



Planning Statement

Wardentree Park, Wardentree Lane, Spalding

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Alder King Planning Consultants have been instructed by Thomas Roberts (Westminster) Limited to submit a change of use planning application on the former Travis Perkins unit in Spalding in order to allow for a flexible employment-based permission for B2 and B8 uses, with ability to accommodate ancillary offices/trade-counter/showroom facilities.
- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to undertake an assessment of the planning context, in order to determine the merits of the scheme including any design and access issues. This is a full application for a change of use with no proposed external alterations to the existing premises.
- 1.3 The proposal would assist with the occupation of the unit to create employment and bring a vacant unit back into active and economic use. Whilst vacant the unit is not creating jobs or providing spin-off economic benefits to the local area.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located on the north side of Wardentree Lane and Wardentree Park, Pinchbeck.
- 2.2 The site comprises a large rectangular steel-framed building previously used as a builders and timbers merchants with an open storage yard. The total site area measures approximately 1.25 acres (0.50ha). Key operations associated with the building and yard involved plumbing and heating supplies, and tool hire with ancillary retail sales and offices. The site supplied services and products to the public and to trade.
- 2.3 There are a range of existing uses in the surrounding area. Morrisons supermarket and petrol station are located to the south west on the other side of the B1180 roundabout and there are storage and distribution uses directly to the west and east of the application site. In the wider area there are a number of industrial premises, including a car servicing centre, workshops and engineering services. Other uses present in the wider employment area include trade counters (such as Screwfix, Topps Tiles, City Plumbing), a car dealership, and health uses such as gyms and therapy centres.
- 2.4 The site is accessed via an existing access arrangement from Bervor Close at the northern end of the site which will continue to service the site as normal.
- 2.5 The application site is within flood zone 3 and, as it is located on an existing industrial estate and is for a change of use only, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required as part of this change of use application. A telephone discussion with Richard Fidler at South Holland District Council on 6th May confirmed that in this area, no FRA's were required to support commercial changes of use where the proposed use was no more vulnerable in flood risk terms than the previous lawful use.
- 2.6 The application site is located within the settlement boundary for Pinchbeck as set out in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019) and is also identified as being located within the 'Existing Main Employment Area' (further discussed below).

3.0 Proposed Change of Use

- 3.1 The proposal is for a change of use on the former Travis Perkins unit in the Wardentree Park Employment area in Spalding. The applicant is applying for full planning permission for a flexible employment-based permission for B2 and B8 uses. No external changes to the existing steel framed unit and ancillary storage yard are proposed.
- 3.2 The previous occupier, Travis Perkins, had an ancillary office and trade counter, open to the public and to trade customers. It can be expected that any future occupier of the unit may also require similar facilities, which would operate as ancillary to the main use of the building. The floor plan approved as part of planning permission H14-0505-04 shows that the building floor area is broken up into a sales area, with manager's office, toilets and kitchen area. There are then roller shutter doors which service two large store areas and then some smaller compartmentalised smaller storage areas.
- 3.3 In terms of the schedule of areas currently available on site, they include:
- Ex stock area – 1660m²;
 - Roadway – 350m²;
 - Service Yard – 1170m²;
 - Building – 886 m²
- 3.4 Any future occupier of the building may have differing needs for the layout and operation of the internal space, however works affecting on the interior of the building do not constitute development, unless otherwise restricted through conditions. No such conditions exist on the building.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1 From checking the council's online planning register, the only planning history pursuant to the site relates to:
- Planning permission H14-0505-04 (Builders and timber merchants – plumbing and heating supplies, tool hire with ancillary retail sales and offices) – approved 10 June 2004.

5.0 Design

- 5.1 From a design perspective the premises will remain as existing, with no external alterations proposed. Therefore, it has not been necessary to submit any new floor plans to support the change of use and this planning application can rely on the proposed floor plans submitted as part of planning application H14-0505-04. As referred to above, any internal changes would not amount to development.

6.0 Access

- 6.1 Changes are not proposed to the existing access arrangement serving the premises and associated storage yard. The self-contained access leads on to Bervor Close which then connects with the B1180 (Wardentree Lane), a short distance after.

7.0 Planning Policy Context

- 7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.2 The application site is located within the jurisdiction of South Holland District Council where the Development Plan comprises the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (March 2019). The adopted proposals map shows that the site is not the subject of any specific safeguards or designations, although it is within a flood zone and there are local planning policies which are relevant. In this case, the application site is located within the council's 'Existing Main Employment Area' for Spalding industry and commerce are welcomed.
- 7.3 In addition to the above, national planning policy is a material consideration, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (the 'Framework') and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (March 2019)

- 7.4 Policy 7 of the Local Plan states that 'the *Existing Main Employment areas* are reserved for main employment in Classes B1 (now Class E g.i.ii.iii.), B2 and B8'.
- 7.5 Policy 7 aims to ensure that growth happens in the right areas (both from the market's perspective and to meet sustainability objectives) and will ensure that resources can be focused on delivering a small number of quality, attractive business locations. This approach helps ensure that the right infrastructure and conditions can be delivered to give businesses the confidence to invest in the area.

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

- 7.6 The Framework advises at paragraphs 80 and 81 that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The Framework advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. It states specifically that planning policies should:
- set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;
 - seek to address potential barriers to investment;

- be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices, and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

7.7 It has always been acknowledged that planning policies should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no prospect of a site being used for that purpose.

8.0 Planning Justification

Principle of Development

8.1 The existing premises was permitted as, and until recently has been operated as, a “builders and timber merchants – plumbing and heating supplies, tool hire with ancillary retail sales and offices”. The Land Use Gazetteer confirms that a builders’ merchant is a B8 use. It is our view that the unit therefore benefits from an extant permission for B8. The building is now vacant, and our client is seeking to widen the planning permission to include other employment opportunities within use class B2 for the unit to maximise the marketing opportunities for the site so as to bring it back into beneficial use as quickly as possible.

8.2 The proposal for a flexible employment based permission for a B2 or B8 use on the former Travis Perkins site in Spalding is, in principle, acceptable and accords with Policy 7 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan. The whole ‘Main Employment Area’ is safeguarded for employment uses by commercial businesses that fit within the B1 (now Class E g.i.ii.iii), B2 and B8 use classes which include general offices, light industry and storage and distribution uses. The immediate setting of the application site is characterised by industrial/commercial uses and therefore a B8 or B2 occupier, potentially with ancillary offices/trade-counter/showroom facilities will dovetail with a number of other employment uses already operating locally. As such, there will not be an impact on the character of the surrounding area.

8.3 It is considered that the proposed change of use satisfies the relevant criteria of Policy 7:

- It involves re-using a vacant building and ancillary storage yard (PDL);
- There will be no conflict between the proposal and neighbouring uses;
- There will be no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- There will be no adverse impact on the local highway network; and
- The change of use would not conflict with the delivery and viability of the council’s employment land/uses.

Flexible permission

8.4 Planning policy allows for employment premises to be used for alternative uses where the replacement use has significant benefits which outweigh the loss. In this case the application seeks to bring a vacant unit back into an active economic use. A B2 or B8 use will create employment, benefit the local economy and is preferable to a continuing period of vacancy.

- 8.5 The purpose of applying for a flexible planning permission, is so that if either use ceases then the premises can revert back to its permitted industrial/storage and distribution uses without the need to go through a further planning application process. This does echo the purpose of Policy 7 which sets out a flexible approach to help ensure that businesses can continue to operate or expand with confidence should business needs require additional or different provision. We acknowledge that after a period of 10 years, the permitted use of the building will be limited to that which is in use at that point in time, until such time as a further application may be submitted.

Residential Amenity and Highways

- 8.6 There will not be any amenity impact arising from the proposal as the former Travis Perkins unit is surrounded by other industrial and commercial premises thus according with criteria 1 of Policy 2 of the Local Plan. Furthermore, there are no residential receptors located close to the premises and therefore no impacts to any residential amenity would occur as a result of the change of use.
- 8.7 It is unlikely that any proposed B2 or B8 use would result in a material increase in traffic to Bervor Close/B1180 over and above that which was already operating from the former builders and timber merchants use (Travis Perkins) thus according with criteria 4 of Policy 2.
- 8.8 The application site is sustainably located and appears to be well-served by the B1180 Wardentree Lane that dissects the wider employment area. A flexible permission will complement other uses in the established employment area and will not conflict in terms of operational requirements or impact on the highway network.
- 8.9 The existing site has 12 no. parking spaces demarked with painted lines, however the external area associated with the site clearly has capacity for many more if required. We note that the Council's parking standards for B8 are 1 space per 150sqm and for B2, 1 space per 65sqm is required. That would equate to a parking requirement of between 6 and 13 spaces. The parking standards associated with a B2 operation could easily be accommodated within the existing site boundary.

9.0 Other issues

- 9.1 No building operations are proposed as part of this application and therefore the change of use will ensure that the size, scale and layout of the application site and warehouse building remain the same. Any office/trade-counter/showroom facilities will be ancillary to the primary use and will be accommodated within the footprint of the existing building (see breakdown of areas at paragraph 3.4 above).
- 9.2 Whilst the site is within Flood Zone 3, the premises is located on a long-established employment site and is for a change of use only with no external changes to the building or external area of the site. The former use of the premises was for a builders and timber merchants and given the applicant is applying for a flexible permission for either a B2 or B8 use, the vulnerability classification is not changing. In discussions with the council's validation team, in particular Richard Fidler, we have agreed that in this instance a Flood Risk Assessment is not necessary to support the application.

10.0 Summary

- 10.1 The proposed change of use will increase the viability of the existing premises and will not have an impact on the amenity of existing users or impact the character of the surrounding area. There will be no implications for highway safety arising from B2 or B8 uses which are commensurate with the established employment area.
- 10.2 Therefore, on balance, given that the existing premises are vacant, the proposal would make a positive contribution to the employment site and would bring economic growth which is encouraged by the Framework. As such the application meets the relevant planning policy requirements and should be approved.