

Application No: 09/0802M

Location: WYCLIFFE HOUSE, WATER LANE, WILMSLOW, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF

Proposal: ERECTION OF THREE STOREY EXTENSION FOR B1 OFFICE PURPOSES AND PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL DECKED CAR PARKING ACCOMMODATION

For ORBIT INVESTMENTS(PROPERTIES)LTD

Registered 30-Apr-2009

Policy Item No

Grid Reference 384419 380948

Date Report Prepared: 19 June 2009

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions and s106 legal agreement

MAIN ISSUES

Highway implications, residential amenity, design, landscaping

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application relates to an office complex covering an area west of Alderley Road and south of Water Lane. Commercial properties bound the site to the north and east and back land residential properties border the office complex on the west and south. The overall office complex within the ownership of the applicant comprises 5 detached office blocks: Kings Court, Wycliffe House and Sandfield House accessed via Water Lane and Wycliffe Avenue; Stuart House and Teejay Court accessed from Alderley Road. The site edged red with the application covers an area of 0.17 hectares and covers an area between Wycliffe House, Sandfield House and Teejay Court.

The development comprises three parts:

- A three-storey extension to the existing three-storey office building at Wycliffe House
- An extension to the existing car deck at the rear of Sandfield House including a new single storey deck above part of the Teejay Court surface car park
- A two-storey connecting link between Wycliffe House and Sandfield House

The office extension is required by the existing occupants of Wycliffe Court, the Information Commissioner, to provide room for an additional 130 staff.

The proposed extension would have an overall height of 12.5 metres and mirrors the existing Wycliffe House building in scale, materials and design. The footprint of the extension would be approximately 540 sq m. In comparison the existing Wycliffe House building has a footprint of just under 700 sqm, so the extension amounts to an increase in scale by approximately 77%.

The extension would be located between Wycliffe House and Sandfield House on the existing surface car park. The extension would project towards the Water Lane (north) side of the site at 90 degrees to the existing buildings on the site. This would result in the extension creating courtyards with Wycliffe House and Sandfield House. The extension incorporates an archway on the northern end of the extension to allow vehicular circulation around the site.

The existing interconnected car parking area that serves the three existing office buildings of Kings Court, Wycliffe House and Sandfield House includes 326 spaces. The new car decks would provide 69 spaces, but there would be a loss of 41 existing surface car park spaces to allow for the extension, resulting in 28 net additional car parking spaces with the development.

RELEVANT HISTORY

01/2813P Renewal of planning permission for erection of deck over approved car park. Approved with conditions 02.01.2002.

Kings Court was granted planning permission for offices with retail frontage in June 1989 (57384P). Wycliffe House was granted permission in 1990 (61906P). Sandfield House was originally approved in 1994, subsequently renewed in 1999 (98/1910P) and constructed in 2004. A second floor level link between Wycliffe House and Sandfield House was approved in 2004 (03/3103P).

POLICIES

Regional Spatial Strategy

Policies DP1, DP2, DP3, DP4, DP5, DP7, DP9 are of general strategic relevance to the proposal and set out spatial principles for securing high quality sustainable development.

Policy RT2 relates to managing travel demand from new developments and sets out the North West Parking Standards. In urban areas the standard requirement for B1 office use is 1 car parking space per 35 sqm.

Policy EM18 requires new non-residential development above a threshold of 1000 sq m to secure at least 10% of predicted energy requirements from decentralised and renewable low-carbon sources, unless this can be shown to be not feasible or viable.

Local Plan Policy

The site lies in a mixed use area within Wilmslow Town Centre as designated in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan. Policies WTC7 and WTC9 of the local plan are therefore relevant. Small scale office use is listed as an appropriate use, with small scale defined as up to 500 sq m. An exception to this limit is permitted for existing firms wishing to extend or redevelop for their own occupation, subject to compliance with development control policies.

Relevant development control policies include BE1, DC1 and DC2 (design), H13, DC3, DC38 (protecting residential amenity and ensuring adequate light, space and privacy between buildings), DC6 (circulation and access), DC8 (landscaping), and DC9 (tree

protection). Policy IMP2 is also relevant relating to requirements for commuted sums for infrastructure and public open space / recreation provision.

Other Material Considerations

Relevant national planning policy guidance includes PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development, PPG4 Industrial & Commercial Development & Small Firms, PPS6 Planning for Town Centres, and PPG13 Transport.

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways: No objection in principle subject to conditions and completion of an S106 agreement.

Environmental Health: No objection subject to restriction on hours of construction to safeguard nearby residents from undue noise disturbance.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

7 letters of objection have been received, including one from a representative of the Wycliffe Avenue Residents' Association. The main points of objection are summarised as:

- Wycliffe Avenue has serious parking issues - despite being designed as an Access Only area - and we have a constant battle with illegal parkers from Data Protection and other offices situated in and around Kings Court. The current office workers have a one week in three rota operating for the car parking provision currently available to them - thus leaving them with two weeks in which to "find" local parking. The application for office space would appear to offer parking for approximately one third of the workers, so, yet again, two thirds of the working staff will be looking for "free" local parking.
- Spring Street Carpark is no answer, as people will not pay. The argument that the police are currently operating "Python" equally is of limited value, as in reality, it means that Wycliffe Avenue is "policed" about once a month.
- The application for additional office space would appear unnecessary as there are two current office blocks adjacent to Data Protection, largely unoccupied. Stuart House contains 1700 sq m of vacant office space.
- The significant and harmful impact on the residents of Balmoral Way from the extension to the decked car park by way of: loss of privacy; overbearing impact; noise and disturbance; loss of light. The new single deck car park will face directly onto the rear elevation of properties on Balmoral Way. The hedge screening proposed is not an adequate solution as this will cause a loss of light. A new pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfare will be created between Alderley Road and Water Lane.
- The increased traffic will add to the safety problems of the Wycliffe Avenue junction with Water Lane.

- It is over development of the site and the materials, scale and position of the development area not appropriate.
- There are other alternatives with a reduced impact that should be explored.
- There are inaccuracies on the plans. Properties on Balmoral Way are not shown to the correct scale – they are all indicated to be 3 storey when in fact some are 2 storey dwellings. The existing boundary hedge is not 5.5 metres high rather between 3-3.5 metres. There is a gap in the hedge at the rear of No.4 which currently allows light into the rear garden and ground floor rooms.
- Increased risk of crime
- The car park deck behind Sandfield House caused structural damage to our property, we are concerned this will happen again.
- If allowed conditions should be imposed to control noise, hours of use of the car park, lighting, boundary screening, traffic measures on Wycliffe Avenue and at the junction with Water Lane.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

A design and access statement, planning statement, transport statement, framework travel plan, energy assessment and unilateral undertaking accompany the application, which can be viewed online as background information. The planning statement concludes:

The proposed extension and additional car parking spaces are required to enable a well established town centre user to expand and provide additional space including for new staff accommodation. This is acceptable within the policy framework in relation to this town centre site.

Whilst there is a small increase in overall cars utilising the existing access points to the site this is less than 10% of the existing and can be accommodated within the system.

The development proposed will use a similar architectural style and be of the same height as that existing at Wycliffe House and, in general terms, will not be seen from Alderley Road nor Water Lane as it is shielded from view by existing frontage development.

In policy terms this is a sustainable site and is an appropriate location for the type of development proposed and meets the aspirations of National, Regional and Local Planning Policy.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

As stated above, the site lies in a town centre location designated as a mixed use area in the local plan. The site forms part of larger office development. The office extension would provide approximately 1600 sqm of additional office space. Policies WTC7 and WTC9 set a limit of 500 sqm for office development in Wilmslow Town Centre, but as this is an extension to allow the existing occupier to expand and remain at the site an exception to

the policy can be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant development control policies. A letter of objection raises the point that there is vacant office space within the complex at Stuart House and Teejay Court. However, the applicant has stated that the present occupier of Wycliffe House, the Information Commissioner, requires all of their operation to be housed in a single building and the use of nearby detached office buildings would not be a viable option for operational reasons.

Highways

The current level of parking within the site is 326 spaces which will increase to 354 spaces when the development is implemented. To facilitate the development will result in the loss of 41 existing spaces but the requisite provision is 69 spaces leading to a net increase of 28 spaces

Under current parking standards which are 1 space per 35 sqm this should equate to an additional 46 spaces. The deficit is therefore 18 spaces. This is however acceptable in line with current government planning policy guidance. The development is located within an existing well established town centre with suitable public transport links. As part of the development the applicant is making provision for a secure cycle storage area for 6 cycles which is in excess of current standards for cycles (1 space per 350 sq m).

A travel plan framework has also been submitted by the applicant and this would need to form part of a legal agreement.

To address any concerns in relation to parking migration it is noted that Wilmslow Town Centre is already covered by extensive traffic restrictions which are currently under review. The review includes the adjacent residential roads. A draft unilateral undertaking has been submitted including a financial contribution of £20,000 which would be focused towards the Parking Review of Wilmslow.

The transport statement submitted with the application provides the additional trip generation for the site which is 28 vehicles in the am peak and 23 vehicles in the pm peak. This equates to 1 vehicle per 2.1 minutes in the morning and 1 vehicle per 2.6 minutes in the afternoon peak. The Council's highway engineer states that this trip generation level is very minor and can be accommodated within the existing highway network.

The highway engineer has raised a potential issue regarding the servicing of the site, as the office extension breaks up any through route across the site for larger servicing vehicles. The applicant has stated that larger vehicles, such as refuse vehicles, will have a similar movement within the site as was the case prior to the Sandfield House development. This is to be confirmed with the highway engineer, but on this basis it is considered that an objection on these grounds would be difficult to sustain.

Design

The proposed office extension mirrors that of the existing Wycliffe House and Sandfield House buildings in terms of materials, scale and design. The extension would create courtyards either side of the building with the existing office development. The visual impact and design of the extension is therefore considered to be in keeping and respectful of the architecture of the existing buildings and the site itself, in accordance with the relevant local plan policies BE1, DC1 and DC2.

The proposed deck car park extension, is by its nature, limited in form. Immediately behind Sandfield House, a second floor deck is proposed. The design repeats the existing single storey deck and obviously adds to the massing of the car park. The car park will, however, remain subservient to Sandfield House and, sited at the rear of the building, the extension is considered to be sympathetic to its surroundings and will have limited visual impact from wider public vantage points.

The new proposed single storey deck over the Teejay Court surface car park also continues the form of the existing deck car park, in terms of materials and scale. The car park structure would sit adjacent to the Teejay Court office block. Objections have been raised that the materials would be at odds with engineering brick of Teejay Court. However, it is considered more appropriate for the car park to inherit its materials from the existing deck car park. The structure will not be unduly prominent from outside the site and is considered acceptable in terms of its design, appearance and relationship with adjoining buildings. Overall the proposals are considered to be compliant with design policies BE1, DC1 and DC2 of the Local Plan, which require high quality and sympathetic design.

Landscape and Ecology

There are no significant ecological issues with the proposal. Several semi-mature trees within the existing surface car park area near Kings Court would require removal. As the open space around the office complex is largely made up of hard surface car park it is important to ensure soft landscaping is incorporated into the development. The applicant is proposing to transplant the trees and a landscaping scheme could be conditioned to deal with additional soft landscaping improvements. The Council's landscape architect has no objection to the scheme.

Screening for the Balmoral Way Properties.

Evergreen Thuja hedges 3.5 - 4.0 metres in height are proposed to infill the gaps in the existing boundary screening. The proposed hedges would have an instant screening effect to filter views of the decked car park from these properties. A condition is recommended to ensure that the existing and proposed hedges are regularly clipped and maintained at a maximum height of about four metres to prevent them becoming too tall and overbearing.

The three proposed fastigate beech trees should be omitted and replaced with a smaller species that would add visual interest without becoming too high and intrusive. This can be dealt with by way of condition and as part of an amended landscaping scheme to be submitted.

Amenity

The key issue in this respect is the impact of the extended decked car park on the properties of Balmoral Way, and also the end terrace property of Clarence Court that also adjoins the site. Objections have been received with key concerns being loss of privacy, noise disturbance, fumes, overbearing impact, loss of light, misrepresentation of information, and structural concerns.

The existing car park deck wraps behind the rear of the Sandfield House Building, with a single storey access deck close to the NE boundary of the end property on Balmoral Way. The proposed single storey deck extension would extend into the Teejay Court surface car park at a distance of 5 metres from the site boundary that is shared with properties on

Balmoral Way. The car park would create a 4.1 metre high brick wall that would face the rear elevations of those properties on Balmoral Way with a separation distance of 16 metres. Policy DC38 of the Local Plan includes a standard minimum guideline distance of 14 metres for habitable rooms facing a blank wall. The proposal would therefore not be in breach of minimum standards in terms of loss of light. The majority of those properties are also well screened by an evergreen hedge along the rear boundary of the gardens which has been measured on site at 3.7 metres. There are gaps in the hedge, particularly at No.4, which currently enjoys a more open aspect to the east. The proposal includes a landscaping scheme to plant the gaps in the hedge. This could be done to achieve an instant screen of 3.5 metres high. Residents are objecting that the hedge itself would be overbearing, and this must be taken into account by Members. However, it is considered that with an appropriate soft boundary treatment to be maintained at 3.5 – 4 metres in height, the impact on outlook and light to those residents, with the wall set back 5 metres from the rear boundary, would not be significant or unduly overbearing.

In terms of noise and disturbance, an office car park already exists adjacent to these residential properties. A raised deck will have an additional impact in this respect, however the brickwall on the west elevation would be 1.4 metres above the cardeck level, helping to screen sound and light from car headlights. As an office car park, there will also be limited number of movements throughout the day and very few outside normal office hours. The Environmental Health officer has not raised an objection. The application does not detail lighting on the car park, and this is a consideration for residential amenity. Some form of lighting would be required and the applicant has stated that this could be in the form of low level lights set into the car-deck wall facing away from residential properties.

In terms of privacy, the wall at a height of 1.4 metres, could allow some overlooking towards the rear elevations of properties on Balmoral Way and Clarence Court. However, the parking spaces are situated away from the west side of the deck, which serves as the access road, and so it is considered that an impact on privacy would be limited.

All factors considered the proposal is considered to comply with policies DC3, DC38 and H13 of the Local Plan as there would be no significant harm to living conditions of the adjoining residential properties.

The office building itself extends towards the rear of commercial properties on Water Lane, some of which have residential flats above. The distances and spacings between the buildings are sufficient to comply with Local Plan policy

OTHER MATTERS

An energy assessment has been submitted with the application and suggests ways to improved energy efficiency of the building to meet the requirements of policy EM18 of the regional spatial strategy. A condition can therefore be applied to ensure that the 10% decentralised low carbon energy targets of the policy are met in the new development.

HEADS OF TERMS

The applicant has submitted a draft unilateral undertaking for commuted sums in respect of highway and open space requirements. The terms need to be broadened to also include the operation of a travel plan:

Operation of a Travel Plan

The requirement to produce and operate a travel plan for the development, which has been produced in accordance with local and national standards, guidance and best practice and has regard to the nature of the development, the accessibility of the site and local transport provision, and the requirement to pay the costs associated with the monitoring and review of the travel plan. Such a plan (and its successors), which if appropriate, shall be implemented in a phased manner, shall include procedures for monitoring, review, remedial action and shall be operated at all times while the development is occupied.

Payment of a financial contribution

- The payment of a financial contribution to the Highway Authority equivalent to £20000 at the time of the permission to fund the Wilmslow Parking Study.
- Open space and amenity land commuted sum equivalent to £16,200 at the time of the permission

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

The principle of the development is considered to be acceptable under Wilmslow Town Centre policies to allow the expansion of an existing business occupying the existing building. The proposed development will have an acceptable impact on the living conditions of occupiers of adjoining property. The detailed design and landscaping proposals are acceptable and sympathetic to the site and existing and surrounding buildings. The site lies in a sustainable town centre location and car parking and transport issues have been satisfactorily addressed. Whilst objections have been received, the proposed development is considered to comply with the relevant policies of the development plan. In the light of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions and a legal agreement.



09/0802M - WYCLIFFE HOUSE, WATER LANE, WILMSLOW

N.G.R. - 384,400 - 380,940

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Application for **Full Planning**

RECOMMENDATION : Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A02EX - Submission of samples of building materials
4. A01LS - Landscaping - submission of details
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation)
6. A01TR - Tree retention
7. A02TR - Tree protection
8. A22GR - Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
9. A04HP - Provision of cycle parking
10. A05HP - Provision of shower, changing, locker and drying facilities
11. A32HA - Submission of construction method statement
12. Maintenance of hedge along site boundary with Balmoral Way
13. Parking layout
14. Provision of visitor / short-term cycle parking
15. Provision of visitor / short-term cycle parking
16. Provision of visitor / short-term cycle parking