

Mr Tony Stanberry

rdc
Robert Doughty
Consultancy

Planning Statement in support of an Outline Planning
Application for a proposed meeting hall and function
facility with associated car parking
Land off Elsoms Way, Spalding

Document Reference: 1267 1/IV/DAS

January 2018

32 High Street
Helpringham
Sleaford
NG34 0RA

Tel: 01529 421646
Fax: 01529 421358
Email: admin@rdc-landplan.co.uk
Web: www.rdc-landplan.co.uk

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Robert Doughty Consultancy Ltd on behalf of Mr Tony Stanberry to support an Outline Planning Application for the erection of a meeting hall and function facility with associated car parking. The application site lies inside the settlement boundary for Spalding and within the area allocated for employment in the South Holland Local Plan (2006). The area of the site is approximately 0.29 ha.
- 1.2. The proposed meeting hall and function facility will be used and pre-booked by the clubs' members, the need for which has arisen because of the shortcomings of the existing premises in Pinchbeck Road.
- 1.3. The current hall is used for regular meetings of the Masonic organisations around Spalding and was built some time ago. It is becoming increasingly unsuitable for use, as it does not have separate toilets, facilities for wheelchair users, a lift to the first floor nor any dedicated off-street parking. In this aspect, it fails to meet several modern legal standards, including the Disability Discrimination Act.
- 1.4. The building is not listed as being of special architectural or historic merit, but lies within the Spalding Conservation Area and just outside the Defined Retail Centre shown in the South Holland Local Plan 2006. The opportunities to expand or alter the current building are limited by the small size of the plot, proximity of neighbouring properties and the impact development would have on the mature trees within the adjacent Sir Halley Stewart Playing Field. As such, the changes required to make the building fit for purpose in the 21st century cannot be delivered within the existing small building.
- 1.5. The organisation is thriving in the Spalding area and, therefore, requires an update and expansion of its accommodation to continue to meet the needs and aspirations of its members. Masonic Halls are classified as sui generis in planning use class terms. As such, they are not included as town centre uses in national or local planning policy. In addition to assessing the potential for redevelopment of the current site, we have undertaken a search of available sites. These are within or, as is the case with the current building, adjacent to the defined town centre and across Spalding.

- 1.6. This application is also supported by a Sequential Test which considers the availability of other sites within the defined town centre, and a Flood Risk Assessment.

2. SITE LOCATION AND CHARACTER

- 2.1. The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Spalding and forms part of the Spalding Enterprise Park. Access to the site is via an existing estate road that serves several offices, a children's day care use and a nail bar and beauty salon. These buildings in turn are accessed from Elsoms Way, which has direct access to the roundabout adjacent to the power station. The area is characterised by a variety of industrial and commercial uses and there is also good access to the Spalding town centre.
- 2.2. There is a 1.5m post and rail fence that defines the boundaries of the site and the ground level is presently 1.5m – 2.0m above that of the adjacent commercial land. The ground level on the site has been artificially raised through the deposition of soil following the construction of the adjacent car dealership. It is the applicant's intention to remove this soil and return the ground level back to the original.

3. PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1. The development plan consists of the South Holland Local Plan (2006) (Local Plan).
- 3.2. The current local plan will, in time, be superseded by the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. The emerging local plan is currently undergoing its examination and although reasonably well advanced, little weight can be given to it in the decision making process at this time. However, we note that emerging local plan does not have any significant impact on the various sites we have considered in the Sequential Test that accompanies this application.
- 3.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (the "NPPF") sets out Central Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in the decision making process.
- 3.4. Paragraphs 6 and 7 of the NPPF confirm the commitment to sustainable development based on three dimensions:

“an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.”

3.5. Paragraph 22 of the NPPF states:

“Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.”

3.6. The application site has been allocated for employment use since the adoption of the Local Plan almost 12 years ago. Since the adoption of the Local Plan, further industrial land has also been granted planning permission to the north of Elsom's Way and this too remains undeveloped. Where employment land has yet been developed on, its use for an alternative purpose can be justified.

3.7. The 'South East Lincolnshire annual monitoring report 2015/16 economy - fact sheet 1' states that there is a large amount of land allocated for employment use. When our Sequential Test was prepared, there were 195.29 hectares of new employment land available and, of that, only 1008m² of floorspace has been completed. This completed floorspace was on non-allocated brownfield land. Accordingly, the development of a Masonic Hall on allocated industrial land would not fetter the ability of the local planning authority to deliver industrial land in a sustainable way, having regard to the significant amount of land still available for the new Plan (the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan) period.

South Holland Local Plan (2006)

3.8. The following Local Plan policies are relevant to the proposal.

SG1 - General Sustainable Development:

3.9. "Planning permission for development will be granted where the Council is satisfied that the proposal is consistent with the principles of sustainable development, and where:

- 1) the quality of life for residents is unimpaired or enhanced;
- 2) reasonable measures have been taken to conserve energy and natural resources; and
- 3) South Holland's essential character and main environmental assets are not damaged."

SG2 - Distribution of Development:

3.10. "All proposals for development must be located having regard to sustainable development principles. They should:

- 1) adopt a sequential approach which gives priority to the use of previously developed land and buildings within defined settlement limits, then to greenfield land within defined settlement limits and finally to land adjacent to defined settlement limits;
- 2) make efficient use of land;
- 3) ensure that, wherever possible, development is served by a choice of transport modes including existing public transport or by improvements to public transport infrastructure linked directly to the development and the existing highway network; and
- 4) ensure that the development is acceptable in terms of traffic generation and road safety in the surrounding area."

3.11. The Sequential Test submitted with this application identifies that the application site is the only plot of land reasonably available now. There are cycle links from the site and access is good from Spalding, Pinchbeck and the surrounding areas. The volume of vehicle movements produced by the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network. It should also be pointed out that the building will generally be

used in the evenings when the surrounding offices and commercial buildings are not in use.

SG3 - Settlement Hierarchy:

- 3.12. “For the purposes of controlling and regulating development, and also to reflect the wider functions of settlements the following hierarchy will be applied:

1) Main Town – Spalding

Spalding is defined as the District’s principal urban settlement. It will be the main location for new development.”

- 3.13. The proposed development is within the main town of Spalding, which is identified as being the main focus for new development and the most sustainable location.

SG9 - Development and Flood Risk:

- 3.14. “In areas of flood risk planning permission will only be granted where a flood risk assessment has been carried out and submitted to the Council. Proposals shall, where necessary, include details of measures designed to reduce the risk and consequences of flooding.

For permission to be granted the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and site specific assessment will need to demonstrate how the proposed development will be defended from flooding for its proposed life, taking into account proposed mitigation measures.

Built development that would be at high risk of flooding, or which may be subject to rapid inundation, will not normally be permitted unless exceptionally required for operational reasons.”

- 3.15. The site lies within Flood Zone 3a and, therefore, a Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the NPPF by RM Associates. The assessment concluded that the ground floor level of the application must be 300m above existing average ground level. In this particular instance, the existing average ground level is the original ground level before land raising was carried out.

SG14 - Design and Layout of New Development:

- 3.16. “New development should be designed to ensure that it makes a positive contribution to the architectural and visual quality of its surroundings. It should normally respect the vernacular architecture of the area in which

it is located although high quality contemporary design will be supported in appropriate contexts. In assessing the design and layout of new development the following matters will be taken into consideration:-

local distinctiveness;

the choice of materials;

- 1) the historic pattern of development in the locality;
- 2) the relationship of the development to the character, form and scale of existing buildings nearby;
- 3) the scale, form and height of the proposed development;
- 4) architectural detailing;
- 5) the effect of the development on the amenity of nearby residents in terms of noise, smell, general disturbance, overlooking and loss of light;
- 6) planting and measures to promote biodiversity;
- 7) the layout of vehicular access, parking and manoeuvring facilities and the provision of facilities for cyclists and pedestrians;
- 8) the needs of disabled persons;
- 9) the use of sustainable materials and methods of construction;
- 10) measures to reduce the potential for crime and disorder.

Development that would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality, or which would prejudice the comprehensive development or redevelopment of an area, will not be permitted.”

- 3.17. The proposed design is for a single storey meeting hall with associated car parking. The choice of materials will reflect the surrounding development to ensure that the proposal integrates well with the surrounding development. The indicative site layout shows how the site allows for sufficient car parking and manoeuvring. Materials and structural details will be submitted as part of a Reserved Matters application, along with the proposed final site plans.

SG15 - New Development: Facilities For Road Users, Pedestrians And Cyclists:

- 3.18. "Proposals for development shall provide safe and convenient access to and within the site for motor vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, the less able-bodied and people with disabilities to accommodate the potential increase in movement generated by the proposal. New and improved roads, cycleways and footpaths shall reflect through layout and design the anticipated nature of future traffic and the character of areas to be served."
- 3.19. The access to the site will be via Spalding Office Park off Elsoms Way. This cluster of buildings and uses is fairly modern and incorporates adequate visibility splays on to Elsoms Way. There are footpaths and cycleways leading from the site to Spalding Town Centre and ready access to bus stops.

SG16 - Parking Standards in New Development:

- 3.20. "Development proposals will be required to provide appropriate parking and servicing arrangements.

Parking will be required in the form of residential or operational car and cycle spaces, which shall be provided in accordance with the maximum parking standards appended. Where appropriate, provision will be assessed as an average across the development rather than on a plot by plot basis.

The precise level of provision will be determined by negotiation to reflect the proposed use, its location and potential for access by public transport."

- 3.21. Adequate parking provision will be incorporated within the design of the scheme.

SG18 - Landscaping of New Development:

- 3.22. "Proposals for new development should, where appropriate, incorporate landscaping proposals as an integral part of their design and layout and a landscaping strategy will be required to support all major development proposals. Particular attention will be paid to:-

the protection of any existing trees and hedgerows, and any other attractive landscape features;

- 1) the provision of strategic tree planting of indigenous species to improve the setting of development within the wider landscape;
- 2) the maintenance and establishment of wildlife habitats and corridors.”

3.23. A landscaping scheme will form part of the subsequent Reserved Matters Application and will address what landscaping is necessary for the new development.

EC3 - Existing Employment Areas/Premises:

3.24. “Proposals for new development, redevelopment and changes of use for employment uses within existing employment curtilages and / or proposals for the expansion of existing employment undertakings will be permitted provided they are acceptable in terms of environmental impact, the level of traffic movement and intrusion into the open countryside.

Exceptionally, the redevelopment and/or change of use to non employment uses will be permitted where the existing use is unsatisfactory or where the benefit of the proposed use outweighs the need to retain the existing use.”

3.25. As demonstrated in the submitted Sequential Test, there are no other reasonably available or appropriate sites where this proposal could be located.

4. DESIGN AND ACCESS

Use

- 4.1. The proposed use occupies a site which already has the benefit of planning permission for office use and, therefore, the principle of development on the site has already been accepted.
- 4.2. Having regard to the existing range of uses in the vicinity of the site, there will be no conflict in terms of the day to day operation of the proposal.
- 4.3. The existing buildings surrounding the site are used for a range of services, including child care, a beauty salon and services to the food industry.

Layout

- 4.4. The indicative layout shows how the site can be developed to ensure the proposal integrates well with its surroundings and provide satisfactory access, parking and suitable separation between the existing development.

Landscaping

- 4.5. The landscape scheme will form part of a subsequent Reserved Matters application.

Scale

- 4.6. The surrounding development is predominately two storey office units and to the north, north west and south east of the site are industrial style buildings.
- 4.7. The range of building sizes and designs in the area is typical of industrial and commercial development and the single storey proposal will simply add to this varied grain.

Appearance

- 4.8. The hall will reflect the local vernacular and use appropriate materials to create a development in keeping with its location.

Access

- 4.9. The proposed access point will be via Spalding Office Park off Elsoms Way.
- 4.10. The development proposed will not have a detrimental impact on the local highway network.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. The existing hall in Pinchbeck Road, Spalding is now essentially obsolete and no longer fit for the 21st Century. Accordingly, new premises are needed and a search of suitable and available sites has been undertaken. The Sequential Test concludes the only available sites are located on the industrial areas within the town which serves the membership of the organisation.
- 5.2. The application proposal is for an Outline Planning Application for the erection of a new replacement meeting hall and function facility with associated car parking.

- 5.3. Although the application site is allocated for employment use, it has been vacant for over 11 years. In the absence of a suitable site elsewhere, coupled with the low take-up of industrial land, there should be no objection to the principle of development in this location.
- 5.4. The site lies within Flood Zone 3 and a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted as part of this application. The building will be raised 300m above the original average ground level in accordance with the assessment's findings.
- 5.5. The site is well connected to Spalding, Pinchbeck and its surrounding areas. Private members using the hall will be able to readily and easily access it, regardless of where they travel from.
- 5.6. The hall will be designed in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act and the proposal includes provision of on-site parking, something that is not possible at the current site.
- 5.7. The layout and scale of the development respect the surrounding development. There are no significant impacts on any designated or non-designated heritage assets. The layout of the proposal provides a logical development opportunity in the absence of suitable sites elsewhere in the town.

