

## **CONSULTATION FROM SOUTHEND ON SEA BOROUGH COUNCIL. ERECT DIY RETAIL UNIT, GARDEN CENTRE, BUILDERS YARD, PARKING AND SERVICING AREAS, FOSSETTS FARM, SOUTHEND**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The consideration of this application is a statutory procedure for Southend on Sea Borough Council. It is discretionary as to whether this Council responds to the consultation on the matter.
- 1.2 The application proposes the construction of a retail warehouse for the B&Q operator on land to the rear of the Wellesley Hospital site at Fossetts Farm. The unit is to have a gross floorspace of 9,064sqm with further areas for a garden centre and builders yard of 4,645sqm. There is to be a customer coffee shop and 545 general parking spaces. Also proposed are the ancillary road access and servicing arrangements.

### **2 LOCAL PLAN DESIGNATION**

- 2.1 The Southend on Sea plan identifies the application site and the land to the north at Fossetts Farm as safeguarded land. The written text indicates that uses of the land could be for employment, a crematorium or cemetery extension and for a football stadium.

### **3 PLANNING HISTORY**

- 3.1 Members may recall that, in 2000, a planning application was made for the development of a football stadium on the Fossetts farm site. This was to allow the relocation of the Southend United Football Club. That application has not been determined and now appears to be dormant. If these current proposals were to be permitted they would rule out the development of that Fossetts Farm land for the football stadium, certainly as currently proposed.
- 3.2 The response of this Council to that application was that attention should be given to the development of means of travel to the site by other than the private car; that strategic landscaping proposals should be developed; and that there was concern in relation to the potential for noise generation and crowd control/crime prevention issues.
- 3.3 It appears that a further application was made to Southend Council in late 2000 for the development of a non-food retail unit with a gross floorspace of 2,813sqm. This application site lies to the south of that

now proposed and was granted approval following an appeal on the basis of non determination.

#### **4 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT**

- 4.1 The approach of the government, set out in national policy, is that retail development should, in general terms, be directed towards town and city centre areas. This does not prohibit development in other areas, but it is for the applicant to demonstrate that such sites are not available, that the development will not harm the retail viability of central areas and that a choice of modes of travel to the proposed site are available.
- 4.2 The applicants have submitted an extensive survey report in relation to these issues. They conclude that there is both a quantitative and qualitative need for the development proposed, that suitable alternative locations are not available and that there will be no harmful impact to existing retail centres.
- 4.3 In their surveys the applicants have included the centres of Rochford, Hockley and Rayleigh, and concluded that there are no suitable sites in these towns or that there would be harm to their retail function.

#### **5 EMPLOYMENT**

- 5.1 The applicants indicate that the proposals are anticipated to generate some 250 jobs. However, it is also indicated that those currently employed at the Southend town centre location (Short Street) will be transferred to the new premises. There are currently 65 persons employed at the Short Street location such that the net gain is 185 jobs.

#### **6 TRAVEL**

- 6.1 A separate transport statement has been submitted as part of the application documents. As part of the proposals enhanced pedestrian facilities (road crossings) and cycle facilities (extension to existing cycle network) are to be provided. Together with the retail development to the south of the site (gained by means of appeal and referred to above) a bus service is to be introduced to replace that recently withdrawn from the area. This is to be secured for a minimum period of 10 years.
- 6.2 The applicants have also assessed the likely traffic generation caused by the development. They have taken into account the possibility of linked trips to the adjacent Waitrose food store and the redirection of journeys that currently lead to out of Southend locations. The conclusion is that current road conditions (or as already proposed to be

improved – the Priory Crescent widening scheme) will not be overloaded by the proposed development.

## **7 DESIGN**

- 7.1 The proposed design is common to other large retail units developed by this operator. It is to comprise warehouse type buildings with a height to the ridge of 9.5m generally. There would be an entrance feature which is to have a height of 12m approx. The lower part of the building is to be constructed of brick or blockwork with the remainder to be profiled metal sheeting.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The proposals clearly represent a significant form of retail development. The appeal decision on land to the south and the safeguarded nature of the land in the Local Plan weigh in favour of the principle of this form of development. Clearly, in beneficial terms, it will generate a significant number of new jobs.
- 8.2 However, Southend on Sea Borough Council should carefully consider the potential harmful implications of the development in terms of the impact on existing retail centres and the degree to which the proposals accord with national government advice.
- 8.3 The studies that the applicants have submitted, in terms of retail and transport impact, should be carefully assessed and, if the Authority is minded to approve the proposals, the travel related infrastructure improvements should be secured.

## **9 RECOMMENDATION**

- 9.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

to respond to Southend on Sea Borough Council in relation to these proposals as follows:

- i. It should consider carefully the principle of development here given the potential for conflict between the development proposals and national advice. In that respect the conclusions reached by the applicant in relation to the retail need, impact on existing centres and the availability of other sites should be thoroughly assessed.
- ii. The potential for the development proposals to generate additional traffic movements and the impact that these will have

on the local and wider road network should be considered carefully and improvements secured, where appropriate.

- iii. If Southend on Sea Borough Council is minded to approve the application, the improvements offered by the applicants, in terms of pedestrian, cycle, bus service and other improvements should be secured by appropriate means and implemented at an appropriate time during the course of the development. (HPS)

Shaun Scrutton

Head of Planning Services

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**Background Papers:**

Application plans and documents supplied by Southend on Sea Borough Council

For further information please contact Kevin Steptoe on:-

Tel:- 01702 546366  
E-Mail:- [kevin.steptoe@rochford.gov.uk](mailto:kevin.steptoe@rochford.gov.uk)