

PLANNING COMMITTEE – 15 JANUARY 2019

APPLICATION NO DC/18/4621/COU

LOCATION

Millennium Foundation Trust Land
Mights Road
Southwold
Suffolk
IP18 6BE

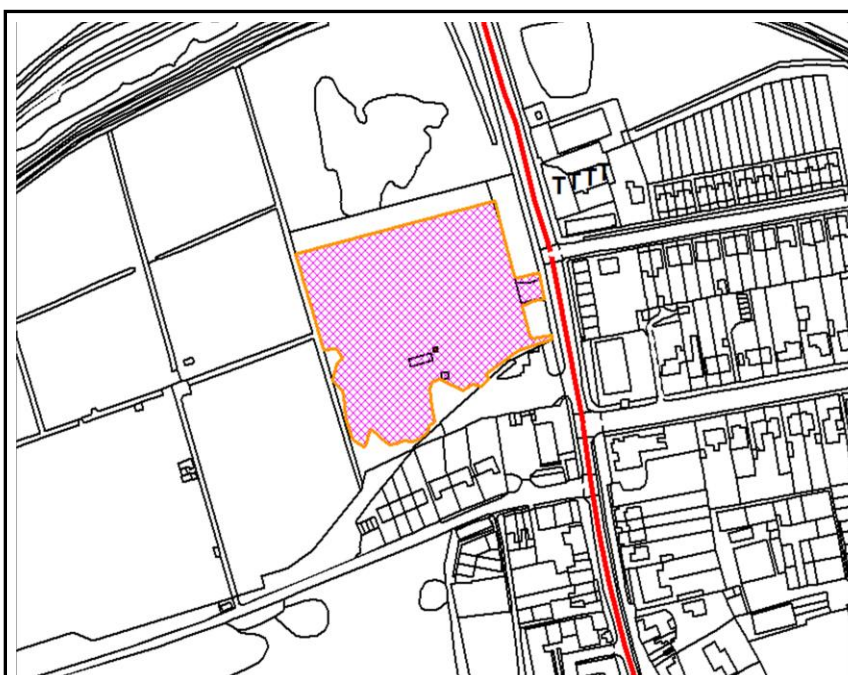
EXPIRY DATE 2 January 2019

APPLICATION TYPE Change of Use

APPLICANT Millenium Foundation

PARISH Southwold

PROPOSAL Change of use of land to include visitor information point, community garden and public car park.



DO NOT SCALE SLA100042052

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings.



1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application is seeking the change of use of land to provide a visitor information centre, a community garden and public car park. It is referred to Planning Committee because the applicant is a Member of the Council. The application is recommended for authority to

approve subject to the receipt of further details regarding surface water drainage and subject to controlling conditions.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site lies alongside Might's Road, the principal route into the town. It is adjacent to the former fire station site and adjoins the allotments, accessed from Blyth Road. It is within the AONB and is within Flood Zone 2 and 3 and is thus at risk of flooding. Buss Creek County Wildlife Site (SWT) lies to the north and east of the site. A Pill Box is present on the site.
- 2.2 The site forms part of land in the ownership of the Millennium Foundation, a charitable trust whose aim is 'to work for the common good'. They run the Millennium Hall to the north-east of the site, on the opposite side of the road.
- 2.3 The site is largely grassland and is partly in use as a temporary builders compound in connection with the re-development of two sites on the opposite side of the road. In 2011 planning permission was granted for improvements to the access into the site to enable its use as a temporary car park under the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order (maximum of 28 days in any one year). In 2007 planning permission was refused to use the land for a permanent car park due the lack of a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).
- 2.4 Prior to its temporary use as parking it was used for the grazing of ponies, and did include stable buildings which have now been demolished.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal is to turn the site into what the applicants describe as a valuable community asset providing a visitor information point, a public car park and a community garden and wildlife area. The applicants state the visitor information point would serve as a gateway to the local area with information about walking, cycling, history and local interest. The building and garden would be used as a learning resource for local schools and other interested groups. The pay and display car park would be a much needed resource for both public parking and to provide permit parking for local residents including newly proposed developments.
- 3.2 The new building is of single storey scale comprising a curved green roof with timber clad walls. It measures approximately 14m x 7m with a maximum height of 3m. It will include the provision of toilet facilities.
- 3.3 The car parking will consist of a permanent year round pay and display car park in the north-east section for 50 cars with bound chipped surface. Part of the southern section of the site will be available for parking to serve the potential re-development of the adjacent redundant fire station site and for recent proposals to re-develop a site on Station Road. An area to the north-west will serve as an overflow car park for the main pay and display car park during the summer months when demand for parking is at its highest. This area will be left to grass.
- 3.4 The community/educational garden will be managed by Greener Growth, a Community Interest Company, who specialise in providing this kind of facility. It will include community

beds for produce growing, bee hives and other nature boxes, a wildlife walk with information boards about the flora and fauna on and around the site. Natural sculptures will also be placed around the site to enhance the community space along with benches. These areas will be screened and segregated by use of willow hedging, willow saplings planted in a formation to create a living fence.

- 3.5 The layout has sought to minimise conflict between pedestrians and vehicles, and includes an access point for pedestrians separate from the vehicular access. The applicants indicate the extra parking will seek to alleviate parking and congestion problems that exist in the Town particularly during the summer, and that there is safe access into the town centre from the site which is only a short distance away.
- 3.6 Supporting documents submitted include a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) Transport Statement and an Ecology Report.

4 CONSULTATIONS/COMMENTS

- 4.1 Town Council Comments:** The Planning Committee noted that this is a valuable project for the town. It is assumed that the lack of detail in the application is due to it being a change of use request and that a full application will be submitted in due course. As part of the change of use application, it is suggested that electric charging points be considered within the project.

Once the full application is available and more detailed information provided, the Town Council Planning Committee will be able to consider any improvements to the architectural design for the visitor centre within this part of the gateway to Southwold and the AONB. The Planning Committee will then review the Suffolk County Council Highways evaluation of the site for parking, especially with regards to a) the entrance/exit, b) surfacing and drainage, c) lighting, d) traffic flow impact, e) pedestrian safety.

The Town Council were subsequently advised this is a full application and any additional comments made will be reported if received.

4.2 Neighbour consultation/representations

One letter of support providing adequate landscaping is carried out to screen the car park.

Two letters of objection on the basis that there is no need to create a formal car park in the AONB. It will prevent views of the reeds and marshes from Might's Road. Children using the community areas would be in danger from moving cars. One objector considers the number of residents' parking spaces is not enough and that provision for residents should take priority over visitors.

- 4.3 Southwold And Reydon Society:** There are significant reservations among some of our members about aspects of this application, including some doubt about the need for another Visitor Centre in Southwold and the allocation of spaces in the proposed car park to avoid the provision of on-site spaces in nearby developments (an approach which we consider should be avoided). Nonetheless, we recognise the value of this project to the town and are therefore not requesting that this application is refused.

However, we have a number of important practical concerns relating to the Car Park aspect of the application. These are:

1. the need to ensure safe vehicle and pedestrian access to and from the car park which must include management of the impact of the car park on traffic flow along Might's Road. At busy periods, most cars using the parking will be waiting to turn right across oncoming traffic which will need to be managed;
2. clear signage is required to indicate the availability of spaces in the car park;
3. electric vehicle charging points should be included in the car park;
4. provision is also needed for safe pedestrian access to and from the car park, including crossing Might's Road;
5. the nature of the car park surfacing which needs both to allow grass to grow but also ensure the ground below is protected from pollution from the parked cars;
6. that adequate lighting is provided for safe use of the car park but in a way that minimises light pollution;
7. the importance of ensuring that the wildlife in this area is protected and further encouraged by improvements in habitat etc in the scheme as a whole.

We consider these issues can be addressed by appropriate conditions and would ask that this is done should the Planning Authority be minded to approve the application.

4.4 Suffolk County Archaeological Unit raised no objections

4.5 Environment Agency no comments received

4.6 SCC Flooding Authority Recommend a holding objection because a surface water drainage strategy has not been provided.

4.7 Suffolk Coasts And Heaths Project no comments received

4.8 Suffolk Wildlife Trust no comments received

4.9 Natural England no comments received

4.10 Suffolk County - Highways Department: Recommend various conditions relating to improvements to the existing access and the provision of the parking.

5 PUBLICITY

5.1 None

6 SITE NOTICES

The following site notices have been displayed:

General Site Notice	Reason for site notice: Change of Use, Date posted 21.11.2018 Expiry date 12.12.2018
---------------------	---

7 RELATED APPLICATIONS

Reference No	Proposal	Decision	Date
DC/11/0685/FUL	Creation of vehicular access	Approved	15/08/2011
DC/07/1866/FUL	Construction of a car park, public conveniences and amenity area	Refused	20/12/2007
DC/94/0696/FUL	Construction of field shelter/stables and reopening of access	Approved	17/08/1994

8 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (2018)

CS01 Spatial Strategy (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

CS02 High Quality and Sustainable Design (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

CS03 Flooding and Coastal Erosion (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

CS13 Tourism (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

CS14 Culture (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

CS16 Natural Environment (Adopted Core Strategy, January 2009)

DM02 Design Principles (Adopted Development Management Policies, January 2011)

DM25 Existing and Proposed Open Space (Adopted Development Management Policies, January 2011)

DM27 Protection of Landscape Character (Adopted Development Management Policies, January 2011)

DM29 Protection of Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Adopted Development Management Policies, January 2011)

WLP8.22 Built Community Services and Facilities (Waveney Local Plan – Final Draft (Regulation 19))

WLP8.24 Flood Risk (Waveney Local Plan – Final Draft (Regulation 19))

WLP8.29 Design (Waveney Local Plan – Final Draft (Regulation 19))

WLP8.34 Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Waveney Local Plan –Final Draft (Regulation 19))

WLP8.35 Landscape Character (Waveney Local Plan- Final Draft (Regulation 19))

9 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

- 9.1 The application site is located outside the physical limits of Southwold. It is however on the very edge of the settlement and is well related to it. The site is sustainably positioned on the principle route into Southwold and within easy walking distance of its many shops and services.
- 9.2 Policies CS13 and CS14 of the Waveney Core Strategy encourages proposals for new tourism or natural heritage, leisure and open space facilities that can be proven to improve the lives of all sectors of the community and encourage visitors to the main tourist destinations. Policy CS13 specifically encourages the redevelopment of existing sites where

it increases the range or quality of tourist facilities and accommodation. The site meets the locational requirements of policy CS13.

- 9.3 The site has had a mix of previous uses including grazing/stabling of horses and temporary car parking. Part of the site is currently in a poor environmental condition with its use as a temporary builder's compound and parking area for the construction workers.
- 9.4 The use of part of the site for a community garden and the provision of a visitor information centre will improve the recreational and educational value of the site for both residents and visitors to the area. The car park will help to alleviate pressure on the Town's existing car parks, and reduce congestion in the town, by providing an alternative facility for those working in the town as well as visitors. Visitors will be able to park in this edge of town car park without having to drive through the Town's streets looking for somewhere to park.
- 9.5 The proposal will it is considered provide an acceptable combination of uses that will serve both the local community and tourists and can thus be supported in principle.

Impact on the character of the area

- 9.6 The site lies within the AONB where both the NPPF and the Development Plan attaches great weight to conserving and enhancing their landscape and scenic beauty. Given the close proximity of the site to the Town's urban edge and the presence of a substantial belt of mature trees along the road frontage and other trees elsewhere on the site, together with the siting and modest size of the new visitor centre and new planting proposals, it is considered the development will have limited visual impact and not be significantly intrusive in the landscape. The visual qualities of the AONB would thus not be harmed, neither would the landscape setting to the Town.

Flood risk and drainage issues

- 9.7 The submitted FRA identifies that the site is mainly located within Flood Zone 3a from a tidal surge event within Buss Creek. The actual risk to the site from overtopping is high and the residual risk from breaching of the flood defence is also high. It recommends a Water Entry Strategy be adopted across the proposed building to reduce the differential depth to safe limits during the design and extreme event and to protect property. It also recommends the site owners register with the Agency's Flood Warnings Direct and prepare a Business Flood Plan. Given that safe access/egress cannot be achieved during the peak of the design event and extreme event it is recommended that evacuation of the site takes place during the early warning stages and prior to a breach in the defences. Signs and information plaques should be distributed across the site to inform people of the flood risks.
- 9.8 Subject to these measures taking place it is considered the flood risk can be satisfactorily mitigated against, and would comply with Development Plan policy CS03 and emerging policy WLP8.24. Any comments from the Environment Agency on the adequacy of the FRA will be reported.
- 9.9 The SCC Flooding Authority has requested the provision of a surface water drainage strategy for the car park and visitor centre. It will entail ensuring a permeable surface

material on a granulated sub base which will act as a filter preventing pollutants entering the water system. The applicants intend to employ a consultant to provide the additional information required.

Ecology and biodiversity

- 9.10 Although a significant part of the site will be a car park improvements are proposed to the biodiversity of other parts of the site. The submitted Ecology Report has considered impacts on protected species and habitats and recommends various protection and mitigation measures. Part of the site contains important lowland acid grassland which the development has largely avoided. Whilst the proposals will have some negative impacts, on the whole it is considered that the proposals maximise opportunities for enhancement and connection of natural habitats and incorporate beneficial biodiversity conservation features, and thus comply with Development Plan policies DM29 and emerging policy WLP8.35.

Transport and access

- 9.11 Access into the site will be via the existing access onto Mights Road. Modifications are proposed to ensure the access is of sufficient width for two vehicles to pass and provides safe pedestrian access. The Highway Authority has not raised an objection to the development subject to conditions requiring the access improvements and the car park layout as submitted. There are therefore no highway safety issues with the scheme.
- 9.12 Pedestrian access will largely be segregated from vehicles and clearly signposted. Buses will be restricted from entering the car park and disabled parking bays are proposed.

Other matters

- 9.13 It is not considered there will be any harmful impacts on residential amenity given the distance of such development from the site.

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The proposed uses of the site will improve facilities that benefit both local residents and visitors to the Town without causing significant harm to the character of the area and the visual qualities of the AONB. Flood risks can be appropriately mitigated and the scheme incorporates biodiversity enhancements. Subject to a detailed sustainable surface water drainage scheme being agreed it is considered the proposal will accord with the provisions of the Development Plan and the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION

AUTHORITY TO APPROVE subject to the issues raised by SCC Flooding Authority being satisfactorily addressed, and controlling conditions including the following;

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within a period of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be completed in all respects strictly in accordance with the submitted drawings received 07/11/18, for which permission is hereby granted or which are subsequently submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority and in compliance with any conditions imposed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt as to what has been considered and approved.

3. No other part of the development hereby permitted shall be commenced until the existing vehicular access has been improved, laid out and completed in all respects in accordance with drawing 17/05/03, and with a minimum entrance width of 5.5 metres. Thereafter the access shall be retained in the specified form.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety to ensure that the layout of the access is properly designed, constructed and provided before the development is commenced.

4. The use shall not commence until the area within the site shown on drawing 17/05/03, for the purposes of manoeuvring and parking of vehicles have been provided and thereafter it shall be retained and used for no other purposes.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient space for the on site parking of vehicles is provided and maintained in order to ensure the provision of adequate on-site space for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles where on-street parking and manoeuvring would be detrimental to highway safety to users of the highway.

5. Details of any lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before it is installed. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the amenity of the area and wildlife protection.

6. The recommendations in the submitted Ecological Report regarding avoidance, mitigation and enhancement shall be completed in full.

Reason: In the interests of protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the site.

7. Prior to the commencement of the use hereby permitted a Flood Response/Evacuation Plan shall be put in place, the details of which shall first be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development and occupants are safe from flood risk.

8. The flood mitigation measures in the submitted FRA shall be implemented in full.

Reason: To minimise the damage to the development in the event of flooding and enable a faster recovery period once floodwaters have subsided.

9. No development shall commence until a scheme for the provision and implementation of a surface water disposal system with oil, grit and petrol interceptors, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To provide adequate drainage and to prevent pollution of the water environment.

10. Details of all external materials to be used shall be submitted to and approved in writing before building works commence.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the development in the interests of visual amenity.

11. None of the existing trees or hedgerow on the site shall be uprooted, felled, wilfully damaged or in any other way destroyed or removed without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority. Any trees or hedgerow removed, dying, being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within five years of the completion of the development shall be replaced during the first available planting season with trees and/or shrubs of a size and species which have previously been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenity provided by the trees and hedgerows.

12. Before the installation of any fencing or other means of enclosure or any signage details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Only the approved details shall be implemented.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

See application ref: DC/18/4621/COU at
www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/public-access

CONTACT

Michaelle Coupe Senior Planning and Enforcement Officer
Tel: 01394 444440. michaelle.coupe@eastsuffolk.gov.uk