

Agenda Item 10.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
210378	09/06/2021	Sonning	Sonning

Applicant	BREO TVP4 LTD & BREO TVP5 LTD
Site Address	Buildings 4 and 5 Microsoft Campus Thames Valley Park Drive Earley RG6 1WG
Proposal	Full application for proposed alterations to external areas to provide improved landscaping, outdoor gym, amenity and presentation areas, plus erection of refuse store and reconfiguration of car parking.
Type	Full
Officer	Baldeep Pulahi
Reason for determination by committee	Major application (Site area greater than 1 hectare)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 9 June 2021
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY

The proposal comprises of works to the external areas of Buildings 4 and 5 within the Microsoft Campus at Thames Valley Business Park which include the reconfiguration of existing parking provision and layout and enhanced landscaping and facilities including an outdoor gym and outdoor amenity and presentation area.

The proposal satisfies Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy through the improvement and refurbishment of the existing buildings to provide enhanced accommodation and facilities to attract new occupiers, to assist in developing and diversifying the local economy and generate new and additional employment. Therefore, the principle of development is acceptable.

There are no objections to the scheme on Landscape and Trees, Ecology, Environmental Health, Highways and Drainage grounds. There were also no comments or objections received from Sonning Parish Council, the ward Member or surrounding properties. The application represents a positive outcome for the site and is recommended for approval subject to various pre commencement conditions for the reasons set out in this report.

PLANNING STATUS

- Major development location
- Core Employment Areas – Thames Valley Park
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Minerals Site Consultation Area
- Flood zone 1

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

a) The following conditions and informatives:

Conditions

1. Timescale

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings received by the local planning authority on 22/02/2021 and numbered:

- a) Location and Site Plan PL0006
- b) Existing Landscape Plan PL0003

and the submitted application plans and drawings received by the local planning authority on 10/03/2020 and numbered:

- c) Proposed External Workout Space and Bin Store Site Layout Plan 106
- d) Building 4 - External Proposed Presentation and Staff Amenity Layout Plan 109a

and the submitted application plans and drawings received by the local planning authority on 13/04/2021 and numbered:

- e) Proposed Landscape Plan PL0004 Rev P2

and the submitted application plans and drawings received by the local planning authority on 15/04/2021 and numbered:

- f) Proposed Refuse Store Plans and Elevations PL0007 Rev P2

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. Materials

The materials to be used for the new bin store are to be in accordance with those specified on the approval drawings and application form.

Reason: In the interests of visual and neighbouring amenities and functional development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04.

4. Landscaping details

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include hard surfacing materials. Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable. Non-invasive species are recommended.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

5. Retention of trees and shrubs

No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

6. Protection of trees

- a) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place on site.
- b) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- c) Any fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning

authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

7. Landscape management

Prior to the commencement of the development a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

8. Parking and Turning (As Approved)

No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.

Reason: To ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07 and Appendix 2 and the Council's Parking Standards Study Report (2011).

9. Cycle Parking (To be approved)

Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted details of secure and covered bicycle storage/ parking facilities for the occupants of and visitors to the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle storage/ parking shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

10. Electric charging details

Prior to the commencement of development, details for an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy serving the development shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This strategy should include details relating to on-site infrastructure, the location and installation of charging points and future proofing of the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07 and Appendix 2 and the Council's Parking Standards Study Report (2011).

Informatives

1. Changes to the Approved Drawings

The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Pre-Commencement Conditions

The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear please contact the case officer to discuss.

3. Discussion

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

PLANNING HISTORY – BUILDING 4		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
28578	Outline application for business park information age project, hotel and local centre and full application for country park, associated roads and engineering operations all at North Earley comprising former power station and adjoining land.	Approved 22/11/1988
RM/1997/66434	Reserved Matters on Approval 28578 for erection of building for B1 and ancillary use	Approved 04/03/1998
RM/2000/2543	Reserved matters on consent 28578 for the erection of B1 office accommodation and ancillary use (Amendment to consent RM/1997/66434)	Approved 30/11/2000
RM/2001/3310	Application for reserved matters on consent 28578 for the erection of B1 office accommodation and ancillary use (amendment to consent RM/2000/2543)	Approved 21/03/2001

203498	Full application for the proposed erection of a replacement front entrance canopy and reconfiguration of basement.	Approved 01/02/2021
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PLANNING HISTORY – BUILDING 5		
Application No.	Proposal	Decision & Date
28578	Outline application for business park information age project, hotel and local centre and full application for country park, associated roads and engineering operations all at North Earley comprising former power station and adjoining land.	Approved 22/11/1988
RM/1997/66434	Reserved Matters on Approval 28578 for erection of building for B1 and ancillary use	Approved 04/03/1998
RM/2000/2543	Reserved matters on consent 28578 for the erection of B1 office accommodation and ancillary use (Amendment to consent RM/1997/66434)	Approved 30/11/2000
RM/2001/3310	Application for reserved matters on consent 28578 for the erection of B1 office accommodation and ancillary use (amendment to consent RM/2000/2543)	Approved 21/03/2001
210377	Full application for the proposed erection of a replacement front entrance canopy, reconfiguration of basement and provision of new external stairs and steps to basement level.	Approved 12/03/2021
210435	Application to remove condition 4 of planning consent VAR/2007/1716 for the Proposed variation to condition 9 of consent RM/2000/2543 for the use of part of the undercroft as a gymnasium. Condition 4 refers to the fitness centre and the variation is to widen the use of the gym	Pending Decision The determination of this application is subject to the outcome of 210378

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
Site Area	2.72 Hectares
Existing Floor Area	18,212 sqm2 (both buildings)
Proposed Floor Area	No change
Existing Parking Spaces	546
Proposed Parking Spaces	587
No. of jobs created/lost	No change

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Drainage	No objections
WBC Environmental Health	No objections
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments received
WBC Highways	No objections subject to conditions 8 9 and 10
WBC Landscape and Trees	No objections subject to conditions 4 5 6 and 7
WBC Ecology	No comments received
Berkshire Archaeology	No objections

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Members	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPLICANTS POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The buildings were formally occupied by Microsoft as part of their campus within the Thames Valley Park and these have been sold to BREO TVP4 Ltd and BREO TVP5 Ltd respectively who are proposing to upgrade and improve the accommodation and site surroundings to meet modern standards to attract new occupiers to the park. The proposed works to the building and external areas will improve the sites environment and provide a healthy place to work.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP15	Employment Development
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC06	Noise
	CC07	Parking
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB11	Core Employment Areas
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB20	Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	BDG	Borough Design Guide

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development

1. The proposal seeks planning permission for works to the external areas of the site. This includes improving the amenity and landscaping provision externally for users of the building and reconfiguration of the car parking, delivery servicing facilities, bin storage provision and additional car parking.
2. The proposals will provide an additional 41 car parking spaces associated with both buildings, increasing the car parking provision from 546 spaces to 587 spaces.
3. The loading area for both buildings to the rear of the site that caters for deliveries and refuse collection is to be reconfigured to serve the buildings needs and cater for the new bin enclosure, which is to replace the current open bin storage areas.
4. The proposal will deliver improved facilities for building users and enhanced landscaping. This includes the provision of an outdoor exercise area, outdoor amenity and presentation area which will allow employees to both host and watch outdoor presentations / conduct outdoor meetings ,improved pathways and pedestrian connections, and new soft landscaping.

Principle of Development

5. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
6. The site is located within the Thames Valley Park which is an identified Core Employment Area. Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy recognises the importance to secure a range of employment facilities and opportunities.
7. The proposal satisfies Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy through the improvement of existing external areas to provide enhanced facilities for existing and future occupiers and assists in developing and diversifying the local economy and generate new and additional employment. It also accords with Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this respect; therefore, the principle of development is acceptable.

Character of the Area

8. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. Policy NR1 of the Borough Design Guide states development should respond to key characteristics and features of the site. NR2-NR12 are also applicable in terms of ensuring a positive entrance, presentation, car park layout, boundary treatments and servicing and appropriate height, roof form and materials that are compatible with the area.
9. This site is located within the Thames Valley Business Park, and Buildings 4 and 5 are located within the south-eastern part of the wider site. Buildings 4 and 5 are existing 4 storey commercial buildings with basements provided within external car

parking and landscaped sites. The site is surrounded by the remaining Microsoft Buildings 1-3 which are of a similar scale and design.

10. The proposed external works to the site and provision of additional amenities for users of the buildings will improve the use of the external areas of the site and make better use of underutilised areas. Specific details of these works are provided below:

11. Outdoor Gym

A new external gym space is proposed in place of the existing loading bay. The area will have an external area of 221.8sqm2 and will be hard landscaped, providing a flexible space for outdoor activity, workout classes and boot camps. New soft landscaping will be installed in place of the existing decking to creating an inviting entrance to the gym; the landscaping will be primarily wildflowers and prairie planting. Landscaping details are required in Condition 4.

12. Outdoor Amenity Space

The outdoor amenity and presentation area will be located to the south of the site in an area of existing staff amenity. The existing soft landscaping will be stepped to provide outdoor seating to improve the usability for staff of the buildings, to deliver an improved space to gather, to take a break and eat lunch and to watch presentations . The proposal in this location provides improved use of the space and an enhanced function for users of the building.

13. Connecting Pathways

Two new pathways are proposed to create a connection between Buildings 4 & 5 and the park. This will allow for a safe pedestrian route. Subject to final hard landscaping details in Condition 4, there are no concerns with this layout.

14. Bin storage:

The bin storage will be 11 wide and 2.1m high. Due to its modest height and footprint, it would not result in harm to the character of the wider commercial setting. The proposed materials consisting of timber cladding are considered to be acceptable within the commercial setting.

15. Car Park:

The works to the car park will be achieved through a number of areas of reconfiguration of the external site. The majority will be delivered through the formalisation of informal parking on existing hard surfacing areas within the site and the additional spaces will be provided where the former access points to the neighbouring sites (Buildings 1-3) have been closed off as a result of the change in ownership and internalisation of the circulation.

16. Overall, the proposal will enhance the appearance , function and usability of the site, providing opportunities for enhanced fitness and wellness. In this respect it is acceptable in terms of Policy CP3 and the Borough Design Guide and no objections are raised.

Neighbouring Amenities

17. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and Policy TB20 of the MDD Plan requires that there be no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses in terms of noise, fumes and disturbance.

18. The proposed outdoor gym and outdoor amenity and presentation area would be located at least 90m away from the nearest commercial building (Building 3 Microsoft Campus) and 340m from the nearest residential property. At this distance and against the backdrop of train noise, it is considered there would be no adverse impact upon this property in terms of outlook, privacy and noise.

Access and Movement

Car Parking

19. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards.

20. The proposal will make use of a number of areas of the site which are underutilised to provide an enhanced car parking layout.

21. The proposal will provide an additional 41 car parking spaces associated with both buildings, increasing the car parking provision from 546 spaces to 587 spaces (including the internal parking spaces within Building 4 and 5). The Council's Parking Standards recommends 607 spaces for the buildings however the original permission for the buildings was approved with fewer parking spaces than this. The additional 41 spaces will meet the Council's Parking Standards and is deemed to be acceptable by the Council's Highways Officer. Two of these additional spaces are assigned disabled spaces which are deemed to be acceptable against the standards in Table 1.2 of the MDD Local Plan, which requires a total of 2.8 spaces.

22. The increase will be achieved through a number of areas of reconfiguration of the external site. The majority are delivered through the formalisation of informal parking on existing hard surfacing areas within the site, whilst additional spaces are provided where the former access points to the neighbouring sites (Buildings 1-3) have been closed off as a result of the change in ownership and internalisation of the circulation.

23. Electric vehicle charging points will be required based on the overall number of new parking spaces, the Council's emerging standards recommend a minimum of 2 x passive and 2 x active EV charging points. As such details are to be secured via Condition 10.

Cycle Parking

24. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum cycle parking standards.

25. The provision of 6 x short-term cycle parking spaces is considered acceptable for public use of the proposed gym (subject of application 210435). This is in addition to the long-term cycle parking also provided in that application which is 34 cycle spaces. The details for secure cycle storage/facilities are to be acquired via Condition 9.

Access

26. Due to the separate ownership of Buildings 4 & 5 there is no longer a need for accesses to connect to the adjoining business units. The submitted plans indicate a one-way operation to ensure acceptable circulation of the car park and use of the

parallel parking spaces. No objections are raised by the Council's Highways Officer on this aspect.

27. The access for the service and delivery vehicles will be maintained and a new loading bay provided between the buildings. Swept paths have been demonstrated which are acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

28. Improved pedestrian facilities are proposed to the main entrance through the front car parking areas for each building which are deemed to be acceptable.

Flooding and Drainage

29. Section 10 of the NPPF, Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC09 and CC10 of the MDD requires flooding protection, sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.

30. The site is located within Flood Zone 1. The proposed outdoor reconfigurations are already located on existing hardstanding and the surface water runoff is managed within the main sewer. Since there are no changes to the surface water drainage strategy and the existing method can continue to operate as above no objections are raised by the Council's Drainage Officer.

Landscape and Trees

31. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local aims to protect green infrastructure networks, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

32. Buildings 4 and 5 have three protected Oak trees to the rear boundary of Building 4. The rear of Building 5 is protected woodland at Little Goggs. The Council's Landscape Officer has raised no objections to the proposal given there is no adverse impact upon any of the protected trees.

33. It is recommended there is additional tree planting for both the proposed outdoor gym area and outdoor presentation and staff amenity area. This would allow to mitigate local impacts of climate change and enhance visual mitigation for the existing buildings on the wider landscape. Details of the soft landscaping scheme is to be secured via Condition 4. An ongoing management scheme is also necessary to ensure that the benefits of the landscape enhancements are maintained as part of the precinct wide operations. See Condition 7.

Environmental Health

34. No objections have been raised by the Council's Environmental Officer on the grounds of contaminated land or noise.

Ecology

35. Policy TB23 of the MDD required the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider greener infrastructure network.

36. The site is located within a bat roosting habitat; however, the proposals represent no change to the existing buildings that could potentially host bat roosts including any minimal tree works capable of accommodating bats or nesting birds. The site is sufficiently removed from the Thames River and is located within an area of

significant hardstanding which is unlikely to have an adverse impact on ecological grounds therefore no objection is raised.

Archaeology

37. The site is within a wider area of archaeological potential, as demonstrated by previous archaeological investigations which identified significant prehistoric archaeology. The site of the proposals has been investigated and any archaeological features have been recorded and there is little chance of further deposits being affected by the proposed works, therefore no objections are raised on archaeological grounds.

Community Infrastructure Levy

38. Being a commercial development, the application is not liable for CIL payments.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

39. In determining this application, the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.

CONCLUSION

40. The proposal will enhance the appearance, functionality and usability of the site, providing opportunities for enhanced fitness and wellness. The proposal would not have a harmful impact on the landscape and built character and appearance of the wider area and the nearby commercial buildings and will maintain an acceptable level of parking provision.

41. No harmful impact would occur in regard to drainage, landscape and trees and environmental health therefore it is recommended that the application is approved subject to the conditions included in this report.