

Application No: 14/0448N

Location: Robert Eardley & Son, Coppenhall Garage, REMER STREET, CREWE, CW1 4LS

Proposal: Proposed change of use of the Coppenhall Garage at Remer Street, Crewe to form a retail unit with associated servicing and parking area for approximately 21 cars including 2no. wheelchair accessible spaces

Applicant: Robert Eardley

Expiry Date: 19-Mar-2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principle of the development
- Amenity
- Highways
- Retail Impact

REASON FOR REFERRAL

The application is before Committee as it has been called in by Councillor Chris Thorley on the grounds of highways and access.

DESCRIPTION AND SITE CONTEXT

The application site comprises an existing car showroom and associated vehicle repair shop. It is sited adjacent to the roundabout that serves Remer Street, Stoneley Road, North Street, Broad Street and Greenway.

The site is designated as being within the settlement boundary of Crewe.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks full planning permission to change the use of the site from car sales (Sui-Generis) to retail use (A1). The retail use would utilise the existing showroom building and it would be converted to provide a sales floor, storage area and associated ancillary accommodation.

No material changes to the existing elevations or extensions are proposed as part of this application.

RELEVANT HISTORY

13/3976N 2013 Withdrawn application for change of use to retail unit

There are also several historic applications on this site, none of which are relevant to this application. However; Outline consent has been granted for a residential development of 650 dwellings, a public house and associated infrastructure (11/1643N Coppenhall East) to the north of the site.

POLICIES

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

Local Plan

BE.1 - Amenity
BE.2 - Design Standards
BE.3 - Access and Parking
E.4 – Development on Existing Employment Areas

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

Members are aware that the submission version of the new local plan is now in the public domain. This will be presented to the Strategic Planning Board and full Council at the end of February. Subject to this being accepted an update will be provided in relation to this issue.

CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health:

Recommend conditions relating the following;

- hours of construction
- hours of operation
- external lighting
- acoustic enclosure of fans
- bin storage
- travel planning

Highways:

Recommend refusal of the application due to lack of information.

VIEWS OF TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL

None received at the time of report writing.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of report writing.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The application site is within the settlement boundary of Crewe where there is a presumption in favour of development.

Policy E.4 allows for the re-use, re-development or intensification of the use of the land within existing employment areas, The proposal is considered to be in compliance with Policy E.4.

The proposal includes provision of a convenience store of 500sqm in floor area.

The site lies outside the town centres of Crewe and Nantwich, as defined in the Local Plan, where Policy S.10 states that major retail developments will be permitted only if all of a number of criteria are met. According to the supporting text major proposals for the purposes of this policy will be regarded as those with a gross floorspace of over 2500 sq. m.

Similarly, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. However, it goes on to state that local planning authorities should only require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500 sq m).

The Local Plan policies have been saved. As a result, it is concluded that the proposal is in accordance with the up-to-date development plan. The total floorspace within proposed local centre would remain under the 2,500sq.m. Therefore, under the provisions of both the Local Plan Policy and the NPPF, it is not necessary for the developer to demonstrate that there is a proven need for the development; a sequential approach to site identification has been followed; or that the proposal, either by itself or together with other shopping proposals or developments, will not harm the vitality or viability of another shopping centre. Furthermore, the proposed store would improve considerably the sustainability credentials of the surrounding area including the nearby proposed development. The revised proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of retail impact.

The NPPF states that, the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. *“Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves do not mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world.”* There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles including, an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, as well as an

environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The document states that for decision taking this means, inter alia, approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

According to paragraph 17, within the overarching roles that the planning system ought to play, a set of core land-use planning principles should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking. According to the 12 principles planning should, inter alia, proactively drive and support sustainable economic development. The NPPF makes it clear that *“the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country’s inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.”*

According to paragraphs 19 to 21, *“the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century. Investment in business should not be overburdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations.”*

Another important material consideration is the Written Ministerial Statement: Planning for Growth (23 March 2011) by The Minister of State for Decentralisation (Greg Clark). Inter alia, it states that, *“the Government’s top priority in reforming the planning system is to promote sustainable economic growth and jobs. Government’s clear expectation is that the answer to development and growth should wherever possible be ‘yes’, except where this would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in national planning policy.*

Furthermore, it states that when deciding whether to grant planning permission, local planning authorities should support enterprise and facilitate economic development. Local Authorities should therefore, inter alia, consider fully the importance of national planning policies aimed at fostering economic growth and employment, given the need to ensure a return to robust growth after the recent recession; take into account the need to maintain a flexible and responsive supply of land for key sectors; consider the range of likely economic, environmental and social benefits of proposals; including long term or indirect benefits and ensure that they do not impose unnecessary burdens on development.

According to the statement, *“in determining planning applications, local planning authorities are obliged to have regard to all relevant considerations. They should ensure that they give appropriate weight to the need to support economic recovery.”*

The proposal is therefore in accordance with the relevant provisions of the NPPF and in accordance with policy.

Design and Scale

The proposal is for the change of use of this existing car showroom and associated vehicle repair shop and no external alterations are proposed as part of the application. The design and scale of the site will therefore not be altered.

Amenity

The site is close to residential properties and Environmental Protection have requested conditions to control the hours of use, the acoustic enclosure of any fans, bin storage and any external lighting in order to protect residential amenity. This is considered to be necessary and reasonable.

The Transport Assessment of the proposed development indicates that there will be an impact of road traffic volumes and as a result a small adverse impact in air quality emissions in the area. The cumulative impact of a number of developments in the Crewe area (regardless of their individual scale) has the potential to significantly increase traffic emissions and as such adversely affect local air quality for existing residents by virtue of additional road traffic emissions.

The Transport Statement submitted with the scheme makes reference to the accessibility of public transport, walking and cycling routes. The accessibility of low or zero emission transport options has the potential to mitigate the impacts of transport related emissions. However it is felt appropriate to ensure that uptake of these options is maximised through the development and implementation of a suitable travel plan.

In addition, modern Ultra Low Emission Vehicle technology (such as all electric vehicles) are expected to increase in use over the coming years. (The Government expects most new vehicles in the UK will be ultra low emission). As such it is considered appropriate to create infrastructure to allow charging of electric vehicles in new, developments.

Having regard to the issues discussed above, it is considered necessary to impose a condition requiring the provision of individual Travel Plans, including the provision of electric vehicle infrastructure on a minimum of one parking space.

Given the existing use of the site it is not considered that the change of use would have any significant adverse impact on amenity subject to the conditions proposed.

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable and in compliance with Policy BE.1 of the adopted local plan.

Highways

The key issue relating to this proposal is highway safety. As part of the Coppenhall East development there will be alterations made to the roundabout which is adjacent to the site.

The Strategic Highways Manager (SHM) recommended refusal of the previous application due to lack of information. As a result this application offers a revised Transport Statement with stage one Road Safety Audit, revised design drawings and car-park accumulation figures. Assessment has been made for the existing roundabout arrangement and the proposed new roundabout which will be developed with the Coppenhall East housing

development. There is also a drawing showing delivery vehicle tracking which shows access taken from the roundabout and egress via Greenway with an enforced left turn down Broad Street which is unsatisfactory. 21 car spaces are shown to serve the proposed retail store and traffic generation numbers have been derived from the TRICS database specifically for a food retail use.

The Traffic Statement predicts that the traffic generation from the store in terms of additional traffic will be minimal given many of the trips will already be on the highway network however it must be remembered that these trips will still take access and egress to and from the site onto the existing or new roundabout and they are likely to be in peak traffic times.

Examination of the revised information revealed continuing concerns regarding the service vehicle access strategy and the likely compromise of the safe operation of the revised roundabout design for the Coppenhall East housing development. This was questioned by the CEC safety audit team along with a number of other minor issues and these were communicated to the applicant's highway consultant.

On the 27th February a completely new service vehicle access strategy was provided showing the vehicle access taken via Greenway and exiting onto the roundabout – the reverse of the previous proposal. The provided service vehicle tracking is very tight against pedestrian desire lines and shows splitter-island hatching areas to be compromised. No safety audit is provided for this new access strategy. The CEC safety audit team have expressed related concerns.

Despite the parking accumulation figures which show that for the most part the provided car-parking will adequately serve the site the fact remains that as most of the visiting vehicles are demonstrated to be on the network rather than new trips there remains some concern about parking displacement from the site. Certainly other similar sites around the Borough can generate displaced parking at times and particularly when on-site parking prevents appropriate delivery movements and delivery vehicles are compromised. Displaced parking would not be acceptable.

In addition the traffic generation from the customer car park will be direct onto the new roundabout and whilst it is acknowledged that the emerging vehicle numbers will be low, their times of generation are very different from the existing use. The Road Safety Audit has not strictly considered the interaction of these vehicles with those circumnavigating the roundabout and it is not considered that the provision of a warning sign is sufficient to mitigate the safety audit concerns.

As a result the S.H.M. still considers that there are unresolved issues with this proposal, especially given the very late information provided and must therefore recommend refusal of this application on lack of information and highway safety grounds.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In conclusion, the proposal is acceptable in principle, there would be no change to the design and scale of the building and subject to conditions there would be no significant adverse impact on residential amenity.

Having regard to issues of highway safety insufficient information has been submitted in order to assess the application on highway safety grounds.

RECOMMENDATION:

Refuse for the following reason:

1. Insufficient information has been submitted with the application relating to highway safety in order to assess adequately the impact of the proposed development having regard to highway safety. In the absence of this information, it has not been possible to demonstrate the proposal would comply with the Development Plan policies or other material considerations.

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