

ITEM NUMBER: 5c

4/01642/19/FUL	Addition of two-storey extension to existing office building.	
Site Address:	Oxford House Northbridge Road Berkhamsted HP4 1EH	
Applicant/Agent:	Mr Modha (Agent)	
Case Officer:	Sally Robbins	
Parish/Ward:	Berkhamsted Town Council	Berkhamsted Castle
Referral to Committee:	Due to the contrary view of Berkhamsted Town Council.	

1. RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The proposed development for the upward extension to provide two additional levels of office space is acceptable in the Northbridge Road General Employment Area. The layout, design and scale of the proposed extension will not have a detrimental effect upon the visual amenity of the surrounding area, nor will it impact negatively upon parking or highway safety. The proposal complies with Core Strategy (2013) Policies CS1, CS4, CS8, CS12, CS14 and CS15, Saved Appendix 5 of the Local Plan (2004) and the NPPF (2019).

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The application site is located on the southwest side of Northbridge Road in Berkhamsted. The site comprises a two storey office block. The surrounding area is comprised of commercial buildings.

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 The application seeks full planning permission for a two-storey upward extension to the existing office building.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

Planning Applications (If Any):

4/00825/12/FUL - Alterations to forecourt to provide additional Parking.
GRA - 25th June 2012

6. CONSTRAINTS

Parking Accessibility Zone (DBLP): 4
Area of Archaeological Significance: 21
Article 4 Direction (to protect employment areas from change of use to residential)
British Waterways (25m Buffer): GU(N): 25m buffer
Canal Buffer Zone: Minor
CIL Zone: CIL1
Former Land Use (Risk Zone): Former Gasworks, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted
Former Land Use (Risk Zone): Former Warehouse, Belton Road, Berkhamsted
Former Land Use (Risk Zone): Former Works, Gossoms End, Berkhamsted
General Employment Area: Northbridge Road, Berkhamsted
Parish: Berkhamsted CP
RAF Halton and Chenies Zone: RAF HALTON: DOTTED BLACK ZONE

RAF Halton and Chenies Zone: Yellow (45.7m)
Railway (100m Buffer): Railway: 100m buffer
EA Source Protection Zone: 2
EA Source Protection Zone: 3
Town: Berkhamsted

7. REPRESENTATIONS

Consultation responses

7.1 These are reproduced in full at Appendix A.

Neighbour notification/site notice responses

7.2 These are reproduced in full at Appendix B.

8. PLANNING POLICIES

Main Documents:

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)
Dacorum Borough Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted September 2013)
Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1999-2011 (adopted April 2004)

Relevant Policies:

NP1 - Supporting Development
CS1 - Distribution of Development
CS4 - The Towns and Large Villages
CS8 - Sustainable Transport
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS14 - Economic Development
CS15 - Offices, Research, Industry, Storage and Distribution
CS29 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents:

Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards (2002)

9. CONSIDERATIONS

Main Issues

9.1 The main issues to consider are:

Principle of Development
Quality of Design / Impact on Visual Amenity
Impact on Residential Amenity
Impact on Highway Safety and Parking.

Principle of Development

9.2 The application site is located in the market town of Berkhamsted on Northbridge Road Industrial Estate, a designated General Employment Area (GEA). In the market towns and GEAs appropriate

employment generating development is encouraged, in accordance with Core Strategy (2013) Policies CS1, CS4, CS14 and CS15.

Quality of Design / Impact on Visual Amenity

9.3 Core Strategy Policy CS12 states that development should respect the typical density in the area and integrate with the streetscape character. Chapter 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019) seeks to achieve well-designed places and emphasises the importance of good design in context. In particular, Paragraph 130 states that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Paragraph 117 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses.

9.4 The proposal comprises upward extension to provide two additional levels of office accommodation. The extension would be finished in materials to match the existing building, including facing brickwork and cladding. Concerns were raised regarding the impact of the increase in height and the addition of the balcony on the visual amenity of the canal scene. The applicant subsequently omitted the balcony from the plans. In terms of the increase in height, whilst the development would be visible, it would be set back from the edge of the canal by approximately 28m. The adjoining commercial buildings, and many of the other buildings along Northbridge Road, are situated closer to (within 5m of) the edge of the canal. Therefore, on balance it is not considered that the proposed upward extension would have a significant effect on the visual amenity of the canal scene.

9.5 The resulting building would be higher than both adjoining buildings, however bearing in mind the above mentioned NPPF guidance that encourages making effective use of land, including upward extension, there is no fundamental objection to the increase in height. The surrounding area comprises a variety of building heights, architectural styles and material finish. There are no prevailing architectural features, however the surrounding area is commercial in character. The majority of buildings are two storeys high, however there are examples of three storey buildings.

9.6 Taking the above into account it is considered that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The proposal complies with Core Strategy (2013) CS12 in that regard.

Impact on Residential Amenity

9.7 Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF seek to protect the residential amenity of surrounding residential units.

9.8 There are no residential properties in the vicinity. One of the occupants of the adjoining commercial buildings has raised concerns regarding disruption during building works, parking and loss of light. The concerns of the objector are acknowledged, however the above-referenced policies are specifically to protect living conditions. The proposed upward extension would be visible from the surrounding commercial units and, with respect to the southeast facing windows on Aviation House, may cause some overshadowing in the morning, however there would be no significant loss of daylight or sunlight due to the orientation of the building. It is not considered that a low level of overshadowing to a commercial unit warrants refusal. Parking is discussed below.

9.9 The proposal complies with Policy CS12 and the NPPF with regards to residential amenity.

Impact on Highway Safety and Parking

9.10 The current parking policy is provided in Saved Appendix 5 of the Local Plan (2004), which states that the maximum parking requirement for B1 uses is 1 space per 30 square metres of floor

area. This maximum level can be adjusted according to the accessibility zone. The site resides within Zone 4 according to Dacorum's Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards SPG (2002) wherein 75%-100% of the maximum should be provided.

9.11 The total floor area as a result of the development would be 240 square metres. The parking requirement is therefore in the range of 6-8 spaces. In accordance with the submitted information, the proposed development would provide 10 off-street car parking spaces. However it is clear that these could not be achieved without tandem parking. Notwithstanding the above, the parking requirement is 6-8 spaces, 5 of which could be comfortably achieved within the site without the need for tandem parking. Whilst tandem parking is not ideal, it is not considered reasonable that the application is refused on the grounds of having tandem parking spaces. It is considered that the development will not have a significant impact upon local parking provision. There are no changes proposed to the existing vehicle access points. It is therefore not considered that there will be a severe impact upon highway safety. The proposal complies with Core Strategy Policy CS8 and Saved Appendix 5 of the Local Plan in terms of parking, access and highway safety.

Other Material Planning Considerations

None

Response to Consultations

9.12 Berkhamsted Town Council raised concerns that DBC's website marked that the application had been determined. This was a technical error on the website. The application had not been determined and Berkhamsted Town Council's comments have been taken into consideration.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

9.13 Policy CS35 requires all developments to make appropriate contributions towards infrastructure required to support the development. These contributions will normally extend only to the payment of CIL where applicable. The Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted in February 2015 and came into force on the 1st July 2015. This application is not CIL Liable as there would be no additional residential floor space.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The proposed upward extension to provide two additional levels of office space is considered to be acceptable in terms of its visual impact, impact on residential amenity and parking/highway safety. The proposal complies with Core Strategy (2013) Policies CS1, CS4, CS8, CS12, CS14 and CS15, Saved Appendix 5 of the Local Plan (2004) and the NPPF (2019).

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 That planning permission/listed building consent be GRANTED

Condition(s) and Reason(s):

- 1. The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.**

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. **The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match the existing building in terms of size, colour and texture.**

Reason: To make sure that the appearance of the building is suitable and that it contributes to the character of the area in accordance with Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013).

3. **The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the arrangements for vehicle parking shown on Drawing No. 1553-GA-012 A have been provided, and they shall not be used thereafter otherwise than for the purposes approved. Permanent arrangements shall be made for surface water from the site to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge into the highway.**

Reason: To ensure the adequate and satisfactory provision of off-street vehicle parking facilities, in accordance with Core Strategy (2013) Policy CS12.

4. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans/documents:**

**1553-GA-007 D (Site Plan)
 1553-GA-012 A (Car Parking Layout)
 1553-GA-001 D (Proposed Building Extension - Plans & Elevations) - Annotated 'E 15/04/20 JP Balcony removed'
 1553-GA-003 B (Existing and Proposed Building Elevations with Neighbours) - Annotated 'C 15/04/20 JP Balcony removed'
 1553-GA-008 B (Map plan with surroundings)**

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

APPENDIX A: CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Consultee	Comments
Canal & River Trust	No comment
Archaeology Unit (HCC)	Please note that we have no comments to make on the above application.
Berkhamsted Town Council	Objection The proposals would result in loss of amenity to neighbouring property through overlooking and overshadowing; the bulk and mass of the building would be out of keeping with the street scene. There would also be inadequate parking provision. It was further noted that DBC's planning portal has marked that application as determined although there is no decision notice. The Committee is very disappointed that

	<p>having previously alerted DBC to inadequate drawings (now rectified) it would appear that DBC has not given the Town Council a chance to comment on the full set of drawings before reaching its decision.</p> <p>CS12; Appendix 3 (i) and (iv).</p>
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APPENDIX B: NEIGHBOUR RESPONSES

Number of Neighbour Comments

Neighbour Consultations	Contributors	Neutral	Objections	Support
8	2	0	2	0

Neighbour Responses

Address	Comments
<p>Aviation House Northbridge Road Berkhamsted HP4 1EH</p>	<p>I cant see how this extension can be completed whilst maintenance constant access via the shared access road to our main loading bay.(which is in constant use) Also can not see a plan view confirming the overall footprint remains untouched and how parking spaces are to be increased from 5 to 10 - I cant see how this is possible? Light would also be very restricted into our main office windows</p> <p>Further comments:</p> <p>I recently received a correspondence from you regarding my neighbours at Oxford house, when the original application went in I left my comments on the web site for all to see - these comments still stand on the full application - the main objection is to light to my main office and how the shared access will remain open at all times.</p> <p>I would appreciate acknowledgment of this e mail - and if you are planning to visit site please let me know so I can show you the issues.</p>
<p>Stonycroft 9 Shrublands Road Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 3HY</p>	<p>I write on behalf of the BCA Townscape Group, of which I am Chairman. The Group continues to object to this proposal as it considers it too tall, and thus would impinge on the canal-scape. The design is pitiful; and the suggestion of the introduction of a curved roof does not redeem it. It is furthermore disingenuous to suggest that the parking provision, which relies too heavily on parking provision on neighbouring sites, is adequate. The applicant should rethink both design and facilities on site.</p>