

Application No: 11/01151/F	Ward: Yarnton, Gosford and Water Eaton	Date 05/08/2011	Valid:
Applicant:	Thames Valley Police Authority		
Site Address:	Thames Valley Police HQ, Oxford Road, Kidlington, Oxfordshire, OX5 2NX		

Proposal: Erection of three storey building to provide additional office space including associated vehicle parking and landscaping works

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The Thames Valley Police (TVP) Head Quarters site is situated just off the east side of the Oxford Road in Kidlington and accessed via a cross over by the slip road. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the east, south and west boundaries, with school playing fields and the Kidlington and Gosford sports centre to the north. The site is outside of a conservation area and there are no listed buildings within proximity. A public right of way runs to the south of the site, along the road, which connects the site to the Oxford Road and Cromwell Way. The site may also have some ecological potential.
- 1.2 On site currently are a number of office buildings. The functions currently occurring at the HQ South site include the Chief Constables management team and support team, the Police Authority and support team, corporate communications, the ICT department, corporate back office functions (such as programme management, performance management etc), forensic services and local policing (HQ and back office support). These functions, with the exception of the lab services, are mainly back office and employees generally work standard office hours. The existing buildings are constructed from brick, with the use of some render. The current floor space at the HQ south site amounts to approximately 7980m² and 392 staff are currently accommodated at the site. There are currently 315 parking spaces available and some bicycle spaces are also available. Some of these parking spaces are secure for TVP personnel only.
- 1.3 This application seeks planning permission for the construction of a new three storey office building along with associated vehicle parking and landscaping. The building will be on the same site as where a building known as 'B' block originally stood, which was demolished in 2008. The building proposed would be 40m in length, 13m in width, with a total gross internal area of 1572m² and a total height of 12.3m. Accommodation would be arranged over three floors and would include open plan office space, enclosed office rooms, meeting rooms and other associated services. A glazed link would be constructed to link the new 'B' block to the existing 'A' block, to include a lift for access to all floors of both blocks. The building would be flat roofed, but would represent a more modern designed building than the existing buildings on the site, with a significant amount of glazing and the use of coloured stainless steel cladding. Some landscaping would be introduced around the building. 49 additional car parking spaces would be provided to ensure that the HQ site overall provides an appropriate level of parking giving a total number of

parking spaces on the site of 364.

- 1.4 The functions of the Police Authority to be accommodated within the proposed building are not yet known as this is still under review; however the proposal will allow the Authority to collate teams which are currently split over several offices/sites around Kidlington and to contain the majority of the staff into the HQ North and South sites. It is anticipated that 75 full time equivalent staff will be accommodated within the new building.

1.5 Planning history

Recent planning history relates mainly to alterations to the buildings including the installation of plant and machinery such as a satellite dish, generator, and flue. Application number 04/02310/F (Permitted) Change of use of front lawn to car parking area and installation of associated lighting bollards is relevant.

The site also gained planning permission in 2000, for residential development including affordable housing following the demolition of structures and buildings (00/01884/OUT).

2. Application Publicity

- 2.1 The application has been advertised by way of five site notices and a press notice. The final date for comment was 08 September 2011.
- 2.2 3 letters of objection have been received (one said to be representing local residents) raising the following points:
- TVP HQ has got busier and noisier over the years
 - Extension will be elevated to such a height that it will over look their property (17 Cromwell Way) and being in line with bedroom windows and over the garden
 - TVP should consider planting more on the Cromwell Way side of the Headquarters to provide privacy for surrounding neighbours
 - Existing buildings have flood lights, which are left on over night and shine directly into rooms. Thought should be given to further lighting.
 - Noise should also be considered, lorries are a nuisance early mornings and at weekends.
 - Sufficient thought must be given to parking to ensure it does not encroach on residential areas.
 - Parking is bad enough now but with extra employees, this could create extra problems.
 - Application fails to provide sufficient details to consider the application. Cost of the building questioned compared to the amount of staff that could be accommodated.
 - Possible review of Police Authorities
 - Request that permission is withheld until the new Commissioner is in post and have had time to evaluate the needs of TVP and the suitability of the HQ south site for further development.
 - New strategic plan for the site could then be agreed.
 - No strategic plan for the site is given but indications are that further phases are envisaged and without this information a clear decision cannot be made.
 - Level of staff to be accommodated within the building is considered to be a deliberate misinformation given the amount of floor space to be provided

- No indication of the future staffing levels which may be accommodated on the HQ South site.
- Car parking plans and needs are considered conjectural. The current approved 360 car parking spaces do not support the proposed development.
- Residents believe 200 staff is a more realistic figure than the quoted 75 staff and therefore the parking provision of 360 cannot be a realistic level. Residents estimate is that 360 will be inadequate and a realistic estimate will be another 200 spaces needed at least, which cannot be found on this site. Further development would create an impossible situation.
- The travel plan is unworkable and unmanageable as it relies on staff members choosing how they travel to work. The plan appears to be a re-working of an old Travel Plan, which is unworkable and unmanageable.
- Residents feel they have not been effectively consulted by the applicants. Residents were promised they would have positive input into the Environmental Impact Assessment/ parking/ traffic investigations. One consultation event where these details were not available is not considered to be reasonable consultation. Planning application should be rejected on this fact.
- Local adjacent roads need to be designated residents only parking in order to prevent resident's environment caused by parking in the surrounding roads. If TVP continue to expand they should pay for the protection of resident's environment and the maintenance of their property amenity value.
- A more suitable site should be found which is not so constrained.

3. Consultations

- 3.1 Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council – makes the following observations:
- Environmental matters – TVP telecom tower needs to be considered in terms of health impacts and addressed under this application.
 - Traffic and Transport matter – Existing access off of the Oxford Road causes problems, developer should provide a tapered TVP access bellmouth and or over run.
 - Concerned that traffic generated by Chiltern Railways Parkway station has not been taken into account in the traffic analysis as this is a known committed site. The Langford Lane Waste disposal site should also be taken into account and the potential traffic generation from this. May have an affect on the right turning lane queue lengths waiting to turn into the service road, this should be lengthened.
 - Agreement to provide double yellow lines in the vicinity of the service road, A4260 junction. The Parish Council have requested this previously for double yellow lines to be provided at both ends of the service road at the north and south junctions as well as for the middle TVP HQ access/ service road junction. Personnel for TVP HQ use all of these junctions and it is requested that this double yellow lining is provided.
 - Concern that parking in the service roads occurs with commuters then using a bus to Oxford. Traffic assessment survey does not reflect the on street parking problems that frequently exist and this needs to be carried out and action taken. Possible on street parking management system could be used to prevent all day commuter parking.
 - No consideration appears to have been given to TVP award ceremonies or other short term events. Alternative arrangements (e.g. parking elsewhere in Kidlington) should be investigated.

- Other options for parking are available e.g. at Water Eaton Park and Ride, Stratfield Brake Recreation Ground, possibly Sainsburys car park. Request that TVP contact the Stratfield Brake Recreation Ground committee about the possibility of using this car park.
- Is there the possibility of using these car parks for building contractors during building works? This should be investigated
- Visitors to the site should be provided with additional information re. parking
- Why did a higher percentage of TVP staff not complete the work place travel plan questionnaire? How was this dealt with?
- A one way traffic system is considered to have limited benefit but may lead to extra problems such as higher speeds. There are problems of speeding traffic in this area however and the PC considers this is not outside the remit of TVP to reduce speeding for safety reasons and it may be appropriate for a contribution to be made to make Cromwell Way a 20mph zone due to extra traffic and speeding
- TVP should confirm work place hours and meetings should be planned where possible and accordingly staggered to reduce peak traffic demands and that visitors are pre-advised about appropriate travel or parking arrangements
- TVP should consider parking priorities for car sharing
- Mention of a possibility to move the play area and use this area as car parking but it is then concluded that this is not necessary. There should be a contingency plan in place.
- TVP should appoint a travel manager to monitor, action and liaise with the public over traffic and parking issues
- Clear to the Parish Council that there could be a short fall in parking leading to unacceptable on street parking conditions in roads surrounding the TVP HQ.
- Conclusions within the Green Travel Plan are accepted, but as this is a voluntary arrangement then personnel can ignore it. Staff numbers are also queried taking into account possible desk sharing and visitors in terms of numbers, how meetings could be phased, the use of video conferencing, directions to other car parks nearby.
- Problems regarding the redesigning of the car parks within the site are identified
- TVP has the opportunity to increase car parking at a low cost by enlarging the rear car park by acquiring and repositioning an area of a play area or enlarging the secure parking area

- 3.2 Kidlington Parish Council – Objects to the proposal on the grounds that there is inappropriate access to the site for the development which will substantially increase traffic movements. The application has not demonstrated sufficient mitigation measures for the added problem – that should include developer contributions
- 3.3 OCC Highways – No objections (comments outlined below)
- 3.4 CDC Environmental Protection Officer – No comments received to date
- 3.5 CDC Ecologist – Due to the site being largely hard standing, it is unlikely there will be any significant ecological impacts. Wildlife enhancements such as native planting or bird boxes on the new building should be sought as required by PPS9
- 3.6 CDC Rights of Way Officer – Gosford & Water Eaton FP14 (229/14) passes through

the site but would not be affected by the proposed new building.

3.7 OCC Rights of Way Officer – No response received

4. Relevant Planning Policies

4.1 PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPG13: Transport

Draft National Planning Policy Framework – July 2011

4.2 The South East Plan: Policies CC1, CC2, CC4, RE1, RE3, RE5, BE1, BE2, T4

4.3 Adopted Cherwell Local Plan: Policies EMP3, T1, C28, C30

5. Appraisal

5.1 The key issues are:
Principle of the development
Visual amenity
Neighbour amenity
Highway safety and parking provision
Other matters

5.2 Principle of the development

The use of this site for the Police Authority is long standing and established. The proposal will form additional office accommodation for the Police Authority and will allow the Authority to rationalize on space and costs. It must be noted that the proposed building will be on the same site as the original 'B' block, which was demolished in 2008.

5.3 PPS4 states the Government's overarching aim for sustainable economic development and sets out that planning applications that secure sustainable economic growth should be treated favourably. Policy EMP3 within the adopted Cherwell Local Plan states that within the built up limits of Kidlington, Yarnton and Begbroke (East), planning permission will normally be granted for employment generating development providing the proposal represents a modest extension to an existing employment generating use amongst a number of criteria.

5.4 Given that this site forms the existing Headquarters for TVP, the proposed development replaces a building that was originally in this location, which was of a similar scale, which had around 1,071m² floor space (but was demolished as it surpassed its useful life), the proposed development will provide additional accommodation for the Police Authority and will enable the Authority to rationalize on their space and costs. Taking this assessment into account, it is clear that the proposal accords with the aims of Policy EMP3 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan as it represents a modest extension to the existing site, which is a major employer in this area. As such, your Officer's consider that the principle of the proposed office building is acceptable.

5.5 Visual amenity

With regard to visual amenity, the whole Thames Valley Police site is situated behind the dwellings along the Oxford Road to the west and Cromwell Way to the east and south, with Gosford Hill School and the sports centre to the north. As such, the buildings on the site are not prominent in the street scene from the Oxford Road or Cromwell Way. A public right of way runs through the site linking the Oxford Road to Cromwell Way and views of the new building will be gained from here.

5.6 From a policy perspective and in terms of design, PPS1, Delivering Sustainable Development states that "Planning Authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people." (paragraph 34).

5.7 PPS4 also suggests that proposals for economic development should secure a high quality and inclusive design, which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions.

5.8 The South East Plan also emphasises the need for good design, with policy BE1 stating that Local Planning Authorities should use opportunities associated with new development to help provide significant improvements to the built environment.

5.9 Policy C28 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan states that control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external-finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development.

5.10 The existing buildings on the site all date from the 1960's – 1980's and are standard office type buildings constructed from brick and render with flat roofs. Architecturally, they are bland in their design, but they are suitable for their purpose as office buildings and function for their use well.

5.11 The proposed building would be more modern in appearance than those currently on site, with the use of a large amount of glass, render and coloured cladding. However, it would also be similar in scale to the existing buildings in terms of height and bricks that are similar in appearance to the bricks that are used on 'A' block would be used. The window detailing and positioning would also be similar to the windows on 'A' block. A glazed link would be placed to link the existing 'A' block, with the proposed 'B' block, which would be set back from the front of each of these buildings and which would therefore not be a prominent addition. The proposed building is considered to sit comfortably on the site, will relate well to the existing buildings and will provide a more modern alternative for the office accommodation, which will not harm the visual amenities of the wider area. Samples of the materials to be used have been submitted, which are considered to be acceptable. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy C28 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.

5.12 Neighbour amenity

With regard to the impact of the development upon the residential amenity of neighbouring properties, it is considered that there is unlikely to be any serious

impact by loss of light, loss of privacy or over dominance. This view is taken given the distances between the proposed building and neighbouring properties nearby to the east, south and west boundaries, the fact that the building replaces a building which was previously in this position and the fact that it is no taller than other buildings on the site, and so any impact is unlikely to be significantly worse than the existing impact.

- 5.13 The comments of the neighbouring property nearby (to the south on Cromwell Way) are noted, however given the distance between the rear of this property and the proposed building (at least 50m) and the presence of 'A' block between, the impact caused is not unacceptable.
- 5.14 In terms of light pollution or other disturbance from the building, again, given the existing site is used for the police currently, it is not considered that any impact would be significantly worse than any current impact given the use of the building will be for further office space and the operation of the site is generally during 'normal' office hours. Any disturbance caused during the construction phase would not be a reason to refuse a planning application, however planning notes have been recommended to ensure that the applicant is aware of the surrounding neighbours during construction. It is considered that the proposal has an acceptable impact upon the residential amenity of nearby properties and so the proposal complies with policy C30 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan.
- 5.15 Highway safety
Extensive traffic information has been submitted, which is available to view on the file and which is based on a staff survey of travel behaviour of staff at all sites in and around Kidlington, traffic surveys at key points in the surrounding highway network and surveys of existing parking supply and demand in and around the site on two typical weekdays. The transport assessment concludes that the proposed reinstatement of B block will have no significant adverse impact in terms of peak hour queues and delays and all additional parking demand will be accommodated within the existing site, which includes increasing the total parking on the site from 315 spaces to 364 spaces through the reconfiguration of the existing parking layout which accordingly complies with Policy T4 of the South East Plan 2009. It is also expected that some further parking spaces will become available through the implementation of the Green Travel Plan.
- 5.16 Consideration was given prior to the application being submitted, to relocate the children's playground to the rear of the HQ site and to then use this land for additional car parking. The Transport Assessment submitted concluded that this additional parking was not required to support the proposals and this area is therefore not included within the planning application and no change will occur to the playground.
- 5.17 The Highway Authority have considered the information submitted and have advised that a robust Transport Assessment (TA) has been submitted, the scope of which was agreed with the Highway Authority prior to the application being submitted. The TA has considered the impact of associated traffic upon the local highway network and specifically sensitive junctions in the locality. The assessment has used professionally recognised software with survey and appropriate forecast traffic data to model these junctions and the conclusions of the TA are considered to be fair and appropriate.

- 5.18 The application is supported by a travel plan to promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport and discourage the use of single occupancy car journeys. The site benefits from good connections to public transport and is highly accessible. The travel plan addresses the existing situation and suggests a comprehensive approach across the organisation.
- 5.19 In terms of parking provision, this has been carefully considered and the application proposes levels commensurate with existing demand, as determined by current ratio of parking provision to employee. The supporting documents include parking surveys, both on and off site and show there is a small level of spare capacity within the site and negligible overflow to the highway network. The issues raised by local objectors, in terms of vehicles parking on the street are noted, and whilst the Highway Authority are satisfied with the level of parking proposed, it is accepted that there may be some potential for over spill if staffing numbers were to be greater than those identified within the TA. The proposed parking layout is considered appropriate and provides appropriate space for manoeuvring. The surfaced areas should incorporate SUDS, which can be secured via condition.
- 5.20 Access to the site would remain unaltered, and this is considered appropriate for the increased use that would result from the proposed development. In terms of safety there have been no recorded accidents at the access within the last five years, suggesting there are no safety concerns in the function of the junction. Accident records for the surrounding highway network have been inspected and there does not appear to be any clusters or correlation that would suggest safety deficiencies in the local highway network.
- 5.21 TVP have stated their intention for construction vehicles to be carefully controlled to ensure that these do not cause any unacceptable impact during the construction phase. The DCTL considers that together with the implementation of the green travel plan and transport monitoring, there is adequate parking provision within the site and the access arrangements are acceptable. Therefore in terms of parking, access and highway safety and convenience the proposal accords with PPG13: Transport and Policies T4 and T5 of the South East Plan 2009.
- 5.22 Planning Obligation
The Highway Authority have advised that a small transport contribution of £5,000 will be required which will go towards monitoring parking levels and providing any necessary mitigation that arises as a result of this monitoring. The DCTL considers that this is a reasonable request and that this can be secured via a unilateral undertaking, which the County Council have started to draft for the applicant. TVP have agreed to provide this contribution as requested. The proposal therefore complies with policy T1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan in this respect.
- 5.23 It is clear that a thorough assessment of highway safety implications of this development has been made and that the conclusions are considered by the Highway Authority to be accurate and fair. The Highway Authority raise no objections subject to conditions and the financial contribution, which will go towards monitoring the parking levels on site and to provide any necessary mitigation identified.

5.24 Other matters

The site is not within any flood zone and so the development will not result in increased flood risk. The Highway Authority has suggested conditions to ensure that drainage of parking and turning areas is acceptable and to incorporate sustainable drainage where necessary. No comments have been received from the County Drainage Team.

5.25 In terms of ecology, the Council's Ecologist has commented that due to the site for the new building being largely hard standing, there is unlikely to be any significant ecological impacts as a result of this development. She would like to see wildlife enhancements included on the site such as native planting or bird boxes, which should be sought in order to comply with PPS9. This has been included as a planning note as it would be good practice to enhance wildlife habitats. A phase 1 environmental statement has been submitted, which concluded that there is likely to be limited impact from the proposed development. The Council's Rights of Way Officer has confirmed that although Gosford & Water Eaton FP14 (229/14) passes through the site; it would not be affected by the proposed new building.

5.26 The comments of Kidlington Parish Council (as the adjoining Parish) are noted, and the concerns have been addressed within the highways paragraphs earlier in this report. The comments of Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council are also noted, however it must be made clear that any developer contributions or conditions this Council requires must be related directly to the development proposed. The Local Planning Authority cannot question the working practices that the Police Authority employs.

5.27 The comments of third parties in relation to parking and highway matters have been addressed within the highways paragraphs earlier in this report. It is not considered that this Council can question the timing of this planning application, the costs that may be incurred for the Police Authority, the future staffing levels, or defer a decision until future plans for this site have been submitted, or until a new Chief Constable is in post as this is not reasonable and the Local Planning Authority must consider each application on its own merits. A full assessment has been made of the implications of this proposal, including on highway safety and the County Council as Highway Authority have confirmed that no objections are raised.

5.28 The comments made in relation to the community involvement that has been carried out are noted, however although it is desirable to consult the community and take their comments and concerns into account, there is no statutory requirement for an applicant to do this. In this case, the applicant has chosen to carry out some consultation, however it is not for the Council to question the quality or extent of the exercises carried out and this is not a reason to resist a planning application. The Council has carried out its own statutory advertisement of the application as set out within paragraph 2.1, whereby any comments or concerns of third parties can be fully taken into account.

5.29 Conclusion

The above assessment has demonstrated that the proposal is acceptable in principle and will have limited impact in terms of visual amenity and the residential amenity of neighbouring properties. It is noted that highway safety and parking provision for this site are a considerable concern; however extensive information has been provided in relation to this matter, which has concluded that no significant

highway safety impact will be caused and that all additional parking demand can be accommodated on the site. This information has been considered by Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Highway Authority, who agrees with the conclusions reached and therefore raise no objection. As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and to comply with the above mentioned planning policies.

6. Recommendation

Approval; subject to:

The applicant entering into a planning obligation to the satisfaction of the District Council;

And the following conditions:

1. 1.4A (RC2) [Full permission: Duration limit (3 years)]
2. Except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the following plans and documents: application forms, design and access statement, statement of community involvement, phase 1 environmental survey, transport assessment and all accompanying documentation, site location plan and drawing numbers 100292/A/PL01 A, 100292/A/PL02 B, 100292/A/PL03 B, 100292/A/PL04 B, 100292/A/PL05 B, 100292/A/PL06 B, 100292/A/PL07 B, 100292/A/PL08 C, **100292/C/002 A, 100292/C/003 B, 100292/C/006 A, 100292/C/900 A** and JNY7037-03 B
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and to comply with PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development.
3. The external walls of the building shall be constructed in accordance with the samples of the bricks to be “Selected Light Facings” manufactured by Freshfield Lane Brick Works Limited, the render – colour RAL 9016 and the Rimex stainless steel cladding – colour green unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. (RC4A)
4. That before the development is first occupied, the parking and manoeuvring areas shall be provided in accordance with the plan (100292/A/PL02 B) hereby approved and shall be constructed, laid out, surfaced (bound material), drained (in accordance with SUDs) in accordance with full details which shall be submitted for the prior approval in writing by the Local Planning and shall be completed and retained unobstructed except for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles at all times. (RC14AA)
5. That within 3 months of any new occupation of the development, a travel plan to reduce dependency on the private car, which shall include clear and unambiguous objectives and modal split targets, together with a time-bound programme of implementation, monitoring and regular review and improvement; and be based on the particulars contained within the approved framework produced in support of this application, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter operated. (RC66A)
6. **Confirmation of need for a condition relating to drainage from the County Drainage Team**

Planning notes

1. X1 – Ecology
2. The Council’s Ecologist has recommended that wildlife enhancements such as native planting or bird boxes on the building would be beneficial. Further advice in relation to this matter can be obtained from the Council’s Ecologist Charlotte

Watkins on 01295 227912.

3. ZZ – Unsuspected contamination
4. S1 – Post permission changes
5. T1 – Third party interests
6. U1 – Construction sites

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION AND RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

The Council, as local planning authority, has determined this application in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The development is considered to be acceptable on its planning merits as the proposal is acceptable in principle and pays proper regard to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area and would have no undue adverse impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties. Furthermore, the proposal is acceptable in highway safety terms. As such the proposal is in accordance with PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, PPG13: Transport, Policies CC1, CC2, CC4, RE1, RE3, RE5, BE1, BE2 and T4 of The South East Plan and Policies EMP3, T1, C28 and C30 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. For the reasons given above and having proper regard to all other matters raised the Council considered that the application should be approved and planning permission granted.

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