

HISTORY OF SITE

The Middlemoor site has an extensive planning history most of which is not directly relevant to the current application. The most relevant recent history is set out below -

13/4073/FUL - Full planning application for a Criminal Justice Centre and Police Hub in the south of the site and a Class A1 Supermarket (extending to 6,789 sqm with associated petrol filling station and customer car parking for 418 cars) in the north-east of the site. Approved 23/12/14.

18/0651/NMA - Amendment to approved consent in respect of the Criminal Justice Centre and Police Hub comprising minor changes relating to the following: - alignment of internal access road, external ground levels/landscaping, internal vehicular access arrangements and parking layout (Both vehicular and cycle), building footprint, finished floor levels and overall building height, secure compound to custody building, plant buildings/arrangements, materials/external appearance/design of building, and design of external areas. (Non-Material Minor Amendment to planning permission 13/4073/03 granted 23rd December 2014). Approved 10/05/18.

19/1126/NMA - Amendment to consented scheme with revised rear car park and updated landscape information. (Non-material Minor Amendment to planning permission 13/4073/03 granted 23rd December 2014 as also modified by 18/0651/NMA). Approved 07/10/19.

13/4067/OUT - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) for two residential areas (referred to as 'Area A' and 'Area B') to provide a combined provision for up to 92 residential units. Area A is located in the north-western part of the Middlemoor site whereas Area B is located in the central part (to the south of the proposed supermarket). Approved 14/01/15. This permission has now lapsed as the timeframe for submission of 'reserved matters' has expired.

18/1007/FUL - Demolition of existing buildings and construction of a mixed use development comprising Class A1 retail units; Class A1/A3/A5 food and drink units with drive through facilities; Class D2 health & fitness use; management office, customer toilet facilities, and associated access, parking, and landscaping. Application withdrawn by applicant 16/07/19.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE/PROPOSAL

The application site comprises a 1.35 Ha parcel of land situated almost centrally within the Middlemoor complex. The site comprises land that was previously used as the landing area for the police helicopter and associated vehicle parking areas. The land lies between existing buildings forming part of the Middlemoor complex and the Exeter to Exmouth branch railway line.

Permission is now sought for the formation of a temporary car park comprising a total of 287 spaces on the land comprising a stoned finish. Permission was original for a temporary period of 5 years but through the course of processing the application and negotiations consent is now only sought for a period of 3 years.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION SUPPLIED BY THE APPLICANT

The application is accompanied by the following supporting documents –

- Design and Access Statement
- Technical Note – Transportation.
- Supporting letter from Chief Constable

REPRESENTATIONS

2 letters of representation/objection have been received raising the following matters –

- Inaccuracies within supporting technical note in respect of access matters – i.e. reference to previous proposals/permission to create an additional arm onto the B3181/Wilton Way roundabout
- Previous Highway Authority objections to such proposals on application no. 18/1007/FUL
- Lack of justification for provision of additional parking on site, how site will operate after removal of parking once temporary consent expires
- Lack of demonstration of applicant's attempt to reduce nos of staff travelling by car and promotion of use of public transport and walking/cycling, i.e. absence of submission of a Green Travel Plan
- Changing staff numbers/patterns of work – question need for extra parking.

CONSULTATIONS

DCC (LLFA) – Comment as follows and raise an initial objection –

“The applicant has not provided any information in relation to the disposal of surface water from the site to enable me to make observations on the proposal. The applicant must therefore submit a surface water drainage management plan which demonstrates how surface water from the development will be disposed of in a manner that does not increase flood risk elsewhere, in accordance with the principles of Sustainable Drainage Systems. The applicant is therefore advised to refer to Devon County Council's draft Sustainable Drainage Design Guidance, which can be found at the following address:

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/floodriskmanagement/sustainable-drainage/suds-guidance/>.

It is noted that the proposed temporary car park is for a period of 5 years (since amended to 3 years) to provide 287 car parking spaces with a stoned up area of approximately 7600m².

The proposed car park area is within the groundwater source protection zone. Some ground investigation may need to be carried out to confirm any made ground and the likelihood of any contamination being present. This is to ensure that surface water infiltrating into the ground does not transport contaminants into groundwater, which could have an effect on the groundwater source protection zone.”

DCC (County Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment) – Response as follows –

“The application is for a temporary car park (287 spaces) for a period of 5 years (since amended to 3 years) at the Police Headquarters Devon and Cornwall Constabulary Police Training College, Exeter.

The applicants reasoning for an addition of a 287-space car park on the east edge of the site, is to compensate for the expected increase of demand from the closure of

other police premises elsewhere in Exeter as well as the anticipated the loss of parking spaces elsewhere on the site in the near future. Access to the temporary spaces is believed to be via the existing access, off Alderson Drive, and will be for the use of Devon & Cornwall Police staff only.

The submitted documents make reference to historic planning applications namely, 13/4073/FUL and 18/1007/FUL. One application, necessitates the demolition of three existing buildings (the Traffic Centre, Torbay House and Devon House) on the site and their associated car parks, totalling 104 spaces, whilst the other has been withdrawn by the applicant. The submitted documents also refer to the possibility of the Heavitree Offices to be closed shortly, displacing approximately 250 officers which are understood to be relocated largely into the Middlemoor site.

However, these have yet to come forward and no increase in floor space is proposed, but it is realised that when the Heavitree Offices close there will be an increase in demand for parking. Nevertheless, the increase in parking levels at this site are significant and the implications on the highway network have not been assessed. Concerns from the LHA were raised in relation to planning application number 18/1007/FUL, where ultimately the LHA recommended refusal.

It is unknown as to whether this site has a travel plan or not. If an existing travel plan is not in place, a travel plan should be introduced including details of walking and cycling routes, as well as public transport including maps, timetables, and information about ticket offers. It should also include information about car sharing schemes, car clubs, eco-driving and motorcycle safety. These measures should be encouraged to continue the promotion of non-car based travel.

If an existing Travel Plan is in place, it is essential that car park management details, incorporated through the site Travel Plan, are provided to confirm how existing parking spaces will be suitably managed. This should give consideration to appropriate demand management measures, such as benefits to car sharers and/or multiple occupancy vehicles.

Secure cycle parking should be provided in accordance with the standards set out in the Exeter City Council Sustainable Transport Supplementary Planning Document. The plans do not show cycle parking provision and therefore the plans should be amended.

Summary

Given the above concerns, the Highway Authority are not able to provide a recommendation until further information is provided. The applicant needs to provide further information on the traffic impacts of the proposal and the implications on the highway network. The suggestion of traffic from one site being moved to the proposed site does not overcome highway implications at the Middlemoor police base.”

Network Rail – No response received.

Environmental Health – Recommend a condition requiring submission of a Green Travel Plan for approval prior to commencement of use of the car park.

PLANNING POLICIES/POLICY GUIDANCE

Government Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)
Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Core Strategy (Adopted 21 February 2012)

Core Strategy Objectives

- CP1 – Spatial Strategy
- CP2 – Employment
- CP9 – Transport
- CP11 – Pollution
- CP12 – Flood Risk
- CP17 – Design and Local Distinctiveness

Exeter Local Plan First Review 1995-2011 (Adopted 31 March 2005)

- AP1 – Design and Location of Development
- AP2 – Sequential Approach
- E1 – Employment Sites
- T1 – Hierarchy of Modes
- T2 – Accessibility Criteria
- T3 – Encouraging Use of Sustainable Modes
- T10 – Car Parking Standards
- T12 – Temporary Car Parking on Vacant Sites
- C5 – Archaeology
- EN3 – Air and Water Quality
- EN4 – Flood Risk
- EN5 – Noise
- DG1 – Objectives of Urban Design
- DG7 – Crime Prevention and Safety

Development Delivery Development Plan Document (Publication Version, July 2015)

- DD1 – Sustainable Development
- DD20 – Accessibility and Sustainable Movement
- DD21 – Parking
- DD25 – Design Principles
- DD26 – Designing out Crime
- DD33 – Flood Risk
- DD34 – Pollution and Contaminated Land

Exeter City Council Supplementary Planning Documents

- Archaeology and Development SPD (Nov 2004)
- Sustainable Transport SPD (March 2013)

OBSERVATIONS

The main material considerations in respect of this application relate to transportation matters, visual impact and drainage.

Transportation matters

In terms of transportation matters the main issues are impact on local highway network, and justification for the additional parking provision in the context of sustainable transport initiatives and environmental considerations.

Incoming to a conclusion on these matters it is important to understand the context/background to the submission of the application. The Chief Constable of the Devon and Cornwall Police Force has written in support of the application to outline the background behind the application. The support letter states that the additional parking is a short-term requirement related to the 24/7 requirement for policing Exeter & East Devon, the wider Force area and its regional and national responsibilities. The letter highlights that the Police Force is making provision for cycle to work schemes, exploring the electrification of vehicles and is actively pursuing alternative transport to work options and exploring flexible working opportunities. Supporting this the letter confirms that the Force has a Green Travel Plan in place, a Bicycle User Group and a Mobile Working Policy in process. Notwithstanding the above the letter states that changing cultures and behaviours of Police officers and force staff will take time and that for the following reasons the additional parking is required on a temporary basis –

- Need to make provision to meet required crisis capacity
- 2000 officers/staff employed at site working various shift patterns
- Forthcoming increase in police numbers through additional recruitment
- Migration of 250 officers from Heavitree Road site will increase parking requirement.
- One of key concerns emerging from local consultations, including with local Resident's Associations, was the potential for overspill/staff parking in residential areas adjoining Middlemoor

In addition to the letter from the Chief Constable the application is accompanied by Technical Note prepared by the Police Authority's Transport Planning and Highway Design consultant that seeks to provide further support/justification for the proposed additional temporary parking. This document states that the Middlemoor complex currently benefits from 734 parking spaces serving the site. It reiterates that the additional temporary parking is required to meet increased demand arising from the closure of other police premises, but also to offset the anticipated loss of parking spaces elsewhere on site. The extant planning permission on the northern part of the site would result in the demolition of some existing buildings forming part of the Middlemoor complex and the loss of the existing parking facilities associated with those buildings amounting to 104 spaces. It is understood that the applicant's intention is to proceed with the demolition, and hence loss of the associated parking spaces, in readiness for future redevelopment of that part of the site.

This document expands upon the Chief Constable's letter in terms of factors supporting the provision of the additional temporary parking proposed as follows –

- Overall staff levels currently 2000 officers and staff
- Heavitree Road site closure will result in a 12.5% (250 people) increase in staff at Middlemoor, plus a need to accommodate additional operational vehicles displaced from that site
- 3 shift pattern operated, early, late and night with 2 hour overlap
- Function of Middlemoor as a training hub with increased amount of specialised training being offered at the site
- 104 existing parking spaces taken up by various operational vehicles (mainly traffic control & armed response)
- On site gym – extends staff parking demand beyond shifts as they stay on to use facilities
- Safety – considered imperative no officer/member of staff should be required to park outside site
- Impending loss of existing parking facilities across wider site.

The required level of parking provision is analysed in the context of parking standards contained within the Council's Sustainable Transport SPD and adopted Local Plan. Based on the current floor space of buildings comprising the Middlemoor complex this would equate to 677 parking spaces. However, having regard to the points outlined above it states that the estimated required minimum parking demand for Middlemoor following the closure of Heavitree Road will be as follows –

- 677 spaces for the various land uses on site (mixed use B1, B2, D2) as suggested by Council's adopted parking standards
- Spaces to account for the spike in parking demand at shift handover times (approx. 68 additional spaces)
- 117 spaces for operational vehicles, with an increase likely due to migration of specialist functions from Heavitree Offices
- At least 24 spaces for officers visiting site for training purposes.

This totals a suggested parking requirement of 886 spaces across the Middlemoor site as a whole.

Of the current 734 parking spaces available on site 104 will be lost as a result of redevelopment proposals relating to parts of the site leaving 630. Consent is now sought for a temporary car park providing 287 spaces giving a total of 917 (630 + 287). This equates to an increase of parking provision across the site of 183 spaces. There are also a number of existing parking spaces within the area comprising the current application and it is unclear if these have been taken into consideration in calculating the net increase in parking provision arising from this proposal. Whilst the potential number of staff relocating to Middlemoor in connection with the future closure of the Heavitree road site have been quoted as part of the justification behind the need for the additional parking proposed, it has not been stated how many parking spaces exist at the Heavitree Road site serving staff working there. Clarification of this has also been sought to help put the quantum of additional temporary parking now sought into context.

DCC as the Highway Authority have expressed concerns in their consultation response reported above that the impact of additional parking provision upon the highway network locally has not been assessed. They have also queried the Police Authority's position with regard to Green Travel Plans in the context of this application for increased parking, and the absence of clarity over secure cycle parking provision at the site. Until additional information addressing these points is provided the Highway Authority have indicated that they are not in a position to be able to make a recommendation in respect of the transportation related impacts of the proposal.

Accordingly further information has been requested from the applicant and will be reported via the update sheet or verbally at Committee depending upon when it is received.

Visual Impact

The site is well contained within the overall Middlemoor complex and is not readily visible from public vantage points other than from trains passing the site on the adjacent branch railway line. The land comprising the application site is grassed and contains no trees or planting and bordered by banks on three sides. Consequently, the site is not considered to have any significant intrinsic visual or ecological quality. The existing bank to the north of the proposed temporary parking area would be slightly repositioned as part of the proposals. Given that the site is well contained within the Middlemoor complex, and limited in visibility from public vantage points, it is not considered that the visual impact of the formation of a temporary car park would constitute grounds to withhold consent.

Drainage

The proposed temporary parking will comprise a stoned surface thereby allowing surface water to infiltrate naturally into the ground in a similar way to the currently prevailing situation as most of the application site is currently grassed. This is a sustainable approach to surface water drainage and is considered acceptable in principle subject to confirmation that the nature of the underlying soil is such that the approach would not pose a risk of pollution to groundwater. This is the subject of on-going negotiations in line with comments from DCC as the LLFA

Delegation Briefing (24/09/19)

Members noted the representations received and sought clarification on the Council's overall Travel Plan covering the Middlemoor site, and how this application for additional parking sat within the context of current concerns relating to climate change and sustainability. Members requested that the application be referred to Planning Committee for determination.

Conclusions

The particular circumstances surrounding the operational requirements of the Police Force outlined in support of the application, and the comments regarding changing of the culture and behaviours of Police officers and force staff in respect of transport choices and working practices taking time are acknowledged. However, the concerns of the Highway Authority regarding the potential impact on the highway network are an important material consideration in the assessment of the merits of this application. The further information addressing the outstanding matters referred to in this report is required before a final assessment of the merits of the temporary car park proposed can be reached. Consequently the recommendation below is a provisional one that might need to be reconsidered dependent upon the consideration of any further information submitted or the absence of such further information.

In the event that further satisfactory information is received and the temporary permission sought granted, should a further application be submitted to retain this parking beyond the 3 year period sought, it would at this time be appropriate to further analyse and robustly critique the attempts of the Police Force to influence sustainable transport choices amongst staff/officers and to reduce overall parking demand/provision through its Green Travel Plan initiatives etc.

RECOMMENDATION

Subject to the receipt of satisfactory further information as outlined in this report Approval subject to the following conditions –

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted and the applicant shall notify the Local Planning Authority of the intended date of the commencement of works to implement the permission prior to work commencing.
Reason: To ensure compliance with sections 91 and 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and to enable the Local Planning Authority to monitor the period of the temporary consent hereby approved.
- 2) The use hereby approved shall cease on or before the date 3 years post the date of the commencement of works to implement this temporary consent as referred to in condition 1.

Reason: The use is considered unsuitable on a permanent basis in this locality in the context of its potential impacts on the local highway network and the desirability of promoting less reliance on the motor vehicle in favour of more sustainable modes of transport which have less adverse environmental impacts.