

City of York Council
Planning Services
West Offices
Station Rise
York
YO1 6GA

25 May 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Portal Ref. PP-09863421

Unit 2, Severus Court, Centurion Way, York, YO30 4WW

Insertion of 12 high-level vents on the north-west, north-east, and south-east elevations of existing Unit 2, and security provisions of obscure film, security bars (windows), two collapsible security bollards and three fire security doors (one with a keypad and three with emergency push bars) in relation to Class B8 Use (Storage and Distribution).

On behalf of our client, CityFibre Holdings Limited, please find enclosed a planning application for minor external alterations to Unit 2 at Severus Court, York in relation to its use as a data storage centre (Class B8).

The application documentation, which has been submitted to the City of York Council as the Local Planning Authority via The Planning Portal (Ref: PP-09863421) comprises the following:

- Covering Report/Letter;
- Completed Application Form;
- Site Location Plan P1808-179-PL-001;
- Existing Site Plan P1808-179-PL-002;
- Existing Site Elevations P1808-179-PL-003;
- Proposed Site Plan P1808-179-PL-004; and
- Proposed Site Elevations P1808-179-PL-005.

The statutory application fee of **£234** has been paid via the Planning Portal.

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Background

CityFibre is a leading digital infrastructure provider in the UK. It will be instrumental in helping to deliver the Government's target of 15 million users with full fibre broadband by 2025 and comprehensive coverage across the UK by 2033. The improved service will provide faster internet speed, together with better connectivity and reliability. This, in turn, will help boost the country's economy by enhancing business productivity and provide the UK's fastest broadband services to households, schools and hospitals, to name but a few. The need for an enhanced service has been made more vital due to Covid-19 where reliable, high speed broadband is fundamental to enable effective homeworking, which has become standard practice for many for the foreseeable future.

To achieve this, the existing network must be expanded and upgraded. This application seeks permission for minor external alterations to existing Unit 2 at Severus Court to allow the building to accommodate high-speed servers. This in turn will enable an improved broadband service to be delivered to this part of York and the surrounding area.

Existing Site

The application site is previously developed land located north of York, within the Clifton Moor Industrial Estate, with several showroom, industrial and trade counter units. The site is located off Clifton Moor Gate, via Wigginton Road (B1363), which leads to the A1237 north of the site and York Central to the south. The same road leads up to Sutton-on-the-Forest.

At present there is a large modern warehouse format commercial estate with grass verges on the eastern and western boundaries, behind fencing. The eastern boundary serves the site's access point off Centurion Park (pedestrian and vehicle access), and the western boundary abuts green, open land that is outside of the Council's administrative boundary. Other industrial buildings are sited to the north-west and south-west of the site.

The surrounding buildings include vehicle repairs and several car showrooms/dealerships. Otherwise, there is green, open land surrounding the site. In the wider locale, there are numerous trade counter units including paint, fabrics, and interior and carpentry shops, amongst other trade units, as part of large industrial, commercial, and retail uses as unallocated employment land.

Planning History

There have been three planning applications at the site. The most relevant applications include:

- 00/02696/FUL – Erection single storey pitched roof industrial building to form two units – **Granted 05/01/2001**
- 3/27/361D/OA – Erection of buildings for light industrial/office use (class B1), general industrial use (class B2), storage distribution (class B8), food and drink (class A3), and two car showrooms/workshops (site area 3.37 ha) – **Granted (date unknown)**

- 3/27/361F/FA – Demolition of runways and building, construction of roads, drainage, and balancing lagoon. – **Granted (date unknown)**

There are no planning designations at the site, and the existing lawful use is industrial (Class B1 (now replaced by Class E), B2 and B8).

Proposed Development

The proposed development is for the insertion of 12 high-level vents on the north-west, north-east, and south-east elevations of the existing industrial Unit (2), and security provisions of obscure film, security bars (windows), two collapsible security bollards and three fire security doors (one with a keypad and three with emergency push bars) in relation to Class B8 Use (Storage and Distribution). One roller shutter is to be widened by 0.5m to provide sufficient space for data storage equipment to safely go into the Unit.

Planning Considerations

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Planning Authorities must determine applications for planning permission in accordance with the Development Plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires Local Planning Authorities, in dealing with an application for planning permission, to have regard to:

- the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application; and
- any other material considerations.

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National planning guidance, which is a material planning consideration, is largely detailed within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). For decision making, the NPPF advises that local planning authorities should look to approve sustainable development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

City of York Development Plan

The adopted Local Plan comprises the following:

- Local Plan (2005); and
- Policies Map (2005).

The planning policies that are relevant to the consideration of the application are:

- Policy E4 – Employment Development on Unallocated Land
- Policy GP18 – External Attachments to Buildings
- Policy GP20 – Telecommunication Developments

Principle of Development

The site is previously developed land and has been in industrial use for a significant amount of time – the earliest known date that the site was in industrial use is 2001. All applications before this date are unavailable on the Council's website.

Policy E4 explains that planning permission will be granted for employment of a scale and design appropriate to the locality. The proposed development will be to install equipment that will support the nature of the use at the site i.e. fibre broadband exchange. This leads into Policy GP18 whereby, planning consent is required for external attachments to buildings. The proposed vents and security bollards would provide a minor external change to the existing building and the location, materials and colouring will not detract from the visual appearance of the area.

The location was selected because:

- It will avoid the Greenbelt.
- It will be significantly screened by the existing tree-lined boundaries north-east and south-west of the site, and therefore minimises visual impact relative to surrounding properties. This will be retained in accordance with Policy GP18.
- The proposal is for an industrial use, which is in character with the surrounding area i.e. the site is within an existing industrial estate.
- The site is completely enclosed either by trees or buildings of a similar industrial use, and as such does not detract from the nature of the use in the locality, in accordance with Policy E4.
- The site will be accessed via the existing route off Centurion Way via Clifton Moor Gate, which is well connected to wider highway networks i.e. A1237 (north) and B1363 Wigginton Road (east) towards York Central.
- It is not within an area of flooding.

The proposal for vents will aid the performance of the unit; enhance the nature of the use of the unit in terms of offering a variety of premises in the industrial park; and enhance the performance of the economic use at the site.

Policy GP20 refers to telecommunications. The unit will be leased for telecommunication within the approved B8 use, and the proposed vents are to ensure the data centre performs to its best capabilities. The development is not in a sensitive location as it has already been industrial use for a significant amount of years, and any noise generated by the data centre will be similar to a domestic fridge. As the site is surrounded by other industrial units the noise distribution from the units will be negligible – any potential constraints are nullified by the enclosed approach of the site i.e. open land to the west and a fair distance away from adjacent industrial properties. The proposed Fibre Exchange will improve the broadband performance for the needs of the surrounding York area requiring high-speed broadband, particularly York Central, which the site is in proximity to. In addition, the proposal keeps the building safe and secure.

Design and Appearance

The modestly sized vents, each of which will be approximately 4 metres from ground level, will have a similar appearance to the existing building and have been sited at the north-west, north-east, and south-east elevations.

The collapsible steel security bollards (approximately 0.9m in height) are designed to withstand vehicle impact, they are of a standard design and will be located directly in front of the existing roller shutter doors. One roller shutter is to be widened by 0.5m to provide sufficient space for data storage equipment to safely go into the Unit. The other roller shutter will be retained, so too will the existing hard and soft landscaping, and parking and highway arrangements.

The vents, bollards and additional security provisions are extremely modest interventions that will allow the building to continue to support a commercial use that will have significantly wider benefits. The development integrates sympathetically into its surroundings in physical and visual terms and there will be no demonstrable harm caused by the proposals to the existing visual amenity of the wider commercial area.

Conclusion

The works will facilitate the use of the building as a Broadband Server Exchange that will provide a significantly improved internet service to York and the surrounding area, with enhanced connectivity and reliability. The need for an improved service has been made more vital due to Covid-19 and the provision of improved services is at the heart of National Planning Policy. On this basis, I respectfully request that the Council supports this application.

I look forward to receiving confirmation that the application has been validated. In the meantime, if you have any queries, please contact Silas Willoughby at Silas.Willoughby@cluttons.com or on (020) 7647 7059.

Yours faithfully

Silas Willoughby
Senior Planner – Town Planning
Encl.