

Planning and Regulatory Committee
15 July 2014**7. PROPOSED ALTERATION AND EXTENSION TO THE EXISTING EAST CAR PARK TO PROVIDE 195 SPACES, INCLUDING NEW LIGHTING AND CCTV CAMERAS AT WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICES, COUNTY HALL, SPETCHLEY ROAD, WORCESTER**

Applicant	Worcestershire County Council
Local Councillor	Mrs P Agar
Purpose of Report	<p>1. To consider an application under Regulation 3 of the Town and County Planning General Regulations 1992 for planning permission for the alteration and extension to the existing east car park to provide 195 spaces, including new lighting and CCTV cameras at Worcestershire County Council Offices, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester.</p>
Background	<p>2. The number of staff at the County Hall Campus has increased significantly over the last few years, with approximately 750 staff from other existing work bases moving onto the site, which has enabled the County Council to sell or dispose of buildings. In August 2008, there were 1686 members of staff based at County Hall and in December 2013 this number had increased to 2371.</p> <p>3. Parking along Spetchley Road has been an issue due to overflow parking of County Council staff and visitor vehicles. The proposed new car park and rearrangements will aim to reduce the number of vehicles parking along Spetchley Road.</p>
The Proposal	<p>4. Worcestershire County Council is seeking planning permission to provide an additional 195 car parking spaces in the east car park at County Hall Campus. The proposal to provide an additional 195 spaces would include some remarking of the existing car park and creating new car parking areas. The applicant also proposes new lighting and CCTV cameras to be installed in the new car parking areas.</p> <p>5. There are currently 270 existing car park spaces in the existing east car park and with the additional 195 car parking spaces there would be 465 spaces in total in the east car park. These would be a combination of 80 long stay spaces, 95 short stay spaces, 23 visitor car parking and 7 disabled</p>

spaces.

6. With regard to drainage, it is proposed to attenuate and limit to new run-off rates before discharging to the existing drainage network; however, the full detailed drainage design is subject to a survey of the existing drainage system and infiltration tests which are currently being undertaken by the applicant. The preferred means of drainage is to provide open attenuation storage, however, the applicant has stated that the physical space for this is very limited. The drawings submitted with the application show a swale with a wildflower mix.

7. The planning application is accompanied by an Extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey. The survey concludes that the proposed development is unlikely to impact on protected species and/or valuable habitats and the loss of the low to medium ecological value sites can be mitigated for and improved using the correct mitigation.

8. A lighting assessment accompanies this planning application and proposes to use luminaires in the new car park. The applicant states that the lighting of the car park has been designed to reduce light spillage and protect the amenity of nearby residents and local wildlife habitats whilst also ensuring the most energy efficient and cost effective luminaires are used.

9. A travel plan accompanies the planning application and states that County Hall Campus will be a multi-functional campus which is operationally efficient and as close to carbon neutral as possible. This is proposed to be achieved through breaking the reliance on single occupancy car use and supporting and promoting alternative modes of transport to the site and when conducting council business.

10. The applicant proposes to carry out the construction during extended hours including evening and weekends and there will be closure of some existing car parking spaces to facilitate the development.

11. The applicant carried out a pre-planning public consultation which included a week long consultation at County Hall including display boards and manned drop in sessions.

12. County Hall is located on Spetchley Road on the eastern edge of Worcester, approximately 2 kilometres from Worcester City Centre.

13. Nunnery Wood is located immediately north of County Hall campus, with St Richard's Hospice and the Countryside Centre to the east, Worcester Sixth Form College to the west and Spetchley Road and residential properties to the south.

14. The A4440 is located west of the site and access to the site from the A4440 is gained via Wildwood Drive. The second

The Site

access to the site is from Spetchley Road

15. The main County Hall buildings are located west of the site with car parking located to the east and north of the site. The proposed new car parking areas are shown on the attached plan labelled Proposed Car Park A, B, C and D. The proposed car park A would be located on an area of existing grass verge and the proposed car park B would comprise of remarked spaces on the existing car park and new spaces on an area of grass verge. The proposed car park C would be located on an area which is currently a vegetated earth bund and grass verge and car park D would be located on an area which is currently a vegetated earth bund and an area of trees. The new car parking areas would be accessed by the existing access roads into the car parks.

16. The County Hall campus has been allocated as Green Network which is protected by Policy NE.9 of the City of Worcester Local Plan.

17. The nearest residential properties are located approximately 95 metres from the site, south of Spetchley Road.

Summary of Issues

18. The main issues in the determination of this application are the impact of the proposal on:

- Transport & Highway Safety
- Drainage
- Residential Amenity
- The Green Network, and
- Ecology and Biodiversity.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

19. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and came into effect on 27 March 2012. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision takers and is a material planning consideration in determining planning applications. Annex 3 of the NPPF lists the documents revoked and replaced by the NPPF. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through plan-making and decision-taking.

20. Sustainable Development is defined by five principles set out in the UK Sustainable Development Strategy:

- "living within the planet's environmental limits;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance; and
- using sound science responsibly".

21. The Government believes that sustainable development

can play three critical roles in England:

- an economic role, contributing to a strong, responsive, competitive economy;
- a social role, supporting vibrant and healthy communities; and
- an environmental role, protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

22. The following guidance contained in the NPPF, is considered to be of specific relevance to the determination of this planning application:

- Section 1: Building a strong, competitive economy
- Section 4: Promoting Sustainable Transport
- Section 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

The Development Plan

23. The Development Plan is the strategic framework that guides land use planning for the area. In this respect the current Development Plan consists of the adopted City of Worcester Local Plan. Planning applications should be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

24. Annex 1 of the NPPF states that for the purposes of decision-taking, the policies in the Local Plan should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the NPPF. However, the policies contained within the NPPF are material considerations. For 12 months from the day of publication, decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with the NPPF. In other cases and following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

City of Worcester Local Plan (Saved Policies)

- Policy NE5 Landscape Protection
- Policy NE7 Landscaping Scheme
- Policy NE9 The Green Network
- Policy BE1 Environmental Standards for Development
- Policy TR12 Parking Standards

Draft Planning Policy

Draft South Worcestershire Development Plan

25. The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) is being prepared jointly by the three local authorities and communities of Malvern Hills, Wychavon and Worcester City. The plan considers the long-term visions and objectives for

South Worcestershire.

26. On 28 May 2013 the SWDP was submitted to the Secretary of State. The Examination in Public on Phase 1 took place on 1-3 October 2013 and the publication of the Inspectors interim findings was published on 30 October 2013. The Inspector's interim conclusions on Phase 1 asked the three councils involved in compiling the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) to look again at the figures they prepared on the number of homes needed in the area by 2030 and do more work on the technical evidence used to establish how many homes the area will need. An additional hearing took place on 13-14 March 2014 following new evidence submitted by the three councils. The Inspector's interim conclusions dated 31 March 2014 on Phase 1 provide a full, objectively assessed need for housing over the plan period for South Worcestershire of 28,370 dwellings. A second phase of examination will follow, looking at the sites where new homes and businesses are proposed to be developed.

27. The SWDP in its entirety has not been tested at examination or adopted by any of the Councils; therefore, having regard to the advice in the NPPF, Annex 1, it is the view of the Head of Economic Development and Planning, that little weight will be attached to the SWDP in the determination of this application.

Consultations

28. The City Archaeologist considers that as the site has been subject to substantial landscaping, the probability of archaeological remains surviving on the site is severely reduced. It is, therefore, recommended that an archaeological access condition (one day for unencumbered archaeological recording) in case any archaeological remains survive and are affected by the development.

29. Worcester City Council has no objection to the proposals subject to a suitably worded condition(s) requiring the submission and subsequent implementation of a landscaping scheme.

30. The City Council recommends that a landscaping scheme which includes heavy stock trees within the car park, one for every 10 spaces and native tree and shrub planting to the perimeter to mitigate the loss of the existing mature planting. In addition this is required to mitigate the impact on the Green Network to the satisfaction of Local Plan Policy NE9.

31. The Environment Agency refers the County Planning Authority to the Environment Agency Surface Water Management Advice Note.

32. Worcestershire Land Drainage Officer has no objection subject to a condition regarding details of surface water drainage.

33. Natural England has no objection to the proposal in terms

of statutorily protected sites or landscapes. It is recommended that the County Planning Authority refer to the standing advice on protected species.

34. (Adjoining) Warndon Parish Council has no objection to the proposal.

35. Whittington Parish Council has no objection to the proposal.

36. West Mercia Police has no objection to the proposal. It is considered that the car park is well laid out and new CCTV cameras are a welcome inclusion.

37. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Air Quality) recommends that electric charging points are installed in 10% of the allocated parking spaces. The provision of more sustainable transport modes will help to reduce CO₂, NO_X and particulate emissions from transport.

38. WRS recommend 10% EV charging points are installed in all significant commercial/employer car parking space developments to mitigate pollution creep in line with sustainable measures outlined within NPPF (p29 and 35).

39. Worcester City currently has 2 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), with one more to be declared and 2 more areas currently requiring assessment to determine if declaration is necessary. It is likely that in the next few years the number of AQMAs could increase to as many as 6. EV charging points and Low Emissions Strategies and Zones are all options posed in the Air Quality Action Plan, but in order to effect a reduction in emissions from traffic within the AQMAs clearly such actions require a greening of the vehicle fleet travelling into those areas of poor air quality from beyond.

40. Given the size of the Council's car parking facilities will increase to circa 1200 and currently has no EV charging points and the County Council's own responsibility to improving air quality in Local Transport Plan 3 it is considered that this recommendation is particularly appropriate to apply to this development. Consider also the opportunity for the County Council to 'lead by example' as a local authority and improve its green credentials. It is also worth noting the cost of installing in road/car park charging points now at the early development stage will be far more cost effective than retrospectively installing at a future date when substantial ground-works to lay cable increase costs substantially so there is an element of future-proofing against increased costs.

41. Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Pollution Control) recommends that the contractor refers to the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Construction and Demolition Guidance in order to minimise nuisance to local residents.

42. Severn Trent Water Limited has no objection to the proposal subject to a planning condition regarding surface water drainage.

43. The County Highways Officer has no objection to the proposal and has been involved in extensive pre-application discussions.

44. The main issue was the possibility of car parking "over provision" which is against the ethos of sustainable travel. Furthermore, because the site is within the City boundary, the scheme is subject to the City Local Plan car parking restraint policy which should be fairly and evenly applied to all development, both public and private.

45. Because of the "complexities" of County Hall usage (i.e. as opposed to for example "normal" B1 office accommodation), the submitted proposals were analysed against staff/visitor numbers rather than Ground Floor Area which is far too simplistic for a campus like County Hall.

46. In this respect, the current parking capacity plus the proposals represents approximately 52.4% in terms of provision which is well within the acceptable standards set out in The City of Worcester Local Plan which would allow up to 90% of full parking provision for a site in this particular location.

47. The County Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions regarding a landscape and vegetation plan, Sustainable Drainage scheme, soil management methods and the contractors working area.

48. The County Ecologist has no objection to the proposal subject to conditions regarding a lighting scheme, biodiversity gain/habitat creation, protection of nesting birds and trees with the potential for roosting bats.

Other Representations

49. In accordance with the Development Management Procedure Order 2010, the application has been advertised on site, in the local newspaper and through neighbour notification letters. No letters of representation have been received.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning's comments

50. As with any planning application, this application should be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant policies and key issues have been set out earlier.

51. Worcestershire County Council is seeking or planning permission for the alteration and extension to the existing east car park to provide 195 spaces, including new lighting and CCTV cameras at Worcestershire County Council Offices, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester.

Traffic and Highway Safety

52. Worcestershire Regulatory Services recommend that electric vehicle charging points are installed in 10% of the

allocated spaces at County Hall.

53. There are currently two electric vehicle charging points in the existing County Hall car park. The Worcestershire County Council Transport Policy and Strategic Development Officer confirms that they have only been used once. The Officer considers that a demand is unlikely to materialise as most electric vehicle owners charge their batteries at night in their own home for convenience and cost, therefore are unlikely to need an electric hook-up at work given the current long battery lives and the average staff mileage.

54. The County Highways Officer accepts that provision of electric charging points will steadily increase in relevance and that the County Council are committed to air quality improvement and should lead by example. The Highways Officer has recommended that an area of the car park could be designated for a potential/future electrical vehicle parking area if the demand materialises and that the applicant could investigate what ducting could be sensibly included in the forthcoming car park works (i.e. no actual cabling or charging points until any such demand is realised). The applicant concurs with this suggestion and will investigate installing ducting in the new car park areas.

55. The County Highways Officer has been involved in extensive pre-application discussions regarding the proposal and has no objection to the proposed development. Therefore, the Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that the proposed development is acceptable on highways grounds.

Drainage

56. Based on the comments from the Worcestershire Land Drainage Officer, the Head of Economic Development and Planning recommends that a detailed drainage design is submitted to demonstrate how the surface water will be managed in a sustainable manner on site in order to prevent flooding. It is considered that this matter can be dealt with by the imposition of a pre-commencement planning condition.

Residential Amenity

57. It is considered the potential nuisance to local residents and St Richard's Hospice can be minimised during the construction period subject to the contractor complying with the Worcestershire Regulatory Services Construction and Demolition Guidance.

58. There is an existing earth bund with mature vegetation and trees on the southern boundary of the County Hall Campus which provides partial screening to residential properties on Spetchley Road. This bund would not be affected by the proposed development.

59. There is an existing earth bund located immediately adjacent to the south of the existing east car park, and along with the landscaping this also provides partial screening to the

nearest residential properties along Spetchley Road, which are located approximately 90 metres from the site. This earth bund would be removed to make way for the car park extension.

60. Although the car park extension would be located closer to the residential properties on Spetchley Road than the existing car park, it is considered that there is sufficient distance between the properties and the proposed car park extension to prevent any adverse visual impacts on amenity. It is considered that the existing and proposed landscaping would provide sufficient screening to these properties and, furthermore, the car park extension would not have any overlooking or overbearing implications on these properties.

61. The applicant has submitted a lighting assessment, however, notwithstanding these details the Head of Economic Development and Planning recommends that a condition is imposed requiring details of the lighting plan and the location of CCTV cameras be submitted and approved, to ensure that these would not adversely impact on residential amenity.

Green Network

62. All valuable open space in the City of Worcester has been allocated as Green Network in the City of Worcester Local Plan and is protected by Policy NE9. The whole of the County Hall campus is allocated as Green Network.

63. Worcester City Council consider that a landscaping scheme which includes heavy stock trees within the car park, one for every 10 spaces and native tree and shrub planting to the perimeter should be carried out to mitigate the loss of the existing mature planting and to ensure compliance with the Policy NE9 of City of Worcester Local Plan in terms of protecting the Green Network.

64. The Head of Economic Development and Planning concurs with this view and recommends that a condition is imposed requiring a landscaping scheme to be submitted and approved.

Ecology and Biodiversity

65. The County Ecologist has stated that some areas proposed to be cleared to facilitate the car park development were created as compensatory habitat and biodiversity gain when the previous car park extension was developed. The County Ecologist therefore recommends that the applicant submits a habitat creation and management plan to compensate for the loss of these habitats. The Head of Economic Development and Planning concurs with this view and recommends that this be imposed by a planning condition.

Conclusion

66. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that in principle the proposed extension to County Hall car park is acceptable in accordance with Policy TR12 of the City of Worcester Local Plan. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable on highways

grounds.

67. The County Council Transport Policy and Strategic Development Officer has stated that there is zero demand for the two existing vehicle electric charging points on site, therefore, the Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that it would be unreasonable to require the applicant to provide more electric vehicle charging points. Furthermore, there are no Planning Policies to justify this recommendation from Worcestershire Regulatory Services. However, the Head of Economic Development and Planning is satisfied that the applicant will investigate the implementation of ducting should a demand ever materialise for electrical charging vehicle points.

68. Subject to the imposition of a pre-commencement condition requiring the submission and approval of further drainage details, it is considered that surface water can be suitably managed and that the proposal would not increase the risk of flooding at the site.

69. The Head of Economic Development and Planning considers that subject to planning conditions the proposal would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity.

70. Subject to the imposition of a condition requiring the submission of a comprehensive landscaping scheme, it is considered that this would provide adequate compensation for the loss of vegetation and green space to comply with Policy NE9 of the Local Plan in terms of the Green Network. It is considered that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on ecology and biodiversity at the site and would provide enhancement opportunities in accordance with the NPPF.

71. On balance, taking into account the comments received from statutory consultees; members of the public and the provisions of the development plan in particular Policies NE5, NE7, NE9, BE1 and TR12 of the City of Worcester Local Plan; it is considered that the proposal would not cause demonstrable harm to the interests intended to be protected by these policies or highway safety.

Recommendation

72. The Head of Economic Development and Planning recommends that planning permission be granted for the alteration and extension to the existing east car park to provide 195 spaces, including new lighting and CCTV cameras at Worcestershire County Council Offices, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester, subject to the following conditions:

- a) The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this planning permission;**
- b) The permission enures for the benefit of Worcestershire County Council only;**

- c) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the details shown on submitted Drawing Numbers: P01, P02, P04-D, P05 and P06 except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission;**
- d) Before the development hereby approved is brought into use the layout of the car parking spaces shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details;**
- e) Notwithstanding the indication of materials which may have been given in the application, before the development hereby approved is brought into use a schedule and or samples of all surfacing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details;**
- f) Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme for surface water drainage shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Prior to submission of the scheme an assessment shall be carried out into the potential of disposing of surface water by means of a sustainable drainage system (SuDS), and the results of this assessment shall be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority. If infiltration techniques are used then the plan shall include the details of field percolation tests. There shall be no increase in surface water run-off from the site compared to the existing pre-application run-off rate up to a 1 in 100 year storm event plus an appropriate allowance for climate change. The scheme shall provide an appropriate level of runoff treatment. Thereafter the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use;**
- g) Twenty one days before any development is commenced resulting in any excavation within the site, written notice shall be given to the County Planning Authority, whereupon the County Planning Authority shall, within twenty one days of receipt of such notice, specify in writing to the developer which persons authorised by the County Planning Authority shall be allowed access to the site whilst any excavations are in progress for the purpose of archaeological investigation. This access shall allow for a period of up to one day for unencumbered archaeological recording to take place within the trenches if in the opinion of the City Archaeological Officer features of interest are revealed;**

- h) Notwithstanding the submitted details, prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a landscaping scheme, which shall include the retention of any existing trees and hedgerows and details of all walls, fences, surface treatments, new trees, shrubs and other planting, and details of the proposed planting species, sizes, spacing, densities, locations, planting methods and details of the provision of adequate growing medium and drainage, and details of the soil management including topsoil stripping, storage and replacement and de-compaction of impacted areas shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the scheme shall implemented in accordance with the approved details within 6 months of the completion of the development. Any new trees or shrubs, which within a period of five years from the completion of the planting die, are removed, or become damaged or diseased, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of a similar size and species;**
- i) Details and locations of all external lighting and CCTV cameras shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the County Planning Authority prior to the development being brought into use. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details;**
- j) All vegetation clearance shall be undertaken outside the bird nesting season which generally extends between March and September inclusive. If this is not possible then any vegetation that is to be removed or disturbed should be checked by an experienced ecologist for nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing. If birds are found to be nesting any works which may affect them would have to be delayed until the young have fledged and the nest has been abandoned naturally;**
- k) The trees proposed to be felled on site should be reassessed for bats if the works are undertaken after 31 March 2015; and**
- l) Within 2 months from the date of this planning permission a habitat creation and management plan shall be submitted to and approved by the County Planning Authority. Thereafter the works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved management plan.**

Contacts

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List of Background Papers

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In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Economic Development and Planning) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this item:

The application, plans and consultation replies in file reference 14/000019/REG3.