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Our ref: J0059485

22 March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR CHANGE OF USE AT COTSWOLD FARM, COTSWOLD DENE, STANDLAKE

I write on behalf of our client, Noble Foods, to submit a planning application for a change of use in connection with proposed development at Cotswold Farm, Cotswold Dene, Standlake ('the proposed development').

My colleague Steven Sensecall has liaised directly with Phil Shaw, Business Manager for Development and Sustainability, and William Barton, Business Development Officer informally on this matter to discuss the principles of the proposed approach to the Site.

Noble Foods vacated the facility in October 2022, and the Site is now currently vacant.

Planning Background

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) granted full planning permission (reference: 12/1753/P/FP) on 10 June 2013 for:

"Erection of building for egg grading, packing and distribution with associated goods yard, car park and access roads."

Condition 4 of the planning permission states:

"The premises shall be used for purposes ancillary to the existing use of the site as an egg packing plant and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in Class B of the Schedule to The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason: The site is only suitable for the use specified because of the special circumstances of the site. (Policy E7 of the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011)."

Condition 5 of the planning permission states:

"No storage, industrial or other business use, except the parking, manoeuvring, and loading and unloading of vehicles, shall take place outside the building(s).

Reason: To protect the residential and visual amenities of the locality and to ensure there is no interference with the circulation and manoeuvring of vehicles on the site. (Policy BE2 of the adopted West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011).”

A Section 106 Agreement dated 4 June 2013 was finalised in connection with the planning permission and defined the development as:

“The expansion of existing egg grading, packing and distribution centre, with associated goods yard, car parking and access roads, including the demolition of two bungalows and redundant poultry sheds nos 1& 2 on the Site further to the Planning Application.”

Prior to the June 2013 permission, there are two further planning permissions of note:

- i) Planning permission was granted on 20 July 2011 for “change of use from food production units 1-6 to storage and distribution, creation of parking area” (reference: 11/0796/P/FP).

Condition 3 states “the development hereby permitted shall be carried out only by Noble Foods and for purposes set out in the letter dated 18 July 2011.” The letter dated 18 July 2011 is not available online.

- ii) Planning permission was granted on 17 March 2010 for “conversion of existing poultry housing and egg distribution facility (use class sui generis) to general industrial, storage and distribution (use class B2 / B8) with associated works and parking facilities” (reference: 10/0043/P/FP). This permission related to Unit 8 at Cotswold Farm.

There is therefore a longstanding presence of general industry (Class B2) and storage and distribution (Class B8) land uses on this Site.

Existing Site and Context

The Site is located to the south of Witney and west of Stanton Harcourt, and it is located to the west of the A415 within an existing commercial and industrial setting.

To the east of the A415 is the boundary of the Lower Windrush Valley Project Area, however the Site is not located within it.

Proposed Development

Noble Foods vacated the Site in October 2022 and is therefore considering the future options for the building and the wider Site.

The existing planning permission for the land use of the Site is very restrictive, and are, in effect, personal to the specific requirements and needs of Noble Foods. Now that Noble Foods are no longer using the building, there is an opportunity to bring the buildings back into active use by a new occupier.

The proposals are therefore seeking an increased amount of flexibility to attract the greatest range of potential occupiers to re-activate the site and use the building for industrial purposes.

The land uses sought for permission are in keeping of the existing industrial setting, and Class B2 / B8 were previously granted for the building in 2010.

For clarity, there are no changes proposed to the exteriors of the building and no changes are proposed to the site access, access road, car parking or layout of the Site.

Planning permission is therefore sought for:

“Change of use from egg packing plant to flexible Class B2 (general industry), Class B8 (storage and distribution) or Class E g ii (industrial processes).”

The Transport Assessment prepared by Glanville Consultants has demonstrated that the existing Site access would continue to operate well within its theoretical capacity, if either of the proposed uses came forward.

Planning Policy Context

The Development Plan

The Development Plan for West Oxfordshire District Council, relevant to the consideration of this Site, consists of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan, which was formally adopted on 27 September 2018 and sets out the overall planning framework for the district from 2011 to 2031.

In addition to the Local Plan 2031, there are several other relevant documents that are considered material to the consideration of the proposed development, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance, WODC’s adopted Supplementary Planning Documents, and the Emerging WODC Local Plan 2041.

The Emerging Local Plan 2041 for WODC is currently being prepared. A public consultation ran until 5 October 2022 seeking early views on potential areas of focus for the new Local Plan.

The adopted Local Plan 2031 was therefore not the local plan at the time that the planning permission in June 2013 was considered. Therefore, the policies from the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011, which are cited as reasons for imposing the relevant planning conditions to the June 2013 permission have now been superseded and no longer form part of the development plan.

Superseded Policy E7 which is stated as the reason for imposing Condition 4 of the 2013 planning permission stated that “proposals for the expansion of existing established businesses will be permitted.” The inclusion of Condition 4 therefore related to the fact that the egg distribution centre was already located on the Site within an existing established business.

Superseded Policy BE2 which is stated as the reason for imposing Condition 5 of the 2013 planning permission related to development needing to improve the character and quality of its surroundings and providing a safe, pleasant, convenient, and interesting environment.

Planning Considerations

Principle of Development

The Core Objective 7 of the WODC Local Plan is “to support sustainable economic growth which adds value to the local economy, improves the balance between housing and local jobs, provides a diversity of local employment opportunities, capitalises on economic growth in adjoining areas, improves local skills and work readiness, removes potential barriers to investment and provides flexibility to adapt to changing economic needs.”

Policy OS3 of the Local Plan states that “all development proposals (including new buildings, conversions, and the refurbishment of existing building stock) will be required to show consideration of the efficient and prudent use and management of natural resources, including, *inter alia*:

Making the most efficient use of land and buildings, whilst having regard to the character of the locality, and
Delivering development that seeks to minimise the need to travel.”

The proposals would enable a vacant Site to be brought back into active use, making an efficient use of the land, and providing a range of local employment opportunities. The existing planning permission is very restrictive, and now that Noble Foods have vacated the site, a broader range of land uses would be beneficial and enable the Site to be brought back into use.

Policy E1 of the Local Plan states that “employment development land and employment sites are those which include predominantly office-based, industrial or storage and distribution activities (B class uses) or related sui generis uses.” In relation to existing employment sites, the policy states that “proposals to improve the effectiveness of employment operations on existing employment sites will be supported where commensurate with the scale of the town or village and the character of the area.”

Based on the wording of Policy E1, the Standlake site would be defined as an existing employment Site and it has provided employment for around 150 people within an industrial, storage and distribution land use since Noble Foods arrived at the Site in 2014. The proposed land uses have been considered in the context of the Site’s location within an existing employment site. The Site is an existing employment generating use and it is currently vacant. The proposals would improve the effectiveness of the employment offer, by providing a range of local employment opportunities on a brownfield Site.

Transport and Access

A Transport Assessment, prepared by Glanville Consultants is submitted as part of this application. As is stated in the Transport Assessment, no alterations are proposed to the site access, access road, car parking or layout of the site as part of this application.

It is concluded that the proposals are expected to lead to either a modest increase, or a significant decrease in vehicle movements, depending on which use of the Site is ultimately brought forward, and the use of the Site for any of the proposed use classes would lead to a significant reduction in the number of HGVs accessing the site, with 104 fewer HGV movements for Class E g iii or Class B2, and 49 fewer HGV movements for Class B8 throughout the day.

In addition, the Transport Assessment demonstrates that the existing Site access would continue to operate well within its theoretical capacity if any of the three proposed uses came forward.

Application Documents

The following documents are submitted as part of this application:

- i) Covering Letter, prepared by Carter Jonas,
- ii) Transport Assessment, prepared by Glanville Consultants,
- iii) Application Forms, prepared by Carter Jonas.

The application fee of £494.20 (£462.00 planning application fee plus £32.20 service charge fee) has been paid via our client.

Summary

Noble Foods vacated the Site in October 2022, and the buildings are now vacant. The proposed change of use is therefore seeking an increased amount of flexibility to attract the greatest range of potential occupiers to re-activate the site and use the building for industrial purposes. In line with Policy OS3 and Policy E1 of the Local Plan 2031, the proposals would allow a brownfield Site and an existing employment Site to be brought back into an active and efficient use, providing employment opportunities within an established industrial area.

I look forward to receiving notification of the validation of this application, however if you have any questions in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,



Rachel Turner
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