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Dear Planning Team

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR A CHANGE OF USE OF LAND TO USE CLASSES B2 AND B8 ALONGSIDE MIXED-USE CAR SALES (SUI GENERIS) PURPOSES AT THE FORMER WYEVALE GARDEN CENTRE AND CROWLAND CARAVANS AND CAMPING, POSTLAND ROAD, CROWLAND, PE6 0JB

Please find enclosed a full planning application for the above proposed development. The purpose of this covering letter is to describe the site, set out a detailed description of the proposed development and an assessment against key development planning policy and material considerations.

Please not that in addition to this covering letter / planning statement, this application is accompanied by the following supporting documentation:

For approval

- Application form and certificates
- Location Plan
- Transport Statement (ref. 2506-041/TS/01)

For information and assessment purposes

- Plans of existing caravan workshops (drawing no. W/96/well/1A from application ref. H02-0263-96)
- Plans of existing garden centre buildings (drawings P19-020-102, P19-020-110, P19-020-111 from application ref. H02-0708-19)

Please note that there is no building operation proposed and therefore this application is purely for a change of use. The plans of the three buildings on site (taken from previous planning applications) have been included for information purposes and it is intended these would be used as storage warehouses / show room areas for the proposed car sales use but that no significant internal alterations and no material external alterations to these buildings are proposed; hence these plans and elevations represent the buildings both as ‘existing’ and as ‘proposed’ and there is no need to provide updated or amended drawings.

Carter Jonas LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales no. OC304417. Reg office One Chapel Place, London W1G 0BG. Regulated by RICS.

Background and Economic Justification

Wyevale Garden Centre decided to cease trading at the site in 2019 due to a scaling back of their operations, as such they vacated the site in May of that year. The market shows limited demand for a replacement garden centre.

The owner of the Crowland Caravans and Camping, who deals with the sales of new and used caravans and associated paraphernalia, were also seeking to vacate their part of the site as their lease came to an end.

Planning permission for a change of use of the Wyevale Garden Centre site to mixed B1 and B8 (business and storage and distribution) uses were granted on 12th September 2019 under application reference H02-0708-19, however, a marketing campaign has confirmed there has been limited demand from potential occupants within these use classes.

The applicant and owner are keen to ensure that the site does not remain vacant and instead wish to find an appropriate new alternative uses to occupy the site, which will provide local employment and generate business within the locality.

A prospective occupier dealing in the storage and sales of used cars, as well as MOT services, was looking to move to the site in 2022. Therefore, a planning application for a change of use of the site to mixed B2 and sui generis (use car sales) were submitted on 22nd July 2022 and permission was granted on 5th October 2022. The occupier went bust in December 2024 and the site has been left vacant since then.

A new tenant, GK Transport Ltd is interested to move to the site. This business is a car logistics operation which aims to make a strategic move into car and van storage, pre-delivery inspection (PDI), and vehicle refurbishment. The business stores, clean and repair cars; and require workshops, inspection bays and other related facilities including storage plots for storing cars and vans ready for sales and delivery. The business also intends to offer MOT services to the general public, although this is intended to be a smaller element of the business operations, with the majority of the site will be used for vehicle storage.

The Site

The application ‘site’ is denoted by the red line of the accompanying site location plan and is broadly in two parts (albeit joined). The south east portion comprises a large 5.282 square metre (GIA) building which is the now vacant former Wyevale Garden Centre and surrounding good yards and the north western part of the site is the former Crowland Caravans and Camping site, which includes two maintenance ‘workshops’, ancillary buildings and structures and areas of hardstanding for storage of Caravans. There are 145 car parking spaces distributed around the south east and central parts of the site.

The site mainly consists of building and hardstanding although there is some vegetation at the boundaries and fishing ponds located offsite and adjacent to the northeast.

In total, the site area extends to approximately 3.6ha.

Context

The site is previously developed (brownfield) land. It is located on the north eastern end of Crowland, off Postland Road. Postland Road joins to James Road, running close to the southern boundary of the site and this links to the A16, providing convenient highways links to wider locations including Peterborough to the south and Spalding to the north. The built up area of Crowland is located to the west of the site, albeit there is a separation distance of approximately 130m from the nearest residential areas. A housing allocation, Cro050 – Land to the east of Normanton Road, is located adjacent to the west, however, there is no evidence of any planning application having yet being submitted. Further to the north, east and south of the

site boundary lies open countryside, although mature vegetation surrounds the site boundaries and as such there is limited intervisibility between the site and views from the countryside beyond.

Environmental Designations

The Environment Agency's flood maps indicate that the site in its entirety falls within Flood Zone 3, with a high probability of sea or river flooding. There is also a medium to low probability of surface water flooding particularly at the south of the former Wyevale Garden Centre (this is defined as 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000 chances of flooding each year). Flood risk and drainage is discussed in the assessment section below.

There are no designated heritage assets on the site or within close proximity and there are no relevant environmental designations affecting the site.

Planning Policy Designations

The proposals maps of the adopted South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (March 2019) indicate that the site is located just outside of the settlement boundary, located west of the access point. It lies within a mineral safeguarding area for sand and gravel and also there is a housing allocation (Cro050) located approximately 140m to the west of the site.

Planning History and Lawful Use

Planning permission was granted for the change of use of the former garden centre and the use of 2 buildings for B2 (vehicle repairs and MOT services) and sui generis uses for car sales purposes on 5th October 2022 under planning application H02-0741-22. This established the lawful use of the southeast portion of the site for showroom offices for car sales (B2 use), as well as the two existing at the north west portion of the site for vehicle repairs and MOT services (sui generis use).

Whilst the northwestern part of the site does therefore already benefit from a lawful use for vehicle repair and MOT service, it does not necessarily enable open ended use of the site for the sale of any other vehicles. The applicant also seeks for a lawful use for storage and distribution under Use Class B8 across the site to allow flexibility on any potential reconfigurations. It is for this reason that a change of use to B2, B8 and sui generis on mixed-use car sales is being sought for the entire site, not just the former garden centre building.

Proposed Development

The description of the proposed development is as follows:

'Change of use of land to Use Classes B2 and B8 alongside mixed-use car sales (Sui generis) purposes'

The majority of the site will be used for storage and maintenance of plant, machinery, HGVs, cars and vans within the B2 and B8 uses. There will be pre-delivery inspection stations, valeting and light workshop facilities for minor mechanical and bodywork repair.

No building operations are proposed and the proposals are for a change of use of the site (including the existing buildings and areas of hardstanding) only.

Planning Policy Context and Assessment

The statutory development plan comprises the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2011-2031), which was adopted in March 2019. Planning law dictates that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The key policies of the Local Plan which are of relevance to the proposed development are as follows:

- Policy 1 (Spatial Strategy)

- Policy 2 (Development Management)
- Policy 3 (Design of New Development)
- Policy 4 (Approach to Flood Risk)
- Policy 7 (Improving South East Lincolnshire's Employment Land Portfolio)
- Policy 30 (Pollution)
- Policy 33 (Delivering a More Sustainable Transport Network)
- Policy 36 (Vehicle and Cycle Parking)

As the proposed development is purely a change of use application, it is in accordance with paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) that it is not subject to the sequential test, nor the exception test set out in Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The proposed sui generis, B2 and B8 uses are not considered to be 'retail' or a 'main town centre use' as defined of the NPPF and therefore the retail sequential test under paragraphs 91 of the Framework should not also be triggered, neither should Local Plan policy 24 (The Retail Hierarchy). In any event, the proposals simply involve a change from the sales of used cars and vehicle repair and MOT to include sales of used vans and B8 uses for vehicle storage; as such there is no conflict with retail policy.

Policy 7 (Improving South East Lincolnshire's Employment Land Portfolio) is included in the following assessment on the basis that the current uses of the site fall within the 'B use classes', i.e. Use Class B1, B2 and B8, which is considered as 'employment uses' under this policy context. As such, the site is most likely be considered an 'employment site'. Despite the site not being identified as an allocated employment site in the Council's Policies Map, policy 7 confirms new employment development/businesses or the extension of an existing business outside the allocation will be supported provided that the proposal involves the re-use of previously-developed land or the conversion/re-use of redundant buildings. In this respect, the proposal would be no conflict with this policy on the basis that the proposal is a change to a similar use to the current use of the site but with the inclusion of B8 use on vehicle storage and distribution.

Principle of Development

The application site is located outside of, but adjacent to the settlement boundary of Crowland, which is a 'main service centre' in the Local Plan (considered to be a sustainable settlement, second only to sub-regional centres' within the settlement hierarchy under policy 1). Given that the site is located outside of the settlement boundary, it is therefore designated under policy 1 as being in the 'countryside' for planning purposes. The policy states that 'in the Countryside development will be permitted that is necessary to such a location and/or where it can be demonstrated that it meets the sustainable development needs of the area in terms of economic, community or environmental benefits'.

There is no Local Plan policy which contends directly with the principle of the proposed change of use. As outlined above, there are no conflicts with retail or employment policies. The proposed development does accord with policy 1 on the basis it represents sustainable development, by providing economic benefits through the reuse of an otherwise vacant brownfield site. Given there is no specific policy dealing with the principle, a balanced assessment of the proposals is required of the proposals against the development plan as a whole and material considerations

The current lawful use of the site is a key material consideration. The proposed use is similar in nature to the current use, effectively to include spaces for vehicle storage. Given the similar nature of the uses there is anticipated to be no harm associated with the development, or conflict with policies; on the contrary, the proposals will deliver notable benefits and will enable the continuation of a business use to the site from its

current state of disuse. The proposal will also provide employment to up to approximately 20 staff in the long term associated with the proposed use.

The NPPF (2024) is also an important material consideration for the purpose of determining this planning application. Chapter 6 states that 'planning policies and decisions should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and develop'. The NPPF supports developments which meet the changing needs of businesses and generate investment and growth. The proposed development will result in the sustainable reuse of a vacant site to accommodate new business uses and this is a benefit which weighs heavily in support of the scheme in the planning balance.

Design

The proposed development does not involve any changes to the external appearance of the existing buildings or hardstanding. The building comprises a relatively large steel frame structure, with brick and steel-clad walls, and has the utilitarian appearance of a typical warehouse. The site is suitably designed for the proposed use as it has existing areas of hardstanding for vehicle storage and suitable buildings for the storage and workshops and facilities for inspection and repair of cars.

The proposal also meets the additional criteria within policy 3 of the Local Plan and the provision of the existing footpaths, dropped kerbs and level accesses and cycle and car parking will enable accessibility for all users. As such the proposal is considered to be in accordance with policy 3.

Pollution and Neighbouring Amenity

Policy 2 (Development Management) and also policy 30 (Pollution) of the Local Plan seek to ensure that development proposals are acceptable in terms of impacts upon neighbouring land uses by reason of noise, odour, disturbance and visual intrusion. Policy 30 further states that development proposals should be acceptable upon the surrounding environment and the public, taking into account of any proposed mitigation measures, in terms of air quality, noise and vibration, light levels, land quality and condition and surface and groundwater quality.

The proposed uses do have some potential to result in noise impacts, as a result of the moving of vehicles and vehicle repair works but are very much in keeping with the existing lawful use of the site as a mixed business on used car sales and vehicle repairs and MOT service.

The current use of the site has already included unloading and loading of vehicles at the site and therefore, to include spaces for vehicle storage use should not result in any additional or unacceptable impacts in these regards.

The proposed use generally involves restoration of modern vehicles which may require cleaning, and low-key repair works. It is anticipated these would take place within the buildings which should help to contain any potential noise or odour impacts. Repairs to vehicles offered as a service to the general public is a smaller proportion of the proposed use. Furthermore, there is separation from the nearest residences (which are on Girdlestone Walk are separated by a field at a distance of approximately 80m) this should ensure no unacceptable adverse impacts on noise sensitive receptors.

The proposed development will involve a scheme of external lighting for safety and to enable operation of the employment uses in the winter months when daylight hours are short. The lighting arrangements would be equivalent to the former occupier of the site as a car sales and repair workshops. As such the development would not result in any unacceptable impacts in terms of light pollution or disturbance upon neighbouring land uses.

The proposed development involves a simple change of use of the site to a non-sensitive end use in terms of land contamination and as such, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in these regards.

The proposals accord with policy 30 of the Local Plan.

Transport and Parking

Policy 33 of the Local Plan states that major proposed developments which will result in impacts upon the local highway network should be accompanied by a Transport Statement, setting out the transport impacts of the proposed development and how opportunities for more sustainable transport have been taken up.

A Transport Statement is accompanied in this application explaining the impacts upon the highway, how the site access meets the relevant standards and how sustainable transport modes have been encouraged.

There is no proposed change to the existing access arrangement and the delivery of sales vehicles on transporters and customers travelling from further afield could utilise James Road and A16 to the site; therefore, would not need to pass through the built-up area of Crowland. It would not be expected to have an unacceptable upon highways safety nor a serve residual cumulative impact upon the capacity of the local highway network

The existing car parking spaces would retain for customers and staff parking and to allow flexibility for storage of vehicles for sale. The arrangements are in accordance with policy 36 of the Local Plan and the minimum standards.

Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage

Vulnerability to Flooding

The site is located in an area protected by flood defence embankments from flooding associated with the River Welland. Both the existing retail use and the proposed commercial/light industrial use are classed by the NPPF as less vulnerable. These uses are appropriate in all Flood Zones.

Topography

The floor level of existing garden centre building is approximately +1.4m AOD. External levels, including outdoor sales and storage areas, access road and car park, vary between +1.1m AOD and +1.3m AOD. These levels will remain unchanged by the proposals. Without defences, such low levels in this area would be susceptible to flooding.

Flood History

There have been no flood events recorded at the site since March 1947.

Potential for Fluvial Flooding

The EA Flood Risk maps indicate the site is located in Flood Zone 3 (High Probability).

The South Holland Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2016 Update provides maps based on modelling a theoretical series of breaches in the defence embankments. Appendix B: Fluvial and Tidal Depth Mapping of the SFRA 2016 Update shows potential flood depths in the range 1.0m - 2.0m across the site for this conjectured event.

Potential for Surface Water Flooding

The EA Flood Risk from Surface Water map shows no significant risk of surface water flooding at the site.

Potential for Reservoir Flooding

The EA Flood Risk from Reservoirs map shows a risk of reservoir flooding, albeit very low, similar to that for 1 in 100 year fluvial flooding at the site.

Potential for Flooding from Other Sources

Flood risk from other sources such as groundwater or sewers is considered to be very low.

Flood Management Plan

Change of Use Benefit

The proposed car sales and vehicle repair use still falls within a 'less vulnerable' to flood impact classification in annex 3 of the NPPF.

Flood Warnings and Evacuation

The occupants of the site will register for the EA's flood warnings service which is available for the site. Should a flood warning be received or a flood event be otherwise predicted, personnel will evacuate in good time before any local flooding occurs to dry ground either at Crowland town centre, about 1 km to the south-west, or preferably at Peterborough, about 10 km to the south.

The occupants may also take evasive action to protect property, such as moving sales vehicles into buildings with a raised floor level, or moving higher value vehicles off-site, although this will only happen if there is sufficient warning and time for this to be carried out safely. The occupant is also advised to have appropriate insurance in place to cover any damage to property as a result of any flood event.

NPPF Sequential and Exception Tests

The Sequential Test is not required for changes of use. The Exception Test is not required for less vulnerable uses such as that proposed.

Drainage

The site will continue to drain to the surrounding land drainage system as it does at present. The proposed development does not involve introducing new impermeable surfaces and there are no anticipated changes to surface water impacts than exist at present.

In terms of foul drainage, the proposed development will connect to the existing infrastructure, in the same manner as the existing vacant car sales and vehicle repair building should be capable of accommodating flows given that the foul water impacts of the proposed are expected to be similar.

Conclusion

While the risk of a flood occurring at the site will not be affected by the proposed change of use, any hazard to personnel will be reduced by the adoption of a reliable flood management plan. The proposed change of use may therefore be implemented without any concern with respect to flooding and without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The proposed development is therefore accordance with policy 4 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

This covering letter has provided a detailed description of the site and the proposed development, along with an assessment against the development plan and material planning considerations. The principle of development is supported by the development plan and the proposed development is acceptable in terms of its impacts.

The proposed development will bring numerous benefits, including the sustainable re-use of a brownfield site and providing a new business use on the site will support local economy.

We therefore respectfully request for the planning application to be supported and for a determination to be issued as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully

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