary is open and unvegetated.

There are a number of trees on the periphery of the site and several mature Oak trees within site, to the north of proposed warehouse. There is a length of ditch to the north of the site.

On the eastern boundary, the development would require the removal of a small number of trees on the road frontage, however these trees are not exceptional and the loss would not have significant impact on public amenity. A section of hedgerow would also have to be removed. There would be sufficient space to accommodate replacement planting in mitigation.

Following negotiations with the applicant's agent the proposal indicates that the length ditch would be retained. This is considered to be important as it is likely to impact on the above mentioned mature Oak trees.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principal despite the site being located within the open countryside. The proposal is considered to be of an acceptable design and would have minimal impact upon residential amenity, highway safety or the trees surrounding the site. However insufficient information has been submitted in relation to the impact of the development on Bats and Great Crested Newts and these issues will form the reasons for refusal.

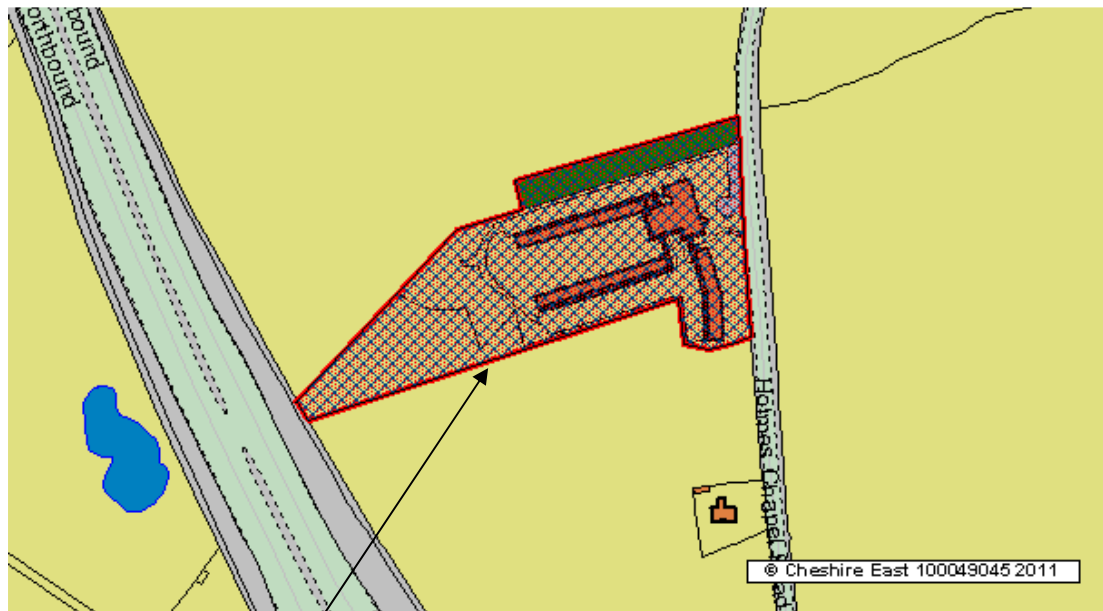
RECOMMENDATIONS

REFUSE

There is an open ditch within the application site. The submitted Ecological Appraisal states that presence/absence surveys will be required to identify whether or not Great Crested Newts are present in this ditch or any mitigation measures to protect this species during the construction works. In the absence of this information, to allow this development would be contrary to Policy NR.2 (Statutory Sites) of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review, Circular 6/2005, PPS9 and Policies EM1 and DP7 of the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021.

The Ecological Appraisal submitted with the application recommends that two nocturnal bat surveys are carried out between end of May and August. In the absence of this information it is not been possible to identify whether or not Bats

are present within the buildings or any mitigation measures to protect this species during the construction works and therefore, to allow this development would be contrary to Policy NR.2 (Statutory Sites) of the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review, Circular 6/2005, PPS9 and Policies EM1 and DP7 of the North West of England Plan Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021.



The Site