

Urban Design Comments:

F/22/93835 – Moorlands Farm, Botley Road, West End

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

Urban Design Officer: Marta Oliveira

Planning Officer: Summer Sharpe

Date: 21 October 2022

Proposal: Demolition of all existing buildings and detailed planning approval for light industrial floorspace [Use Class E(g)(ii) & E(g)(iii)], warehouse floorspace [Use Class B8] and estate office (Use Class E(g)(i)).

Summary:

- The site is located outside the urban edge within the countryside.
 - The proposed layout shows the buildings predominantly within the area of the existing buildings, minimising the encroachment into the undeveloped part of the site.
 - The elevations also indicate a softer design for the buildings, with varied timber cladding that creates a more 'rural' appearance appropriate for the countryside setting.
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These comments are made in relation to the plans dated 04 October 2022 and should be read in conjunction with comments from the Landscape Officer.

1. Site Context

The site lies within the Countryside and adjacent an SSSI. A PRoW runs alongside the northern boundary.

The following comments are therefore made on the assumption that issues relating to development within the Countryside can be overcome.

2. External Layout

The existing buildings are currently in a state of disrepair, and they do not appear to have any architectural merit. In addition, where the character of an existing place has limited or few qualities, then a new and positive character should be proposed to enhance its identity. In this context, it is considered that the proposal helps to improve the overall appearance of the site and makes a positive contribution to the character of the area.

In terms of layout, while it is acknowledged that the footprint of some of the buildings will be located outside what is the current developed area, it seems that the proposal won't have a detrimental visual impact on the surrounding area subject to addressing concerns raised by the Landscape Officer.

There are some discrepancies in the submitted plans where clarification is required. The site plan shows a stepped building line on the north-west elevation of unit A and B. However, this does not correspond with what is shown on the elevation drawings where both sides of the buildings show 'blocks' of timber cladding broken up by planting to soften their bulkiness. Further details would be required to understand better which plans are the most recently updated. The external appearance of these units should dialogue and articulate with each other.

3. Height, Form, Scale & Mass

No objections in principle. Furthermore, the site is currently well-screened, and it is anticipated that there won't be many opportunities for the proposal to be seen from wider views.

4. External Appearance & Materials

No objections in principle to the proposed architectural language nor to the material palette shown on page 13 of the DAS. However, it is important to ensure that an excessive variation of detailing is not employed in a single scheme, as it often results in a discordant composition. It would be encouraged to keep it simple and reduce to the minimum timber cladding orientations proposed.

The external finishing materials and detailing are very important from an urban design perspective. These should be durable and of high quality, reinforce the overall design concept, and take account of the context of the site.

Further details/ samples of materials are needed.

5. Trees, Green Infrastructure and Landscape

The concerns raised by the Landscape Officer regarding potential visual impact, particularly from the motorway, are shared. Therefore, any proposal to remove trees alongside the access road, which are currently providing a significant level of screening, would need to be carefully considered.

Green roofs are welcomed as they provide added benefits for biodiversity and sustainable drainage.

6. Sustainability

To support the Council's commitment to mitigate climate change:

- Significantly reduce vehicular dominance and prioritise pedestrian and cycle provision and links to public transport given the significant growth occurring in this area
- Provide minimum parking provision
- Consider creating provision for shared car club vehicles
- Provide electric vehicle charging points for cars, Ebikes and other forms of micro-mobility in locations that support the streetscene and do not hinder pedestrians and, consider the need to future proof / safeguard land for infrastructure to support autonomous and connected autonomous vehicles and MaaS (Mobility as a Service)
- Include additional tree and soft landscape planting to reduce hard surfaces, slow surface water run-off, provide shade, and create habitats / corridors for biodiversity