

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 6 JANUARY 2016

Application Number	3/15/1690/FUL
Proposal	Extension to Warehouse
Location	Fishpools Warehouse, Foxholes Business Park, John Tate Road, Hertford, SG1 7DT
Applicant	Fishpools Ltd.
Parish	Hertford – CP
Ward	Hertford – Kingsmead

Date of Registration of Application	19th August 2015
Target Determination Date	11th January 2016
Reason for Committee Report	Major Application
Case Officer	David Snell

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The proposal seeks permission for the extension of an existing warehouse and ancillary office building by the erection of a front extension and the raising of the warehouse roof.
- 1.2 There is no objection in principle to the proposal which would support economic growth in a sustainable location in accordance with the policies of the NPPF and adopted Local Plan. Whilst acknowledging that the resulting building would be of a significant size, its form and design would be acceptable having regard to the context of the site and the surrounding area.
- 1.3 There would be a reduction in the amount of car parking provision on the site. However, the current space is underutilised and the proposed provision of 70 car spaces would fall within the Council's maximum parking standards. The highway and parking aspects of the development are therefore considered to be satisfactory and, in any event, the benefits of the proposal are considered to outweigh any harm that would result from the reduction in parking provision.

2.0 Site Description

- 2.1 The site comprises a rectangular plot of approximately 1.5ha situated on the south west side of the Foxholes Business Park adjoining the A414 and close to the entrance to the Business Park which is a designated Employment Area with the adopted Local Plan.
- 2.2 On the site is an existing warehouse building with ancillary offices, loading bays and car parking. The existing building is approximately 5,922 sqm in footprint and is accessed off John Tate Road, the private industrial estate road which runs through the Business Park. The estate is generally well screened from the A414 by an existing bund and mature planting.

3.0 Background to Proposals

- 3.1 The Hertford facility acts as the distribution centre for the Fishpools business operating from the store at Waltham Cross, and for its internet sales. Over the past 2 years the business has seen a substantial increase in turnover from £19m in 2012/13 to £27m in 2014/15.
- 3.2 The proposed accommodation would provide for additional furniture racking storage space and would increase storage capacity by 40%.
- 3.3 The applicants advise that the distribution centre is ideally suited to its business. When the building was purchased it was considered large enough to cater for foreseeable growth. However, the unanticipated rapid increase in turnover means that modest further growth in the future would provide that the distribution centre would quickly reach capacity.
- 3.4 The existing warehouse building has a footprint of approximately 5,922 sqm and the proposed extension would add a further 1,230 sqm - an approximate increase of 20%. In addition the multiple pitched roof of the existing warehouse would be raised by between 3.7m at its valleys and 2m at its ridges to form a flat roof. The extension would be approximately 16.5m deep; 74.6m wide and 12m high to a flat roof, matching the height of the raised roof of the existing warehouse. The extensions would be constructed in profiled steel panels.
- 3.5 As a whole, the current business employs 180 people with 45 full-time equivalent employees being located at the Hertford site. As a result of the proposals, an additional four full-time van crews and four full-time

warehouse staff will be employed, bringing total employment at the Hertford site to 53 full-time equivalent staff.

- 3.6 The application also proposes minor alterations to the site access arrangements and the provision of 70 car parking spaces.

4.0 Key Policy Issues

- 4.1 These relate to the relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007:

Key Issue	NPPF	Local Plan policy
Delivering sustainable development – Building a strong, competitive economy	Section 1	SD1, EDE1, EDE4, HE8
The layout, design and external appearance of the extended building	Section 7	ENV1, ENV2
Highway implications		TR2, TR4, TR7

Other relevant issues are referred to in the 'Consideration of Relevant Issues' section below.

5.0 Emerging District Plan

- 5.1 In relation to the key issues identified above, the policies contained in the emerging District Plan do not differ significantly from those contained in the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF as identified above. The Business Park remains identified as an Employment Area. Given its stage in preparation, little weight can currently be accorded to the policies of the emerging Plan.

6.0 Summary of Consultee Responses

- 6.1 The Lead Local Flood Authority (HCC) considers that the applicant has demonstrated that an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme can be implemented and it raises no objection to the grant of permission, subject to a condition that the development is carried out in accordance with the agreed drainage strategy.
- 6.2 The Highway Authority considers that the site layout, access arrangements and parking provision are acceptable and does not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission.

7.0 Town Council Representations

7.1 Hertford Town Council have no objection to the application.

8.0 Summary of Other Representations

8.1 The application has been advertised by neighbour consultation and a site notice. No responses have been received.

9.0 Planning History

Ref	Proposal	Decision	Date
3/10/0067/FP	Change of use to include B8 use class (wholesale warehouse, distribution centres, repositories) with existing uses	Granted	March 2010
3/96/1350/FP	B2-B8 Development	Granted	December 1996
3/09/1561/FP	Installation of 6 loading doors and modifications to car park	Granted	December 2009

10.0 Consideration of Relevant Issue

10.1 The site is part of the Foxholes Employment Area and there is no objection in principle to the proposed development comprising extensions to a building in employment uses. The key issues to be considered are set out above in section 4.0.

Building a strong, competitive economy

10.2 The proposal seeks to address the company's requirements for additional storage and distribution capacity in response to its recent rapid growth. It would enable the business to operate in an efficient way in the future and would provide additional local employment. Officers are satisfied therefore that it would meet the aims of national planning policy in the NPPF which supports the provision of new economic development in sustainable locations and policies EDE1, EDE4 and HE8 of the adopted Local Plan which all support storage and distribution uses within this identified Employment Area.

Layout, design and appearance

- 10.3 The proposed front extension is rectangular in form and is to be built on part of the existing car park, adjacent to John Tate Road. The building is of functional design, but is considered of satisfactory appearance, having regard to its surroundings and the form and design of the original building. The raising of the original roof of the warehouse is considered to be acceptable in its context and this would be largely screened from view from the A414 by existing roadside mounding and mature planting. To some extent the overall impact of the extensions will result in a more streamlined, modern appearance to the building.
- 10.4 Whilst, the proposed development is acknowledged to be of significant scale, therefore, it is considered to be acceptable in the context of the site and its immediate surroundings.
- 10.5 The warehouse building can be seen from long views from higher ground at Hertford Heath to the south, but is no more visually apparent from here than the remainder of the Foxholes built up area, and Officers are satisfied that the proposed development would not result in any significant visual impact in the wider area.
- 10.6 The materials to be used for external surfaces respond sympathetically to the environment and the existing materials used on other buildings nearby. A change in colour to the front extension will provide a lighter finish to this part of the building and this is considered to be a positive design feature.
- 10.7 The existing frontage landscaping would be retained and this would provide an appropriate setting for the building.

Highways

- 10.8 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement which includes traffic survey information and calculations in respect of trip generation increase and parking requirements. The Highway Authority considers that the approach taken in respect of these issues is robust.
- 10.9 On-site parking provision would be reduced from 90 spaces currently to 70 spaces. However, a number of site visits have confirmed that the existing car parking spaces are underutilised to a significant degree and proposed employment is 53 full-time staff. The Council's adopted parking standards, including an allowance for a reduction of 25% as the site is within zone 4, would be a maximum of 72 spaces. The emerging

District Plan standards, which move away from maximum standards, would require the same provision. The proposal is therefore currently within the Council's maximum parking standard and 2 spaces short of the emerging Plan policy.

- 10.10 Site visits have also confirmed that the daily occurrence of on-street parking at the beginning of John Tate Road, on the road and verge near to the A414 entrance to the estate, is not associated with the Fishpools site. Observations indicate that this is largely associated with the Mercedes garage and to a lesser extent other units on the north side of John Tate Road.
- 10.11 Given the particular use of the building and the details provided within the Transport Statement, Officers are satisfied that car parking provision would be acceptable in this case.

11.0 Conclusion

- 11.1 The proposed building would support an employment generating use and provide for some additional employment at the site. This accords with the aims of the NPPF in terms of sustainable economic growth and also with the policies of the adopted Local Plan that support storage and distribution uses in this location.
- 11.2 The form, siting, scale and design of the proposed extension is considered to be acceptable having regard to the context of the site and its surroundings. Whilst the proposal would result in the loss of some car parking provision at the site, this is considered acceptable given the nature of the use and the underutilisation of the current car parking area. There would be no adverse highway safety impact from the proposal. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the following conditions.

Conditions

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved plans (2E10)
3. Samples of materials (2E12)
4. External lighting (2E27)
5. Wheel washing facilities (3V25)

6. Construction hours of working – plant and machinery (6N07)
7. Provision and retention of parking spaces (3V23)
8. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the drainage strategy prepared by Herrington Consulting Limited dated November 2015, and the mitigation measures detailed within the drainage strategy:
 - 1) Confirmation of the means of discharge of surface water.
 - 2) Results of infiltration tests in accordance with BRE Digest 365 if infiltration through soakaways is proposed.
 - 3) Provision of a fully detailed drainage plan showing pipe diameters, pipe runs, outlet points and location of SuDS features.

The mitigation measures shall be fully implemented prior to occupation and subsequently in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within the scheme, or within any other period as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory disposal or storage of surface water in accordance with the NPPF.

Informatives:

1. Other legislation.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

East Herts Council has considered the applicant's proposal in a positive and proactive manner with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (Minerals Local Plan, Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD 2012 and the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007); the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies is that permission should be granted.

KEY DATA

Non-Residential Development

Use Type	Floorspace (sqm)
Warehousing and distribution with ancillary offices	
Existing	5,922
Proposed	1,230
Total	7,152

Parking	Spaces
Existing	90
Proposed	70
Local Plan Standard Zone 4	72 maximum
Emerging District Plan Standard	72-96

Employment	
Existing	45
Proposed	53