

29 JANUARY PLANNING COMMITTEE

1. 07/0688 Reg'd: 19.06.2007 Expires: 18.09.07 Ward: GE

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LOCATION: MVA House 11 - 13 Victoria Way, And Select House, Victoria Way Woking

PROPOSAL: Demolition of two existing 4 storey commercial buildings, MVA and Select House. Erection of new commercial building of 17 storeys plus ground floor. Levels 2 to 17 use class B1 (office) floor space; ground, mezzanine above ground floor, part 16th and top storey to include use class A3/A4 restaurant/bar and D1 community facilities. 77 car parking spaces in basement, 90 cycle spaces and 19 motorcycle spaces. Gross external floor area 18,557 sq.m. (amended description)

TYPE: Full

APPLICANT: Hutley (Select) Ltd

OFFICER: JL

INTRODUCTION

Prior to submitting the application the applicants requested an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) screening opinion under Regulation 5 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (Request by developer for the Local Planning Authority to adopt a screening opinion prior to submission of an application). It was determined that the proposed use and quantum of development, including the overall height of the draft proposal was not for development of more than local importance, would have no significant effect on the SPA (a "sensitive area") and was not for a form of development which would have unusually complex or potentially hazardous environmental effects. As such the proposed development would not have such an impact as to require an EIA. It was formally confirmed that the decision of the Local Planning Authority was to adopt a screening opinion that an EIA is NOT required. The current proposal has been considered with regard to the formal screening opinion and it is considered that although it is for an marginally increased quantum of development, the development falls within the scope of that previously considered and as such an EIA is not required.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for the demolition of the two existing 4 storey commercial buildings on the site (MVA and Select House) and the erection of a mixed use commercial building comprising use classes A1 (retail), A3 (restaurants and cafes), A4 (drinking establishments); D1 (non-residential institutions) and B1 (business). The development to comprise three conjoined tower elements of 11, 17 and 18 storeys respectively plus a ground floor of approximately 8m ground to ceiling height which enables a mezzanine floor to be provided. Enclosed areas of roof top plant will be provided above levels 17 and 18. Car and cycle parking to be provided within a basement. The proposal is supported by an indicative masterplan for the adjoining sites.

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PLANNING STATUS

- Urban Area
- Within Town Centre Boundary
- Adjacent to Primary Shopping Area
- Policy WTC18 - A320 Highway Improvement Line & Victoria Arch
- Goldsworth Road Regeneration Area

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission subject to Conditions and a Legal Agreement

SITE DESCRIPTION

The area surrounding the site is varied in both scale of development, character and appearance. To the north are two modern 6 storey commercial buildings with frontages to Victoria Way. To the north east is the Peacock Shopping Centre and multi storey car park. To the east is the fire station, a commercial building rising to 6 storeys in height, the post office and open market area. To the south and west of the site lie a mix of commercial buildings between 3 and 7 storeys in height with the railway set on an embankment beyond the commercial buildings to the south. To the south of the railway and accessed via the Victoria Arch lie the recently constructed 10 -16 storey residential development at the Centrium and the site on land at Guildford Road and Bradfield Close which has now has full permission for a mixed use redevelopment comprising residential, office and commercial uses within a series of buildings rising from 3 through 7-9 storeys with a tower feature of 21 storeys in height a second residential tower at 15 storeys and a third tall building of 11 storeys. To the north west of the site the character of the area becomes increasingly mixed in terms of uses with a mainly two storey residential area lying to the north of commercial and retail developments fronting Goldsworth Road.

The site itself which slopes down from south to north by about 2.5m, comprises two four storey office buildings dating from the 1980's. The remainder of the block within which the site is located is bounded by Church Street West, Goldsworth Road and Victoria Way and is characterised by predominantly 3 – 4 storey commercial developments of 20th century construction generally with retail or A3/A4 uses at ground floor level. The redevelopment of the site at the western apex of the block is due to commence and will comprise a mixed use (residential and commercial) scheme with a 7 storey tower feature.

PLANNING HISTORY

07/0375 Request for EIA Screening Opinion for the 23 storey building (use : B1 with element of community use A1, A2 and A3) with heights and areas as follows:- number of floor - ground + Mezzanine plus 23, height to roof - 93.2m, height to plant - 98.1m, Total floor area (gross) - 222,750 ft sq, total floor area (net) - 167,0600 ft sq, Parking - 111 car spaces, 82 cycle spaces, 28 motor cycle spaces.

There is considerable planning history relating to the two buildings on the site but there have been no previous proposals for comprehensive redevelopment.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of the site. The application has been amended since submission and currently comprises three conjoined tower elements. The

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height of the elements rises from the south to north through 11 to 17 to 18 storeys respectively. The ground floor will be two storeys in height (8m approx). The overall floor gross external floor area will be 18,557 sq m of which 16,719 sq m will be for office use, (floors 1- 17), 908 sq m will be for restaurant/café/bar use (ground floor and part 11th and 18th floor) and 475 sq m will be for community use (mezzanine floor above ground floor restaurant and reception area). A reception area is proposed for the ground floor of the southern element of the building which will be accessed via an entrance sited within the main service core tower which links the 11 and 17 storey element. This service core is recessed from the front elevation above ground floor. The restaurant would be accessed from a second main entrance located on the Victoria Way frontage to the north of the site. Plant areas are to be provided above the 17 and 18 storey elements within enclosures which in effect add one further floor in overall height.

Layout/Design and Materials

The proposed layout site comprises three conjoined tower elements, the tallest 18 storey element being on the northern part of the site at the junction of Victoria Way and Church Street West, whilst the lower 11 storey element lies adjacent to the access to the 3 storey development at 1-7 Victoria Way. Vehicular access to the site is from Church Street West with a ramped access under the building to a 9m deep basement accommodating 77 car parking spaces (3 disabled bays and 74 within a stacking system), 90 bicycle spaces and 19 motor cycle space, showers and lockers. Access for service vehicles will also be taken from Church Street West with the entrance to the ground level service area lying immediately to the west of the rear elevation of the building adjacent to Eurobet House.

At ground floor level the building is set back from the existing building line with the upper floors cantilevered over, supported by columns and projecting by about 3m on the Victoria Way elevation and by about 6.5m on the rear elevation which also has clear space beneath the structure at both the north and south ends to allow for the access ramp to the basement and servicing space respectively. The recessed area to the front elevation will form a colonnade from which direct access to the ground floor restaurant, community use on the mezzanine and the entrance foyer for the offices and top floor restaurant will be taken. The change in levels between the southern and northern elements requires steps within the colonnade although level access to each entrance can be achieved by the existing pavement which is part of the highway and follows the slope of the land. Four semi mature trees within a planter are to be sited on the boundary of the site with the pavement along the site frontage. A free standing smoking shelter is provided at the rear of the site away from public view. A refuse store is provided at ground level at the rear within the footprint of the building. Plant rooms are located within the building on each floor with additional plant at roof top level to the 17 and 18 storey towers and two wind turbines proposed on the roofs of the towers. Three service cores are provided with the main core sited between the 11 and 17 storey elements and runs from the basement levels up to the top floor with a lift overrun at roof level and the other two service cores being sited to the northern and southern end of the buildings. These run from ground to top floors for each block respectively.

The main entrance to the commercial floors is located at the base of the main service core element towards the southern side of the site with the entrance to the restaurant being located at the junction of Victoria Way and Church Street West adjacent to the pedestrian crossing and in line with the main pedestrian vista from Church Street when approaching from the designated primary retail area of the town centre. The restaurant proposed for the 17th and 18th floors will be accessed via the office entrance as will the community use (to be designated for uses such as doctors/dentist surgery or childcare facilities) proposed for a mezzanine floor to be set above ground floor and recessed from the frontage. The two storey height of the entrance is designed to be of a scale suitable for the overall building height. Security will be provided within the ground floor reception area to limit access beyond this

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point. The ground floor area to the north of the site beneath the 17 and 18 storey towers is to be for restaurant use.

The double height ground floor is to be expressed architecturally through the use of the double height colonnade with the entire height of this element being structural glazing allowing for maximum views into and out of the entrances to create active frontages. The front and rear elevations are to be glazed with a unitised curtain walling system comprising both clear glazed panels and solid insulated panels which assist in meeting the thermal requirements of the building being located in a controlled manner up the facade of the building which aims to create further architectural interest. The three tower elements are highlighted by brushed steel profiled fins which aim to define the lines of each to give a vertical emphasis. Each floor is identified in the elevations by means of horizontal bands. The elevations are further enhanced by the use of a recessed floors at 5th and 11th levels in the lower element, 6th, 12th and 17th levels in the 17 storey element and 7th, 13th and 18th levels in the tallest. These recessed floors seek to articulate the facades through a shadow effect during the day and with lighting at night. The north and south end elevations are treated differently to express their structural significance with the sheer walls clad in ceramic/porcelain tiles with each floor highlighted by means of a stainless steel band. The staircases are designed to be a feature of the building and will be clear glazed and the plant area on each floor will be clad with metallic louvers. High level plant is to be screened or enclosed. In the scheme as originally submitted the proposal included two narrow vertical bands of windows in the southern elevation which aimed to provide visual relief in the elevation. In responses to objection from the neighbouring land owner these have been removed with the visual relief being achieved by means of contrasting solid material.

Internally the building has been designed to maximise flexibility of use. The central core is located to allow access to either side of the building and enables the step change in the massing between the floor plates to either side to be achieved without affecting the escape strategy for the building. Each of the commercial floors has been designed to allow adaptability to meet changing market trends. Each floor is essentially divided into two separate but connected sections with service cores, plant, sanitary and kitchen facilities being provided to each part enabling the floors to be divided into a number of separate spaces which can be let jointly or individually.

The building has been designed to minimise energy consumption and hence its carbon footprint. A report has been submitted with the application which sets out the "Energy Demand and Renewable Technology" proposals which include:

- Passive solar strategies with respect to building orientation and façade design
- An "excellent" BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method rating) is achievable
- High performance glazing to reduce solar gain whilst retaining good light transmission
- Floor by floor ventilation systems and non use of humidifiers
- Low energy, variable water flow, heating and cooling systems
- Energy efficient lighting and intelligent controls
- Energy efficient lift drives
- Variable speed "impulse" system controlling car park ventilation rate
- Control of external lighting according to ambient light levels

As a result of these and other measures, the supporting report concludes that the building will use between 15.6% and 26.3% less energy and produce between 11.7% and 18.2% less carbon when considered against currently acknowledged benchmarks.

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In addition, various renewable energy technologies have been considered and wind turbines and ground source heat pumps will be utilised resulting in an equivalent reduction in energy consumption of 11.7% and a reduction in carbon emissions of 8.2%. The use of CHP is also to be provided. However, negotiations are ongoing with the local energy supply company Thamesway with a view to meeting all of the building's electricity and heating requirements from off-site CHP.

A landscape strategy has been submitted which seeks to meet the requirements of WBLP Policy WTC4 to provide a co-ordinated landscaping scheme throughout the Victoria Way corridor through such as the planting of street trees to create a boulevard effect. It also aims to ensure clear and easy access to each of the functions within the buildings.

The Access Statement states that the building has been designed to meet the requirements of Building Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act such that the building and all floors and services within it will be fully accessible to all users.

Public Art is to be incorporated within the building design through such as feature lighting, a sculptural installation up the north façade and or feature glazing to the double height entrance.

A Security Strategy has been prepared which seeks to control entry to the commercial floors and monitor the flow of people to the publicly accessible areas. CCTV will be used externally to provide surveillance along Victoria Way and once tenants have been secured an internal system will be provided. The Strategy states that the design has evolved to avoid criminal or antisocial behaviour by removing crime features and creating an open, monitored environment. It is the intention to gain "Secured By Design" approval for the scheme.

A signage strategy for the development has been considered with allocated zones at the top of the building being identified for corporate signage.

Access, Highways, Transportation and Off-Site Works

The layout is designed to retain a protected highway line that runs along the western side of Victoria Way, turning the corner into Church Street West..

The proposed vehicular accesses to the site would be from Church Street West with all parking being provided within a basement beneath the building and servicing at ground floor level. Full turning facilities are provided for service vehicles within the site. However to prevent vehicles entering the site when the service area is occupied a warning light is to be provided at the site entrance.

Pedestrian safety issues resulting from the increase of some 1167 staff who will work on the site have been addressed by the widening of the pavement beneath the upper floors of the building with a large and unobstructed entrance to both the commercial reception foyer and the restaurant entrance that extends to about 3.5 to 4m from the back of the pavement and about 8m in width.

The off-site highways works proposed include:

- Improvement of junction of Victoria Way and Church Street West. Implementation of an improvement scheme to allow HGV's to make a left turn into Church Street West from Victoria Way; a left in/left out access to the site which has minimal impact on Forge Way and provides for pedestrian crossing improvements by means of a formal signalised straight across arrangement for Church Street West

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- Pedestrian crossing improvements on Victoria Way whereby the two staggered crossings are to have enlarged width to accommodate increased use coupled with an extended island to cater for the additional capacity.

A Framework Travel Plan will be secured through the S106 legal agreement and follows guidance provided by SCC.

The Illustrative Master Plan

The proposed development is a stand alone proposal but is supported by an illustrative masterplan which aims to demonstrate one possible option for the regeneration of the wider site as envisaged under WBLP Policy WTC11. Clearly there will be numerous ways in which this section of the town centre might be developed, the illustrative master plan indicates just one possible vision for the development for the remainder of the street block. The policy identifies a Regeneration Area in this part of Goldsworth Road. The policy requires that within this area proposals for redevelopment are critically examined "...to ensure that the resulting development will be of a high standard thereby enhancing this important approach to the town centre".

It should be noted that the masterplan is not for formal consideration or determination as part of the application but has been submitted solely to demonstrate that the proposed development does not prejudice the development of neighbouring sites. The detail of the masterplan will not therefore be assessed in the appraisal section of the report except insofar as is necessary to demonstrate whether it can be concluded that it succeeds in demonstrating that the proposed development does not preclude or prejudice development of the remainder of the triangle of land within which it sits in a manner which accords with planning policy.

For clarity, therefore, the status of the masterplan is illustrative and although the supporting information includes a review of the likely impact on individual residual land values for the Stakeholders of the masterplan sites the findings have not been tested or analysed. The role of the masterplan is to provide a context for the proposed development, to demonstrate that the proposal does not prejudice the redevelopment viability of adjacent sites and to demonstrate how the proposal assists in furthering the objectives of Policy WTC11 (Goldsworth Road Regeneration Area). Although not for consideration, the masterplan details do, as explained above have a role to play in assessing the application and for that reason, the details and objectives of the masterplan as set out in the Design and Access Statement are summarised below.

The Design and Access Statement (DAS) sets out the masterplan principles and considers that the development of the application site will act as a catalyst for the wider area. Further phases of development beyond that to be considered under this current application are identified in the masterplan which could comprise uses such as a hotel, serviced apartments, a new piazza bounded by retail/ restaurants. The DAS considers that the proposed new square would be a new destination space for the town centre which would in turn form a connection space to the area of shops and restaurants around Goldsworth Road. The underlying philosophy of connectivity and destination is seen to be reinforced by providing active edges wrapping around the square itself. The proportions and form of the connection spaces around the application site are stated as being designed to allow a clearly legible spatial connection from the existing adjacent streets and also from Market Square. This is stated as being conceived spatially and functionally in relation to the existing pedestrian crossing which would be improved and assist in overcoming the barrier which Victoria Way represents to pedestrians. The DAS states that the design strategy for the proposed buildings within the masterplan has been developed to support and reinforce the existing street pattern and also to support the massing strategy of the masterplan concept as a whole. The buildings are intended to create a new urban scale to the commercial area of the town centre and for

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this reason are proposed to be of generally 7-8 storeys in comparison to the existing buildings which are generally of 3 to 4 storeys in height. One further feature tower is proposed on the south east corner of the site. The DAS sets out that this is considered to be an important part of the massing composition and provides an appropriate and striking architectural response to the market square. This building is proposed to be up to 10 storeys although its overall form is dominantly horizontal in direct contrast to the application proposal. The DAS considered that the building would provide a strong architectural element of civic scale further animating the market place and enhancing its sense of place. The building shape would provide an elegant form drawing attention from the market square and thus facilitate the visual connection with the proposed new town square. The DAS states that the scale proposed for this building would compliment rather than compete with the application proposal which would remain the dominant form within the visual hierarchy of the overall setting.

The DAS considers that the configuration of the masterplan allows a clear hierarchy of buildings and clarity of the individual roles of each building and space with active edges. The layout allows for good sunlight penetration into the new town square especially during the afternoon.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

| | Amended Plan Details | Details of original submission |
|--|--|--|
| Site Area | 1619.2 sq m (0.162ha) | |
| Previous land use(s) and floorspace(s) | 2,529 sq m B1 office | |
| Proposed floorspace of each use(s) | 17,390sq m office 908sq m restaurant/café/bar 475 sq m community facilities | 23,021 sq m office 867sq m restaurant/café/bar 245 sq m community facilities |
| Change in floorspace (+/-) | 14,861sqm | +21,604 sq m |
| Number of jobs proposed | 1167 | 1250 |
| Existing parking spaces | 40 | |
| Proposed parking spaces | 77 | 109 |
| Existing cycle spaces | 12 | 12 |
| Proposed cycle/motorcycle spaces | 90/19 | 100/29 |
| Existing disabled spaces | 0 | |
| Proposed disabled spaces | 3 | 6 |
| Maximum no. of storeys | 18 plus mezzanine | 25 plus mezzanine |
| Height to highest point on building excluding plant (level 0 taken as existing pavement mid point on site) | 71.4m | 94m |
| Height to top of plant (level 0 taken as existing pavement mid point on site) | 77.45m (79.45m to recessed plant area) | 102m |
| Height of BAT | 66m excluding plant/ approximately 70m including roof top plant (height above datum used for proposal) | |
| Height of Centrium | 56.5m (height above datum used for proposal) | |
| Height of Barratts scheme at | 75.15m including plant (height above datum used for | |

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Guildford Road

proposal)

CONSULTATIONS

Highway Authority:

The amended details and information submitted have resolved all outstanding highway matters, except some matters concerning the draft S106 wording. Therefore there are no remaining objections subject to conditions and completion of S106 legal agreement to secure travel plan and financial contribution.

Environment Agency:

No objections

Natural England

No objection

English Heritage

No detailed comment made. Reference made to the EH and CABE "Guidance on Tall Buildings" which should be adhered to ensure that the effect on the environment is taking into account

CABE

Consider that the Council should adopt a policy led approach to tall buildings which would help Woking identify suitable locations for tall buildings and establish key criteria for assessment. Encouraged that applicant's design team have explored how tall building will fit in its context through the masterplan although it is noted that the masterplan is not intended to have any status in planning. Consider that in view of this the masterplan should be developed to provide a useful policy context for other proposals that come forward on the site as well as give greater certainty for the type of development required. Question the "cluster strategy" for tall building noted in the DAS and are not convinced that the public spaces proposed would make the suggested positive contribution to the town. Find that the proportions of the two elements of the building create an inelegant form as the height separation is not great enough to give the tower distinction, a problem which is exacerbated by the equal width of these two elements. Consider this results in a building of slab block proportions particularly at lower levels. Do not consider that sustainability is embedded within the building design and surprise that all façades have been treated in the same way despite different orientations. Not convinced that a air conditioned, glass building is an effective way to achieve high standards of sustainable design. Welcome proposal for the public spaces within the building and strongly support the proposal floor the ground first and top floor uses being publicly accessible.

(The above comments relate to the proposal as originally submitted)

Thames Water

No comment received

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| Civil Aviation Authority | No objection. Recommend that the building be fitted with low intensity red aviation warning lighting. |
| National Air Traffic Services | No objection |
| SCC Archaeology | No objection subject to condition requiring archaeological works |
| SCC Policy | <p>No objection in principle in terms of the spatial strategy of the Structure Plan (SSP) but concerns/objections raised on following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Object: Scheme fail to comply with policy LO3 in that the scale of development is not justified and there is an insufficient mix of uses on the site. Concern is raised that the development without a guaranteed pre-let would exacerbate the vacancy rate for office floorspace in the town centre• Consider that under SSP Policy SE4 a BREEAM target of "excellent" should be achieved rather than that indicated in proposal of "very good". Subject to the LPA being satisfied that energy and sustainable drainage matters can be secured no objections under Policies SE2 and SE3.• Concern that floorspace proposed amounts to overdevelopment of site and serious concern over height and scale of building and its visual impact within the town and in longer distant views including from Hogs Back which is part of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Consider that the profile and scale of the building would dominate the skyline. Object under Policy SE4 concerning the quality of development and Policy SE8 concerning landscape.• In view of previous developed nature of site archaeological works can be secured by conditions• In terms of strategic transportation policy, the proposals for access, circulation and transportation arrangements including travel plan matters should seek to satisfy the requirements of the County Highway Authority so as to comply with Policies DN1 and DN2 concerning highway infrastructure matters and the implications of development respectively and Policy DN3 concerning parking arrangements. <p>(The above comments relate to the proposal as originally submitted)</p> |
| Surrey Heath Borough Council | No objection |
| Guildford Borough Council | Objects on basis that in absence of Visual Impact Assessment it is impossible to assess the visual impact from environmentally sensitive areas such as North Downs and parts of the Borough such as Hogs Back, Send and Ripley. If granted would expect materials, especially in south elevation, and lighting should be |

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such that visual impact is minimised. Objection form Send Parish Council is attached which considers that the height of the proposed building will dwarf and overshadow neighbouring living accommodation and offices and that the height will be seen for miles around and the BAT building which is nowhere near as high is an eyesore for miles around. (Officer Note: the application has subsequently submitted a visual landscape assessment to demonstrate the impact)
(The above comments relate to the proposal as originally submitted)

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| Police Architectural Liaison Officer | No comment received |
| WBC Waste Services Manager | No objection |
| WBC Tree Officer | No objection |
| WBC Environmental Health | No objections subject to conditions to control noise, access to and from the site, lighting, deliveries to the site, A3/A4 opening times and ventilation/extraction methods |
| WBC Environmental Services | No objection |
| WBC Contamination | No objection |
| WBC PPO Sustainability | No objection subject to conditions and S106 agreement |
| WBC PPO Design | No objection |
| WBC PPO Policy | No objection |
| Valuation Advice | Advises that the £1.5 million S106 package offer is acceptable. |
| National Grid | No objections |
| Council's Consultant Valuer | Having given consideration to the valuation issues raised by the proposal it is concluded that to sustain the viability of the applicant's proposal it is recommended that the quantum of Section 106 contribution offered is accepted. |
| Government Office for South East | (consulted by an objector to the scheme, seeking to have matter called in for determination). The Secretary of State confirms that having considered the details of the application and all other relevant matters, intervention would not be justified as there is not sufficient conflict with national policies or any other sufficient reason to warrant calling-in the application for her own determination. She is satisfied that the issues raised do not relate to matters of more than local |

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importance which would be more appropriately decided by her rather than by the local planning authority.

REPRESENTATIONS

10 letters of objection were received in connection with the application as submitted which raised the following issues:

- Proposed building is too high and will dwarf neighbouring developments
- Out of character with town centre
- Buildings on edge of town centre should be reducing in height
- 10 storeys or less would be acceptable
- Set precedent for higher development along Goldsworth Road which is a residential in nature
- Development will lead to congestion in the area
- Along with BAT proposed development will be an eyesore out of keeping with all other buildings in Woking
- Detrimental to infrastructure including roads, sewerage, parking, water and electricity supplies.
- Will detract significantly from current attractive entry and introduction town
- Will introduce ugliness and disadvantages of an inner London Borough causing loss of civic pride
- Already many empty offices within Woking
- Building should be no higher than surrounding structures
- Disruption during construction would be appalling
- Consider it likely there will be telephone masts on top of the proposed building which is dangerous for local residents
- Will have an unacceptable visual impact
- Will cause loss of light and overshadowing of adjacent residential units
- No need for restaurant in this location
- Building should be site at junction of York Road and Victoria Way
- Present building should be converted into research/learning institutes
- Will allow overlooking of bedroom to flat in adjacent building
- Will overshadow adjacent building.
- The site should be development as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of the block as a whole. Development on a site alone will be prejudicial to adjacent sites so that it will not be possible to commercially develop them. Not only is this prejudicial to adjacent site owners but is not in best interests of Woking
- If the wider site is not development as a single comprehensive scheme it should be subject to 2 simultaneous applications with each being commercially viable.
- The Masterplan submitted with the application is commercially unachievable if the applicant is allowed to take all the high level, high density development on the wider site
- The windows in the south elevation are unnecessary and are specifically designed to stop any development on neighbouring site and would make any redevelopment unviable as building would have to be set away from common boundary. These windows should be removed.

4 further letters of objection were received in response to the amended plans raising the following issues:

- Height is excessive in town where predominant height is 5 -6 storeys
- Overbearing impact on neighbouring properties
- Insufficient parking provision

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- Impact on traffic flows will be detrimental
- Existing office space should be used before new is built
- Properties in Vale Farm Road will be overlooked by the flats (*officer note: there is no residential development proposed*)
- Influx of people will add to existing crime levels
- Will lead to accessibility and noise problems
- Will lead to a decrease in property values and increase insurance costs (*officer note: this is not a planning matter*)
- There will be an increase in the number of local cats being run over, or they will have to be kept indoors which would be cruel.
- The amendments are not minor and therefore a new planning application should be submitted (*officer note: the principle of the proposed development remains the same, the footprint and vehicular access arrangements are unaltered. The approximate 25% decrease in total floor area, the reconfiguration of the building profile, the reduced height and changes to elevational material will lead to a reduced impact. On this basis it is considered that the application as amended can be determined without need to resubmit as a new application. Furthermore, all neighbours originally consulted and those who made representation have been reconsulted as have the relevant consultees*).
- Mandatory notices have not been displayed (*officer note: publicity has been carried out in accordance with the Council's adopted procedure which exceeds the statutory requirement*)
- The application details have not been made adequately available for public viewing (*officer note: details have been available in accordance with the Council's adopted procedures*)
- The proposal contravenes local plan policies WTC11, SHP1, SHP2, WTC21, WTC9, IMP1, IMP2, IMP3, HSG21, EMP1.
- The proposal is in direct conflict with the Local Development Framework Core Strategy (*officer note: the Core Strategy has been withdrawn and is therefore very limited in terms of being a material planning consideration*)
- English Nature has not been consulted (*officer note: English Nature are now known as Natural England and have been consulted – see above*)
- The amended scheme retains windows in the southern elevation which will compromise development on the adjacent site contrary to the Goldsworth Road Regeneration Policy. (*officer note: the windows to the office space have been removed in the amended plans although their presence was not considered to prejudice development on the neighbouring site in planning terms by virtue of the fact that they were secondary windows to offices rather than residential accommodation. The office accommodation proposed is not dependant on these windows to secure an adequate outlook and level of amenity for occupiers. The situation would have been different had the accommodation proposed been for residential use and the outlook and amenity had been dependant on the windows in this location. As such, although the southern elevation of the building abuts the southern site boundary, development on the adjacent site to the south could in principle abut this same boundary without being contrary to planning policies. The glazed staircase remains part of the proposal but for the same reasons given here will not, in planning terms, prejudice the development of the adjoining site*)
- The masterplan should be disregarded as it is not based on sound urban design principles. The application should be judged as a stand alone application and not as a catalyst for further regeneration.

These matters are addressed where appropriate under 'Planning Issues'.

In addition to the above objections the adjoining land owner has commissioned two further objections on his behalf. One of these is a substantial document raising a range of issues. In

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view of the circumstances relating to the submission of this document and the weight of objections raised the following table sets out the issues raised along with an officer comment.

| Issue Raised | Officer Comment |
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| <p>The officer report that was included on the agenda for the Planning Committee meeting held on 25 September 2007 is considered to have placed undue and unsubstantiated weight on the masterplan, and is overly reliant in the appraisal on the deliverability of its perceived merits. As such the masterplan served as the primary justification for the recommendation to approve</p> | <p>The comments made in the objection are in the main based on an apparent misunderstanding of the section of report entitled Proposed Development. This section of the report sets out the details of the application proposal including a summary of the contextual analysis set out in the Design and Access Statement. It does not assess the merits of the proposal. The Officer appraisal is set out under the section entitled Planning Issues wherein it is made clear that the masterplan is not for approval. The application has been assessed on its own merits with reference to the masterplan being limited to comment necessary solely to demonstrate that the proposal does not prejudice the development of the adjoining sites.</p> |
| <p>Officers have implied incorrectly that the proposal will secure the redevelopment of the wider block</p> | <p>This comment is made on the same misunderstanding as above.</p> |
| <p>The grant of planning permission would be premature and will prejudice the proper planning of the area and the securing of important planning benefits</p> | <p>The issue of prematurity is covered in the section of the report entitled Planning Issues.</p> <p>The comment relating to the proposed development being prejudicial to the proper planning of the area appears to be based on the objectors' view that the illustrative masterplan is unviable. To demonstrate this point an alternative masterplan based on a contextual analysis and review of Development Plan policy has been submitted by the objector. This plan has been considered but not appraised by officers. It is noted that the analysis is broadly in line with that submitted by the applicant in their Design and Access Statement.</p> <p>It is also of considerable interest to overlay the alternative masterplan with that submitted as an illustrative document with the application. The two plans are not mutually exclusive. The applicant has undertaken to combine the current proposal for the application site with the objector's masterplan which demonstrates that the current proposal could be substituted for the development shown on that part of the site in the alternative masterplan without prejudicing the scale, layout and accesses it proposes. This</p> |

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| | <p>serves to demonstrate that the illustrative masterplan is but one "in principle" layout for the wider site and reinforces the view that there are a range of alternative design solutions for the development of the wider site that in principle fit with the current proposal.</p> |
| <p>The masterplan could not be delivered on a phased basis due to land ownership issues.</p> | <p>Notwithstanding the fact that the current application is being assessed as a stand alone application it is not considered that the redevelopment of the wider site could not be carried out on a phased basis. The appraisal of the proposal concludes that it would not prejudice the development of adjacent sites which could therefore come forward at a later date either individually or in combination when each proposal would also be assessed on its own merits taking into account any prejudicial impact.</p> |
| <p>The illustrative masterplan creates a ransom situation in terms of access and servicing arrangements which are in the control of two landowners only meaning that the phased redevelopment is entirely dependant upon these two landowners who would benefit from a ransom over ht remaining landowners in the block thereby rendering the redevelopment of these sites unviable</p> | <p>The planning system cannot prevent the creation of ransom situations arising.</p> <p>However, as noted above the objector has put forward an alternative masterplan which they consider to addresses issues such as this. The acceptability of the access that it proposes has not been considered but as the application proposal mitigates its own highways impact the formation of additional access points will not be prejudiced by the proposal should planning permission be granted. Any proposal for these accesses would be subject to individual assessment. That the objectors' masterplan and that submitted with the application are not mutually exclusive and in principle the objectors' masterplan could progress with the proposed development in situ negates this argument.</p> |
| <p>The urban block formed by Victoria Way, Goldsworth Road and Church Street West is a suitable location for tall buildings. Furthermore tall buildings and high density commercial development in this area would reinforce the commercial function of the area and in particular the important commercial frontage of Victoria Way. However, the proposed siting of a tall building on the northern side of the block is not considered to be the optimum location.</p> | <p>The proposal places a tall building on the northern side of the site fronting Church Street West where its overshadowing impact on neighbouring properties will be minimised. One issue that would need to be considered were a tall building to be sited on the southern part of the site would be its impact on the range of uses that could function in the centre of the site and the extent of detrimental impact to the Council's policies on energy and sustainability.</p> |
| <p>Notwithstanding concerns relating to the height and visual impact of the proposal, the original plans submitted represented an elegant solution in design terms. The</p> | <p>Comment on the design proposals is made under Planning Issues.</p> |

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| amended proposals are considered to compromise the integrity if the design and that the elegance has been lost. | |
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One letter of support has been received from the executive committee of the Woking Chamber of Commerce who consider that the proposal for a landmark building as proposed, mainly dedicated office but including bar, restaurant and other leisure facilities would provide the regeneration the area requires. The design is of a high quality that will create a landmark building that this part of Woking so demands. The high energy sustainability credentials proposed are a high priority for the Executive Committee of the Chamber. They note respect for the level of community involvement undertaken. Support the plan subject to the S106 contributions offered being secured.

APPLICANT'S POINTS

The applicants have submitted a series of supporting statements the content of which are considered where relevant under Planning Issues below.

The Statements provided include:

- Design and Access Statement (DAS). An updated version has been submitted to support the amendments made to the proposal
- Planning Policy Statement
- Commercial Real Estate Reports incorporating:
 - Economic Context/Employment Patterns
 - Masterplan Site Valuation Review
- Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement
- BREEAM for Offices 2006 Assessment
- Acoustic Assessment Report
- Lighting Statement
- Wind Microclimate Desk Study
- TV, Radio and Communications Reception Report
- Visual Landscape Assessment
- Overshadowing Analysis
- Transport Assessment Report
- Framework Travel Plan
- Outline Fire Strategy
- Engineers Planning Report (covers issues of drainage, flood risk, contamination, geology, sustainability)
- Ecology Survey
- Archaeological Desk Based Survey
- Electromagnetic Compatibility Survey

Statement of Community Involvement

The application also includes a Statement of Community Involvement. This is a comprehensive document setting out the details of the consultation exercise carried out prior to submissions and the changes made to reflect the comments made. A four stage process has been followed but throughout the process comment on the emerging scheme have been welcomed from people through a range of different mechanisms – direct to members of the design team, use of feedback forms, on line or through the Community Relations Company retained by the applicant. The applicants' project team has also worked with Officers at WBC and SCC for over a year. The consultation process covered:

- **Stage 1:** Identification of key stake holders (January 2007). This included identifying politicians, community and interest groups who were likely to have an interest in the

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proposal. Contact was made with these groups and individuals to enable them to put forward ideas and suggestions and participate in the initial development of the proposal. A Community Relations Company was engaged to act as a point of contact for enquiries and information. An ongoing dialogue was established with the local media to assist in delivering information to the community and relevant statutory consultees and stakeholders were identified and initial contact established.

- **Stage 2:** Consultation on initial design proposals (Feb – April 2007). Briefings and contacts with key stakeholders and presentations to WBC officers and Ward Councillors who were also advised and formally notified of forthcoming public consultation. Key community and interest groups (Town Centre Management, Woking Chamber of Commerce and Agenda 21) invited to an initial presentation. Public exhibition of site proposals and masterplan (Friday 9TH March and Saturday 10th March held at Christchurch in Woking town centre. Preview evening held on 7th March for key Members and officers at WBC and SCC and local business leaders. Exhibition hosted by application team. Information and feedback leaflets were made available at the exhibition and at the Ambassadors Theatre. Exhibition advertised by means of local papers, personal invites to key people and groups and on dedicated website. Follow up letters sent to those invited but unable to attend to encourage comment and press release acknowledging feedback and setting out how comments would be taken on board in working up proposals. Meeting was held with Humphrey Malins MP to gain his feedback and discuss any concerns.
- **Stage 3:** Analysis of Public Consultation. Over 50 responses received of which more than 79% rated overall designs as excellent, very good or good and 92% of respondents commenting that they would like to see more urban regeneration to improve and modernise Woking town centre. The key areas highlighted for further evaluation included:
 - How the masterplan can help kick start the regeneration of the surrounding area and more detail to be worked up
 - The design and context of the tall building
 - The potential impact of traffic to and from the development on the local highway network and car parking issues, adoption of a travel plan
 - How the proposals for landscaping relate to the development and enhance the overall character of the surrounding area
 - Developing the design utilising energy efficient solutions in conjunction with renewable energy sources.
- **Stage 4:** Request for Further design changes. Presentation to CABE who suggested some significant revisions. Expressed concern about two tall building on the site (at this stage the masterplan identified two tall buildings on the site, one in each of the south east and north east corners of the site with the bulk of the development being loaded on the southernmost site). It was suggested that one significant tall building would be more appropriate and that this would be best site on the northernmost part of the site due to orientation. This would provide a focal point and significant local land mark. A greater difference between the two elements on the application site was also recommended to allow for a more elegant structure. Concern was raised with regard to the southern elevation and in particular the inclusion of the third service core. It was suggested that this be removed and a more active frontage be provided to views from the south and the railway line. The masterplan was accordingly reconsidered and amended and the application scheme revised in so far as was practical with additional storeys being added to the taller element. Removal of the core at the southern end was not deemed to be feasible as to do so would require a radical redesign in order to achieve compliance with Building Regulations.
- **Stage 5:** feedback and finalising design proposal. Meeting held with WBC management team and planning case officer focussing on the revised masterplan proposals and energy solutions. Letter sent to all respondees, political contacts and key stakeholders

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updating on revised proposals key issues and changes made to the designs. Letter inviting further comment was sent out and five further responses were received. All Members were invited to a presentation on 14th June. 16 Members attended including 9 Members of the planning committee, the Chair and Vice Chair.

Comments on Issues Raised at Planning Committee Meeting

With regard to specific concerns raised at the Planning Committee meeting held on 25 September when the application was presented for information and not determination the applicants have submitted the following comments:

Pedestrian Access

A significant amount of thought and planning has been given as to how the increase in pedestrian footfall will affect the current infrastructure. The Section 278 works include additional crossings and make adjustments to existing pedestrian crossings, to accommodate the additional pedestrian footfall. At the front of the building a colonnade with wider pedestrian areas has been included entrances to the building have been located with the safety of the building occupants in mind.

The developer has worked with SCC on this matter and through consultation, the scheme has been submitted to an independent audit team at SCC who have reviewed and approved the proposals in accordance with local and national guidance. The scheme is seen as offering an enhanced and safer environment for all users and not those solely associated with the development.

Height

The issue of height is emotive and subjective. This issue was raised and openly discussed during the public consultation, as considered to be central to success of the proposal. Concerns raised were generally resolved when the contextual analysis and placement strategy was explained, although there will always be skeptics about tall buildings and their impact, and those who have nostalgic views of the town (one suggested Woking be returned to village status). The majority of visitors embraced the height of the building and welcomed the fact that this would supersede the much dated BAT as the focal point for the town centre and significantly raise the level of architectural quality.

Without a clear policy for tall buildings in the town centre it is unclear as to the mechanisms with which to determine the height of any future tall building. The easiest and most restrictive approach is to benchmark all future tall buildings against the BAT building. It is considered that this is not the right solution and under sells the future that Woking is so close to achieving. It is believed that the current 'just another commuter town' image that exists in Woking can be challenged through exciting new developments which clearly identify Woking's position as a major economic centre, not just in Surrey, but in the South as a whole. This means that this will be the tallest building in Surrey, with the highest public amenity space (outside of London), but it is believed that this is something that should be celebrated and encouraged, a view that was shared by many at the public consultation.

Views from the Hogs Back through to Chobham Common have been provided each showing how the building, along with the BAT building and Centrium, starts to clearly define the town centre from these distant locations. Other future tall building developments that are currently in the planning process will only further strengthen this town centre cluster which is also identified in the new 'streets and spaces' strategy for the town. It is also possible to see how the dominance of the BAT building, which for 30 years has been the only building on the skyline, will be reduced as this cluster of taller, more elegant buildings evolves.

From ground level, the human eye views first 6 storeys in detail. Above this level, the difference between say 20 and 24 levels is imperceptible, as the eye rises up the building, the levels merge, and height differences are difficult to judge, in effect as a building increases in

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height, the perception of the increase reduces at ground level. For this reason, and those stated above, it is opined that the height of the building should not be viewed as a negative, but a great positive, providing an architecturally striking building, a new focus to the town, and a landmark building that Woking can be proud of.

Commercial Demand

Consultants and advisors have confirmed that there is significant demand for a development of this nature within the town and the wider area, with great demand from existing tenants within the town. Discussions with a number of existing occupiers have been undertaken and it is clear from these that without developments of this nature the town will lose significant employers to neighbouring towns which can better accommodate their needs.

There is no prime commercial space of any significant size to let within Woking, all the current space available is out of date and seen as redundant. Even properties built in the 1980's are viewed by occupiers as outdated, dilapidated and inefficient, with building systems over 20 years old. Tenants of today require modern and environmentally sustainable properties, with which to meet the needs and expectations of their employees, essential in the modern era for staff retention.

The demand for the floor plates this development will offer, is considerable, they will provide tenants fantastic views and space that will accommodate many smaller dynamic companies in the Financial, IT, Technology and Design sectors which dominate the region, who demand a high specification, but at a size which suits. The larger floors have been designed specifically to provide larger tenants the ability to sub divide their space giving them the flexibility of occupation required as companies, and their respective departments grow.

Prejudicial Development

It is considered that the proposed development significantly enhances the adjoining owners land by virtue of the following:

- a. The development will enhance the economic tone of the area thus increasing the value of the existing properties in the surrounding area.
- b. The individual owners of the adjacent sites have it is opined, limited floor plans and access for car parking is extremely problematic. It is proposed (as identified in the Master Plan) that one access is used for the entire development, and as a result of this the quantum of floor area is greatly increased for the adjoining sites. Correspondence from commercial agents is included with the planning application confirming that there is no prejudicial influence to the adjoining sites, rather they advise that the sites significantly increase in value if a scheme as identified in the Master Plan is adopted.

The Master Plan

The applicant notes that it is their wish to undertake this themselves or as a joint venture with the adjoining owners whom they are currently in discussion with, with a view to purchasing the sites or forming a Joint Venture Agreement, to take the current aspirations forward. It is believed that the Master Plan creates a fantastic urban regeneration scheme for this currently under utilised area, not only providing a newly developed business district to attract occupiers to the town, but also at its centre the Urban Winter Garden which is felt to be extremely important to Woking, and will provide an area where restaurants and shops can thrive, and families can visit what ever the time of day. The applicants note their commitment to achieving this space, and the Master Plan as whole and do not support piecemeal development. By working with the relevant site owners and WBC, they believe that the Master Plan can be achieved.

The Amended Plans

In support of the amendments made to the proposal the applicant's have submitted the following comment:

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- There has been a significant height reduction taking the it from 25 to 18 storeys and keeping the overall height in line with Export House and the recently consented 22 storey scheme on Guildford Road
- In co-operation with the neighbouring land owner and on a purely “good neighbour” basis the southern façade has been redesigned to remove windows at all levels
- On-site car parking has been reduced to respond to feedback and minimise impact on surrounding roads
- Publicly accessible space has been retained on the top floor to allow the public to enjoy views over the town, a feature that was extremely well received during the community consultation
- The applicant's aim is to provide Woking with a first class new office building that meets with community and Council's aspirations

Response to Objections

The applicant has submitted the following comments in response to the objections submitted by and on behalf of the adjoining land owner which are considered to be factually inaccurate.

- Communication with adjoining land owners has been ongoing since mid 2006 seeking to enter a joint venture to develop the wider site, or develop the application site in isolation but agreeing masterplan details with other landowners' or to purchase and develop other adjacent land holdings.
- Viability of the wider area. The masterplan was prepared following officer advice that the context for the development needed to be set and to demonstrate how it could facilitate the redevelopment of the wider site but as an indicative and not prescriptive solution. It has not been claimed that the vision put forward is the only way to redevelop the site nor does the development of the applicant's site as proposed preclude the refinement of the masterplan at a later date. What it does is allows the viability of the rest of the site to be examined and understood.
- If Woking is to retain its place as Surrey's leading commercial centre, important sites such as this need to be redeveloped. Any developments should be in the best interest of the town. The applicant's have worked extremely closely with planning officers and the public to ensure the application meets council policy and the council's aspirations. We have also taken into account the points raised throughout the public consultation. It is agreed that the masterplan area should be comprehensively redeveloped. However, the reticence of some landowners to get involved has led to two possible outcomes:
 - 1) Nothing happens on the site at all, or
 - 2) Development is kick-started by a proactive landowner with an indicative masterplan which shows the future development which could take place if and when the other landowners are ready.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

Woking Borough Local Plan 1999:

NE1, Special Protection Areas

NE10, Landscape Design

BE1, Design of New Development

BE2, Crime Prevention

BE3, Access for People with Disabilities

BE6, Energy Conservation

BE16, Areas of High Archaeological Potential & Other Sites Which Contain Archaeological Remains

EMP1, Employment – General Considerations

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EMP7, Loss of B1, B2 And B8 Uses
CUS1, Location and Provision of Community Services
CUS8, Renewable Energy
MV3, The Movement Implications of Development
MV9, Off Street Parking
WTC1, Design of Town Centre Development
WTC2, Height of Buildings
WTC3, Space Between buildings
WTC6, Public Art
WTC9, New Business Development in the Town Centre
WTC11 Goldsworth Road Regeneration Area
WTC18, Highways Proposals in the Town Centre
WTC20, Provision for Public Transport
WTC21, Car and Cycle Parking in New Development
WTC22, Pedestrian and Cycle facilities in the Town Centre
IMP1, Site Assembly
IMP3, Planning Benefits

Surrey Structure Plan 2004:

L01, Location of Development
L02, Managing Urban Areas
L03, Town Centres
L07, Employment Land
L08, Retail Development
SE1, Natural Resources and Pollution Control
SE2, Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation
SE3, Flooding and Land Drainage
SE4, Design and the Quality of Development
SE7, Nature Conservation
SE8, Landscape
DN1, Infrastructure Provision
DN2, Movement Implications of Development
DN3, Parking Provision
DN4, Public Transport
DN5, Cycle and Pedestrian Routes

Other Relevant Guidance

Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
Planning Policy Statement 6 – Planning for Town Centres
Planning Policy Statement 9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
Planning Policy Statement 22 - Renewable Energy

Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport
Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 – Planning & Archaeology

Regional Planning Guidance Note 9 – The South East

Sustainable Communities in the South East - ODPM

Better Places To Live: A Companion Guide to PPG3
Living Places – Urban Renaissance in the South East
By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System

Climate Neutral Development – A Good Practice Guide – WBC

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Planning For Sustainable Development: Towards Better Practice – ODPM
BRE Environmental Assessment Method

Circular 06/2005 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System.

SUSTAINABILITY

Location: The site is within the town centre and is, therefore, ideally located for public transport and an intensification of use.

Mixed Use: The layout follows best practice in Urban Design to secure a mixed-use redevelopment with active frontages at ground floor. Additionally the top floor of the taller element will be in commercial A3/A4 use and as such will be publicly accessible. The proposal allows for flexibility of ground floor layout so that should the masterplan proposals or similar come forward for the redevelopment of adjacent sites the ground floor, vehicular access and servicing arrangements could be reconfigured to enable the rear of the building to open onto public realm.

Parking: the proposal takes advantage of the sustainable location to reduce parking provision. A Travel Plan is to be secured through the S106 legal agreement.

Building Techniques

The proposal is supported by an Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement Heating and Energy Initiatives which reduce CO² emissions and meets the policy requirement for 10% of the energy requirement of the proposal renewable resources and for CHP to be used.

PLANNING ISSUES

The main issues to consider with this application are:

- The principle of development
 - Land use
 - Suitability of site for the location of a tall building
- The scale, form, massing, proportion, silhouette and design
- Impact of the development on neighbouring areas
- Prematurity
- Environmental impacts
- Transport implications,
- Policy WTC18 – Victoria Arch & Pedestrian Tunnel Provision
- Other issues (archaeology, TV Signal)
- S106 and infrastructure contributions

The Principle of Development

Land Use

The existing use of the buildings on the site is B1 offices and it is proposed that the site be redeveloped with a predominantly office development that incorporates two restaurants, one at ground floor and one on the top floor. An area for community use is also proposed. The main issue therefore is the increased intensity of the use which will be increased nearly nine fold.

SCC consider that in principle the proposed use is acceptable and complies with Surrey Structure Plan (SSP) policies LO1 and LO2 which seek to ensure accessibility and the proper use of urban land. However concern has been expressed that there is a lack of an economic

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justification for the scheme which is overtly commercial, excluding uses such as residential or improved community or retail use to satisfy town centre needs and that in the absence of a pre-let agreement the development would exacerbate vacancy rates in the town centre. SCC therefore consider that the proposal fails in providing a balanced approach to major town centre schemes as set out in policy LO3 and an objection on this issue has been raised. This objection is not considered to properly reflect the policy objective or the scheme details.

Policy LO3 refers to development within town centres and will permit proposals which support the identified role of strategic centres. With specific regard to Woking the policy identifies the centre as being of strategic importance, a regional hub and a key economic driver within the region where future development should continue to support the centre's significant economic, retail and leisure base. Areas such as Woking town centre are at the heart of the SSP strategy to concentrate development in urban areas to sustain and improve their vitality and significance. In addition to policy LO3, policy LO7 relates to the development of employment land, such as the application site, and notes that the needs of sustainable economic growth will be met primarily through the re-use of suitably located land already in employment use. This will assist in achieving a successful economy which is an important factor in ensuring a good quality of life and through continuing economic growth, flexibility to respond to changing economic needs can be established. This policy also requires local planning authorities to seek to ensure an appropriate mix of types and scale of premises for a range of economic activities. However, neither this policy nor indeed any other in SSP requires a mix of use on each and every individual site. The mix is to be achieved on an area basis.

With reference to the application, a mix of uses is proposed albeit the dominant use will be offices. Importantly, the ground floor will be mixed use providing activity and hence aiding vitality for this part of the town. The proposed mix of uses is a reflection of the site size and configuration which allows a building with a relatively small footprint. The quantum of development is achieved through height and it is not considered appropriate or feasible to provide a significant vertical mix of uses in such circumstances. Furthermore the absence of residential as part of this scheme also needs to be considered against a backdrop of the completion of approximately 2,100 new residential units since 2001 with about a further 1000 units benefiting from planning permission. Many of these units have been town centre flats and it is not therefore considered that additional units on a site such as this are paramount in meeting the objectives of a balanced mix of uses. The illustrative masterplan submitted to support the application demonstrates how a greater mix of uses could theoretically be achieved across the wider site.

In addition to the above it should be noted that the Council's Employment Needs Assessment which was produced to inform the LDF indicate a need for an additional 43,000sq m of B1 floorspace within Woking up to 2016. This study has subsequently been updated and in fact indicates the requirement for an additional 85,000sqm B1 floor space up to 2018. It is also relevant to note that of the current available supply is dominated by aging buildings which are in need of redevelopment or refurbishment and it is considered inevitable that a proportion of the stock will be replaced by housing. Of the current vacancies in Woking town centre about 75% falls within the category of aging stock which has limited use to modern business needs. Only 6.4% of office stock in Woking is considered to be "new" i.e. built since 2002 which is a relatively low proportion when compared with competing centres. Information submitted with the application confirms that all new office buildings in and around Woking Town Centre are fully let. Thus SCC's concern about the impact on the vacancy rates for offices in the town centre is not considered to be sustainable.

Having regard to the above, Policy E1 of the now withdrawn WBC LDF Core Strategy set the expectation of delivering a 10% increase in office space within the town centre up to 2016. The Inspector's concerns with the core strategy that led to its withdrawals did not relate to the

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provision of additional employment floor space in the town centre so this policy objective still holds relevancy.

Policy WTC9 of the Local Plan states that proposals to provide Class B1 floorspace will be permitted provided that the proposal relates to a site already within Class B1 use and the increase in floorspace is small scale (generally up to 300 sq.m). Consideration may also be given to modest increases which secure other priority uses including residential development. This policy in the 1999 Local Plan has the aim of controlling the growth of labour-intensive B1 development which in turn could result in an imbalance between demand and supply for housing locally. The economic climate has clearly changed significantly since that policy was adopted and as noted above the "overwhelming majority of available [office] space is second hand and much of that quite poor" (WBC Employment Needs Assessment - November 2005). It is not considered that the proposed level of increase in B1 floor area would prejudice the emerging development plan policies or that taking into account the current position with regard to the supply of office space it conflicts with the objectives in the extant policy framework.

One final matter that is relevant in considering the proposed use of the site against the above policy background is that the developer is in negotiations to secure a pre-let of the majority if not the entire building.

The proposal is also considered to comply with the thrust of local plan policy WTC11 which identifies a regeneration area for part of the Goldsworth Road Area. Although the policy is outdated in terms of the amount of office floor space envisaged the objective of seeking to attract HQ buildings to the town remains relevant. Occupiers of such buildings are considered by the policy to be likely to become involved in town centre partnerships.

Having considered the policy issues relating to land use and having had regard to the objections raised on this issue by SCC, it is concluded that the proposed land uses are acceptable and that subject to the issues to be considered below the amount of development proposed complies with policy objectives.

Suitability of the site for the location of a tall building

The quantum of development proposed is predicated on the provision of a tall building. Concern has been raised by SCC, Guildford Borough Council, Send Parish Council and in letters of objection that the height will have an impact on visual and environmental amenity both locally and in the wider landscape setting which includes conservation area and an AONB.

Local Plan policy WTC2 refers to the height of building and allows for proposals which result in a significant increase in height where they provide one or more of the following urban design objectives:

- help to define gateways into the town centre along principal traffic routes.
- form focal points to strengthen the architectural design of corner sites at the intersection of important pedestrian and traffic routes.
- create vistas by providing a focal point to terminate distant views along important routes.
- provide landmarks to identify important site locations in the town centre or assist in pedestrian orientation towards important destinations.

The amended plans significantly reduce the proposed height of the development (94m to 77.5m, a reduction of 16.5m which brings it in line with the height of Export House and the recently approved Barratts development on Guildford Road). However at 18 storeys at the

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highest point and even 11 storeys for the lower element the proposed building still constitutes a tall building within its context. The site is within the Goldsworth Road regeneration area of the Town Centre wherein redevelopment is permitted subject to according with set criteria. The policy allows for development which will lead to an increase in office floor area but does not set any limits on the level of increase, nor does it set any limits on height for this part of the site. The existing office developments which date from the late 60's or early 70's are of poor quality and do not make efficient use of a significant, highly visible site which abuts the most central section of the Town Centre, nor do they make a positive contribution to the street scene which is an objective of policy WTC11. The adjoining site to the south which comprises an inter-war development of little architectural merit also makes limited economic use of an important and equally visible site. Whilst the proposal for the application site is on a vastly different scale to its existing context, the whole area is promoted for regeneration and the proposal needs to be considered against an emerging context of significant intensive change rather than compatibility with the existing context. Thus the site is considered to be a part of a wider site that is an important location in the town centre where a landmark building would assist in its identification. In policy terms therefore there are no limiting factors on the height of a redevelopment proposal for this site.

Furthermore, the Council's emerging Streets and Spaces Strategy identifies the zone around the Market Square as a suitable location to site a number of significant tall building developments to provide a cluster of feature buildings around this key public space. This would be in conjunction with the consented scheme for the site on Guildford Road (the Barratts site) and the existing Centrium and BAT towers. The site is suitably located within this zone to contribute towards this cluster of tall buildings, which could add shape and legibility to the overall urban form of the town centre.

CABE and English Heritage's publication 'Guidance on Tall Buildings' (July 2007) stresses that applications for tall buildings should be assessed against the most demanding standards of quality which, in terms of scale and height, should consider the relationship to context and effect on skyline, design of the top of the building, microclimate and overshadowing. Moreover, the guidance suggests that proposals for tall buildings should have a positive relationship with other tall buildings considering the potential clustering of such buildings in the vicinity of the development site. The guidance notes that *"in the right place, tall buildings can make positive contributions to city life. They can excellent works of architecture in their own right; some of the best post-war examples are now listed buildings. Individually or in groups, they affect the image and identity of a city as a whole. In the right place they can serve as beacons of regeneration, and stimulate further investment. The design and construction of innovative tall buildings can also serve to extend the frontiers of building and environmental technology"*.

The Design and Access Statement (DAS) submitted by the applicant incorporates a contextual appraisal of the area surrounding the application site and includes an analysis of the Woking skyline. It also provides a historic overview of the growth of the town centre and the emergence of historic, existing and emerging public spaces. The DAS identifies the application site as a possible location for a 'landmark building' on the basis of: a) the number of other existing and consented schemes for tall buildings in the vicinity, b) the site's location on a prominent corner in the Town Centre c) the site's central location adjacent to the primary shopping area and d) its proximity to the rail and bus stations and its siting along Victoria Way all of which are important arrival points into Woking by public or private transport and as a pedestrian from the residential areas to the west, south and north of the site. The analysis within the DAS is considered to be sound and helps to provide a vision of an emerging context into which the development would fit. The illustrative master plan submitted with the application sets out one potential form of development for the adjoining sites to demonstrate the overall urban design benefits such a form of development could achieve for the town centre and the role that this individual site would contribute towards that potential scheme.

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Clearly there are many different ways the wider site might be developed but whilst the details set out in the masterplan can not be secured through the current application the applicant's vision serves to illustrate that the site has the capacity to contain development at a significantly higher density than existing. And that the current proposal does not prejudice this happening. Overall the DAS is considered to assist in demonstrating that the proposal accords with the above objectives.

The application includes a photographic appraisal of strategic views of the application site from public viewpoints both within and beyond the Borough and in particular from the AONB and nearby conservation areas. The sites from which views have been taken and the proposal modelled include Chobham Common, Fair Oaks Airport, The Maultway, Knaphill, St Mary's Church Horsell, Wheatsheaf Recreation Field, Goldsworth Road, Send, Mellow and the Hogs Back. Local street scene views have also been provided. These images have not been updated to reflect the reduced height of the proposed building and therefore show a greater impact that would be the case.

In the long distant strategic views from the Hogs Back and Mellow in the south the building as originally proposed projects above the horizon along with the BAT tower. From Send only marginal glimpses of the building between the tree cover occur. In views from the north at Chobham Common the building only just breaches the horizon and again is seen alongside the BAT Tower. From Fair Oaks and Knaphill both existing tall buildings (BAT and Centrium) are seen against the skyline with the proposed building beginning to form a cluster view. In views from St Mary's Church, Goldsworth Road and Wheatsheaf recreation ground the proposed building rises above a backdrop of trees and or buildings along with other significant buildings in the town centre. These views demonstrate that the building will be visible and in some instances would appear as a prominent skyline feature. The visibility of the building in views is not in itself harmful and subject to being assessed as being of an acceptable design quality with appropriate material selection it is not considered that it would have detrimental impact. This conclusion stands when considering views from the Conservation Areas and AONB. Not only is the visual impact considered to be acceptable but it is further considered that its visibility would emphasise the town centre urban context within which it would sit and hence would strengthen the role of the town centre. A tall building in this location would therefore be unlikely to appear as a significantly uncharacteristic feature and would enhance the context of other existing urban forms. Clearly, if the images were updated to reflect the amended scheme the above views would be reduced.

The proposed building would be significantly taller than the majority of other buildings in the vicinity of the application site and would have a significant impact on the skyline. However, the visibility and change in scale are not in themselves harmful. Within the context of the site it is considered that the visual impact of the proposed development in the street scene would be the same for a building of some 6-8 storeys. The following comments as noted under Applicant's Points above are agreed by officers. The issue of height is emotive and subjective. From ground level in an urban area, the human eye views only the first 6/7 storeys in detail. Above this level, the difference between say 20 and 24 levels is imperceptible, as the eye rises up the building, the levels merge, and height differences are difficult to judge, in effect as a building increases in height, the perception of the increase reduces at ground level. Therefore, although there is a stepped change in height between the proposed development and the adjacent site, this is not considered to be visually harmful.

The principle of a tall building in this location must also be considered in respect of its juxtaposition with other existing and proposed tall buildings nearby and its potential presence as a 'corner building' at a significant junction in approaches to the town centre both from the highway and as a pedestrian.

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The application site, being at the northern corner of a block of existing buildings, is considered to lend itself as a suitable location for a taller building. When viewed from locations in close proximity to the site, such as the primary shopping area, Victoria Way and Goldsworth Road, a tall building on this site would be seen in the context of the existing large scale developments, many of which have significantly larger footprints and are of substantial scale and massing (SAB Miller, Globe House, The Peacocks, Toys R Us and car park and Cap Gemini). In close views the overall height of the building will seldom impact, rather it will read as part of the urban form within which it sits. Should the recently consented scheme for taller buildings on the Barratts site on Guildford Road site, be implemented this would also further define the skyline of the town centre.

The principle of a tall building in this location is therefore considered to comply with the criteria and guidance provided within Policy WTC2 and the 'Guidance on Tall Buildings' (July 2007) provided by CABI and English Heritage. With regard to the quote above from this guidance it is concluded that the proposed site is an acceptable location for a tall building and one where it will have a positive affect on the image and identity of the town. In view of its location within a designated regeneration area it is likely it will act as a beacon of regeneration and as shown by the illustrative masterplan sets the way forward for further investment.

However, to establish whether the proposal itself is acceptable in design terms further consideration need to be given in respect of the issues identified at the head of this section.

The scale, form, massing, proportion, silhouette and design

The Council's Local Plan policies on the design of developments in the Town Centre, height of tall buildings, spaces between buildings and developments fronting Victoria Way are set out in policies WTC1, WTC2, WTC3 and WTC4. The Council has no specific recent policy or design guidance on significant Tall Buildings, although the guidance set out in the CABI advice note (2007) provide a useful general checklist.

The architectural design of the amended scheme is not considered to have the impact or poise which the significant tower form of the previous composition provided. However, it still has sufficient elegance of form and quality of design to provide a building of architectural merit. The proposed multiple tower composition, which has three major tower elements in a stepped format, has a distinctive form which should result in an attractive and distinct building design. Placing the tallest element at the junction of Church Street and Victoria Way should provide sufficient weight to emphasise the corner of the site as a focus for the scheme.

The fine modelling of the elevations which has recessed bays and strong vertical aluminium framing is intended to reinforce the vertical division of the three towers which have largely glass curtain wall elevations. Discrete horizontal banding is employed to reflect the stepped form of the building composition. As with the previous scheme feature columns and double height glazing is used to emphasise human scale and provide visual interest at the ground floor level, where transparency of active uses will inject vitality into the street scene.

The amended plans retain a distinctive architectural form and an elegant roofscape which results in an attractive building silhouette. Overall the building design is of high quality and is matched by high quality material finishes, including glazed curtain walling in clear glass and blue tint, ceramic cladding and aluminium framing. The supporting information indicates that the building will not create adverse overshadowing and has high energy sustainability credentials. Subject to the submission of suitable material finishes the proposal is considered to be of an acceptable design standard of appropriate scale and massing, with balanced proportions and an attractive silhouette that makes a positive impact on the visual character of the area both in daytime and night time views.

The inclusion of community uses (not yet defined) at lower levels will help to provide active frontages to Victoria Way and subsequently towards the public space should the master plan

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progress. The prospect of public access to a high level restaurant will enable visitors to enjoy distant views.

The proposed building will sit in a context characterised by its disparate nature. Each individual building fronting Victoria Way in the vicinity of the site and each building in the block within which the site is located is of differing style, scale and materials. There is no commonality of grain, ground floor height, eaves line or ridge height. Thus there are no design cues or constraints to influence the design of the proposed building. Having assessed the building as being of architectural merit, that the materials proposed are appropriate to its design and noted that the double height ground floor will add vitality to the street scene, that the pedestrian environment will be improved, street trees will be planted and the entrances to the building are located appropriately it is considered that the proposal complies with the objectives of local plan policy BE1 Design of New Development in that it will have a positive impact on the street scene and character of the area.

The long term sustainability and flexible future use of the building has been central to the design philosophy of the floor plates with the building being designed to meet the current and foreseeable future to ensure that the building is adaptable to future trends in the commercial market place. The site configuration and access arrangements have influenced the depth of footprint which at a maximum of 24m is marginally deeper than that necessary to secure maximum flexibility in terms of the cost of achieving satisfactory light penetration to the building's centre should subdivision and or change of use occur. Within this constraint the building has been designed to enable it to be let in multiple sizes of units. It can be let in its entirety or as a series of individual floors or each floor can be subdivided to allow for up to 6 small units. To enable such flexibility the building has three service cores, whereas technically only two are required.

Although the application is for a commercial use on the site, to reflect the longevity of the building consideration has been given to the scenario whereby the work place as currently known is no longer required due to improving communication technologies and a reduction in commuting. This could lead to an increase in home working. The structure and form of the building lends itself to residential conversion either in part or full as well as other uses.

Master plan Proposals

The submission includes a coherent illustrative master plan for the adjacent area of street block. The overall concept is considered to be carefully conceived and provides a useful vision of how a future context might emerge which helps to set out a case which supports the development proposal. The masterplan sets out only one possible redevelopment scheme for the wider site but indicates that the proposed development will not prejudice the development of adjacent sites at a higher density and for a variety of uses

The master plan identifies the creation of a new public space at the heart of the site, as the creation of a new area of public realm, which also provides for increased permeability through the site. It also identifies an enhanced area of public realm at the junction of Goldsworth Road and Victoria Way to cater for enhanced movement between the street block and the market Square. The latter concept is also one supported by the merging Streets and Spaces Study to improve pedestrian linkages east – west between the Goldsworth Road area and the Town Centre.

It should be noted that the masterplan proposals cannot be secured under the current application and that it has only been assessed insofar as is necessary to enable it to be concluded that the proposal will not prejudice the comprehensive development of the wider site. Objections to the proposal largely rely on discrediting the master plan and its deliverability and to this end an alternative masterplan has been submitted which the objector considers overcomes objection to the current proposal and offers a deliverable redevelopment proposal. It is interesting to note that the two masterplans are not mutually exclusive. Although it has not been possible to make an accurate assessment as the plans

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are not to scale it is evident that the current proposal can be developed without prejudice to the implementation of the alternative illustrative plan.

Impact of the development on neighbouring sites

This section will consider the impacts of the development on neighbouring sites in terms of the prejudicial nature on future redevelopments and the impact on the existing neighbouring uses.

One letter of objection received refers to the impact of the development on the living conditions enjoyed by the occupier of a flat in the adjacent 3 storey building at 1-7 Victoria Way. The existing building on the application site has an impact on the residential units on the upper floors of 1-7 Victoria Way where there are windows in the side elevation. It is understood that any such windows serve bedrooms. The proposed development will sit on the same footprint with regard to this relationship but will clearly be significantly taller. However taking account of the current situation and the fact the proposal site is to the north of the residential units it is not considered that any significant loss of amenity will result.

Objection has also been raised with regard to the inclusion of windows in the southern elevation. These windows which were to be secondary windows to office floor space have been removed in the amended plans although their presence was not considered to prejudice development on the neighbouring site in planning terms by virtue of the fact that they were secondary windows to offices rather than residential accommodation. The office accommodation proposed is not dependant on these windows to secure an adequate outlook and level of amenity for occupiers. The situation would have been different had the accommodation proposed been for residential use and the outlook and amenity had been dependant on the windows in this location. As such, although the southern elevation of the building abuts the southern site boundary, development on the adjacent site to the south could in principle abut this same boundary without being contrary to planning policies. The glazed staircase remains part of the proposal but for the same reasons given here will not, in planning terms, prejudice the development of the adjoining site.

Whilst there are numerous ways this section of the town centre might be developed, the illustrative master plan indicates one possible vision for the development for the remainder of the street block and has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal does not prejudice the future development of adjoining land. Clearly, the master plan is for illustration only and might not influence the future form of surrounding development, and in this regard the proposal must be considered as a stand alone building development. It is considered however that it does demonstrate that the adjacent sites can be redeveloped at a higher density and for a range of uses. Accordingly it is concluded that the proposed development on the site will not prejudice the development of adjacent sites.

The Overshadowing Report concludes that there will be no significant detrimental impact in terms of loss of direct daylight. The application has confirmed that they have commissioned a rights of light surveyor, who has confirmed in his report that there are certain properties that suffer a loss of light to varying degrees, none of which we believe is injunctable. A financial provision has been made in the development appraisal and it has been confirmed that negotiations have been commenced with the adjoining property owners with regards to compensation for the loss of light as a result of the construction of the proposed building.

Prematurity

Objections to the proposal have been raised on the grounds that a grant of planning permission would be premature. Government guidance on this issue is provided within Communities and Local Government document "The Planning System: General Principles"

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which sets out the Government's position with regard to the determination of planning applications and considers the case for premature applications. The document notes:

1. In some circumstances, it may be justifiable to refuse planning permission on grounds of prematurity where a DPD is being prepared or is under review, but it has not yet been adopted. This may be appropriate where a proposed development is so substantial, or where the cumulative effect would be so significant, that granting permission could prejudice the DPD by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development which are being addressed in the policy in the DPD. A proposal for development which has an impact on only a small area would rarely come into this category. Where there is a phasing policy, it may be necessary to refuse planning permission on grounds of prematurity if the policy is to have effect.
2. Otherwise, refusal of planning permission on grounds of prematurity will not usually be justified. Planning applications should continue to be considered in the light of current policies. However, account can also be taken of policies in emerging DPDs. The weight to be attached to such policies depends upon the stage of preparation or review, increasing as successive stages are reached. For example:
 - Where a DPD is at the consultation stage, with no early prospect of submission for examination, then refusal on prematurity grounds would seldom be justified because of the delay which this would impose in determining the future use of the land in question.
 - Where a DPD has been submitted for examination but no representations have been made in respect of relevant policies, then considerable weight may be attached to those policies because of the strong possibility that they will be adopted. The converse may apply if there have been representations which oppose the policy. However, much will depend on the nature of those representations and whether there are representations in support of particular policies.
3. Where planning permission is refused on grounds of prematurity, the planning authority will need to demonstrate clearly how the grant of permission for the development concerned would prejudice the outcome of the DPD process.

The application has been assessed as a stand alone development against the policies in the adopted development plan with consideration given to the emerging policy context and other material planning considerations. The emerging development plan for Woking is in its early stages with no early prospect of submission for examination. It has been concluded that the proposal is in broad accordance with these policies and does not prejudice the development plan or the emerging development plan either in itself or cumulatively. Thus it is considered that refusal on prematurity grounds could not be justified.

Environmental impacts including wind, lighting and shadowing

The application is supported by a number of statements which consider the environment impacts of the proposal. The findings of these reports are summarised below:

Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement

A report has been submitted with the application which sets out the "Energy Demand and Renewable Technology" proposals for the development. A range of measures are proposed to reduce energy demand in the operation of the building:

- Passive solar strategies with respect to building orientation and façade design
- An "excellent" BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method rating) is achievable
- High performance glazing to reduce solar gain whilst retaining good light transmission
- Floor by floor ventilation systems and non use of humidifiers
- Low energy, variable water flow, heating and cooling systems
- Energy efficient lighting and intelligent controls
- Energy efficient lift drives
- Variable speed "impulse" system controlling car park ventilation rate

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- Control of external lighting according to ambient light levels

The predicted energy efficiency and carbon emissions arising from the use of the building have been modelled against agreed benchmark figures. The total baseline energy consumption of the building is predicted to be 3,670,636 kWhr per year, and would result in approximately 1,402 tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted annually.

The package of energy efficiency measures proposed by the applicant is predicted to result in a 15.6% saving in energy (and 18.2% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions) compared with a building that is only built to the minimum standards of energy efficiency required by Building Regulations. However, some energy uses are not taken into account for Building Regulations purposes, so when compared with a benchmark which includes all energy use in the building, the energy efficiency measures would result in a 26.3% reduction in energy consumption.

Structure Plan Policy SE2 requires at least 10% of the development's predicted energy consumption be met through renewable energy generated on site.

The energy statement examines a number of options for meeting this requirement, and concludes that a combination of wind energy to generate electricity and ground source heating and cooling (GSH/C) small scale wind turbines provide the best mechanisms for meeting the policy:

- The GSH/C will comprise a series deep 'energy-bore' tubes located below the foundations of the building. These will collect low temperature heat which can be upgraded via a heat pump to contribute to the building's heating during the winter, and then reversed in summer to contribute to the building's cooling demand. It is calculated these will contribute approximately 288,716 kWh/year (equivalent to 9.3% of total predicted energy demand)
- In addition it is proposed that 4 small scale wind turbines are installed, two at roof level of each of the development's two blocks. The statement proposes these be 5m high vertical axis turbines, and will generate a total of 36,000kWh/Year, equivalent to 1.2% of the development's predicted energy consumption.

The renewable energy generated by the GSH/C and wind turbines will total 10.5% of the building's energy demand (equivalent to saving 60 tonnes of CO₂ each year).

Structure policy states that CHP should be provided for developments greater than 5,000 sq.m. The use of CHP enables electricity, heat (and in some cases cooling) to be generated at significantly greater efficiencies and therefore lower carbon emissions, than conventional national grid generated and distributed energy.

The applicant's statement proposes the building be connected to a proposed CHP energy station that the borough's ESCO Thameswey plans to construct in the vicinity of this development proposal and that it derives approximately 90% of its heat demand and 14% of its electrical demand from low carbon. This will have the effect of reducing the building's carbon footprint by a further 5.5%. However, the statement does not propose meeting any of the building's cooling demand from CHP. The energy that is proposed be derived from CHP is obviously significantly less than total energy demands of the building.

The energy statement acknowledges there is the opportunity to go significantly beyond this in terms of further reducing the building's carbon footprint by ensuring all of there heating, cooling and electrical demand are met through CHP. Whilst this would in practice this conflict with the operation of the GSH/C on site, calculations show that an overall net reduction in carbon footprint of the building can be achieved by meeting its entire energy needs through CHP. As a consequence, the developer is in negotiations with the local energy services

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company (ESCO) Thamesway Energy Ltd, with a view to the building's entire energy needs being met through CHP, with a contribution made to renewable energy generation off site within the locality. The consequence of this approach would be achieve a total reduction in carbon footprint significantly in excess of 40% (compared to the statutory minimum defined by Building Regulations), as opposed to 34.9% carbon reduction currently proposed. Therefore, it is recommended that this enhancement be sought through negotiation with the ESCO and the completion of the scheme in compliance with the statement can be secured by condition.

The proposal includes the provision of 77 allocated parking spaces with a basement car park. The opportunity exist to encourage the use of low or zero carbon motorised transport by occupiers of the building by providing charging points for electrically powered vehicles within the basement car park. It is recommended that charging points are provided for 20% of all parking bays, including disabled bays.

Accordingly the proposal is considered to comply with the objectives of SSP policy SE2 and BE6 (Energy Conservation) and CUS8 (renewable energy) of the local plan.

BREEAM for Offices 2006 Assessment

BREEAM assessment methods and tools are designed to help construction professionals understand and mitigate the environmental impacts of the developments they design and build. BREEAM for Offices is the world's most widely used means of reviewing and improving the environmental performance of office buildings. Buildings are assessed and awarded credits according to the level of performance within a range of 9 environmental categories, comprising management, energy use, health and well being, pollution, transport, land use, ecology, materials and water. The credits are then added together using a set of environmental weightings to produce a single overall score. The building is then rated on a scale of Pass, Good, Very Good or Excellent.

The proposed development is required to achieve a BREEAM rating of "very good" and the developer has the aspiration of achieving an "excellent" rating. The preliminary assessment has identified the "excellent" rating as being achievable, subject to the provision of evidence at the full assessment stage. The securing of the higher rating should be secured by condition.

Acoustic Assessment Report

A survey of the prevailing noise climate around the site was undertaken in order to proposal appropriate external design criteria and to set the plant noise emissions including the roof top wind turbines at a level acceptable to WBC. The report concludes that compliance with the local authority criteria can be achieved. The report has been considered by the Council's Environmental Health officer who concurs with the findings and has suggested conditions to secure compliance.

Lighting Statement

The report sets out the lighting strategy for the site as well as the proposed lighting types and key parameters for development. In summary the objectives are to provide a well lit and safe environment that is memorable, improve the image of the area, provide an enriched night time economy, reduce pollution and energy use, consider aesthetic concerns to create a well-considered and comprehensive effect and meet British Standards for lighting. Architectural and signage lighting will be used on the building but is to take such a form that the issue of light spillage and glare is controlled and addressed. The report concludes that the proposed mitigation measures will ensure that any impact to local residents and the environment will be satisfactorily mitigated. The report has been considered by the Council's Environmental Health officer who concurs with the findings and has suggested conditions to secure compliance.

Wind Microclimate Desk Study

The report considers the impact of the development on wind flow. The proposed development is expected to generate a downdraught on the southern and northern elevations which will affect the wind microclimate in the corners of the building but only to an extent which is compatible with the expected pedestrian activity at these points. For the main front and rear elevations and where entrances are to be located the wind conditions are expected to be suitable for the required purposes throughout the year. Accordingly no mitigation measures are proposed.

Overshadowing Analysis

The aim of the analysis was to determine whether the proposed design, scale and massing of the development would have an unacceptably adverse impact on the existing surroundings. The assessment of the results showed that the proposed development will have little adverse impact on the adjacent open public spaces with all buildings tested (which includes those abutting the site and selected buildings set further away) meeting the criteria set by BRE for acceptable levels of direct sunlight. It is therefore concluded that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its overshadowing impact.

Engineers Planning Report (covers issues of drainage, flood risk, contamination, and sustainability)

Drainage

An initial assessment was made of the site with regard to the provision of SUDS. However due to the extent of site coverage there is no available area for provision. Thames Water have confirmed however that the both the existing foul and surface systems have capacity to cater for the development.

Flood Risk

The site does not fall within any flood zone and the EA do not therefore have any objection to the proposal.

Contamination

Planning Policy Statement 23 – 'Planning and Pollution Control' states that it remains the responsibility of the landowner/developer to identify land affected by contamination and to ensure that remediation is undertaken to secure a safe development. Accordingly the applicants have submitted a Desk Top Contamination Study which has been considered by the Council's Scientific Officer.

It is considered that, given the proposed the layout of the development and method of construction (i.e. substantial excavation of land to create a basement car park), there is no objection to the proposal on contamination grounds subject to the controls afforded by the appropriate condition, informative and the S.106 agreement.

Sustainability

This report sets out the sustainable construction methods and use of materials to be used and confirms that the development will follow best practice on this matter. Adherence to the proposals can be secured by condition.

Ecology Survey

The aim of this survey was to identify all habitats within and adjacent to the site and assess the potential of all trees and buildings to support roosting bats.

The report notes that Natural England have confirmed that although the site is located within 2km of the Thames basin Heath SPA the development will have "little or no impact on the Horsell Common SPA/SSSI as the proposal is not a residential development nor is it adjacent

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to the boundary of the designated site". no other designated site lies within 1.5km of the application site and therefore it is not predicted to result in any adverse effect on other sites.

There are no habitats on site of nature conservation value and no indication of bat presence. The development is not predicted to have any potential impact on protected or notable species. The report suggests that consideration be given to the provision of green roofs and bird boxes. These matters can be conditioned.

Transport implications.

The County Highway Authority was involved in considerable pre-planning discussion with the applicant. These discussions have been on-going during the lifetime of the planning application. The Highway Authority have confirmed that subject to conditions and the highways works as detailed in the Proposed Development section of this report, the application framework travel plan, and funding of £700,000 towards transport works to address wider town centre transport impacts being secured through a S106 legal agreement there are no objections to the proposal.

Policy WTC18 – Victoria Arch & Pedestrian Tunnel Provision

Policy WTC18 of the Local Plan relates to highways proposals in the town centre. It requires that land be safeguarded for the major highways improvement schemes which, amongst other things, include the widening of Guildford Road between Hill View Road and Victoria Arch, and the improvement of Victoria Way through Victoria Arch and provision of an additional tunnel (or tunnels) on either side for pedestrians.

The policy states that, in addition to those schemes to be funded by the County Highways Authority, Woking BC will allocate finance in its Capital Programme for improvements whilst others will be expected to be provided by the private sector in redevelopment schemes. Furthermore, the Executive of 2 February 2006 agreed to recommend that the Council should establish an earmarked reserve for the Victoria Arch pedestrian tunnels into which contributions achieved by way of S106 contributions may be placed. It was considered that this approach is the only way the policy objective could be secured. This proposal was agreed by the Borough Council at its meeting on 16 February 2006.

The securing of this policy objective would have the potential wider benefits of allowing for the widening of the road carriageway under Victoria Arch, thereby reducing congestion and also significantly improving pedestrian permeability from the north to south sides of the railway. Improved pedestrian permeability to the southern side of the town centre is likely to have the effect of opening up further sites for development in that area and delivering the benefits that they would not otherwise accrue. As noted above, the developer has set back the development sufficiently so that it does not encroach upon the Victoria Way improvement line. This addresses the first part of the policy requirement.

The application site is in very close proximity to the Victoria Arch and the site of potential additional pedestrian tunnels (land for which has been reserved as part of the Centrum development) and occupiers of the development would significantly benefit from the improved pedestrian environment that the tunnels would provide in crossing to the south side of the railway. Given its scale and proximity to Victoria Arch, the development is clearly the type of proposal that the justification paragraphs to Policy WTC18 envisage should contribute towards the project.

On this basis, it is recommended that the available contribution of **£720,000** could be used as contribution towards this project. Subject to this being secured through the S106, it is considered that the proposal addresses Policy WTC18.

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Other Issues

Archaeology

Policy BE16 of the Local Plan requires that, on all development sites of over 0.4 hectares, an archaeological evaluation and investigation should be provided.

The applicants have provided a desk based assessment which indicates that there is limited potential for finds on the site. The report has been considered on behalf of the Local Planning Authority by the County Archaeologist whom agrees that a very large proportion of the site will have been destroyed in archaeological terms by the building works associated with the existing buildings but considers there is a possibility that remains may survive outside the footprints of buildings. There is therefore a need for a programme of archaeological works which can be secured by condition

Subject to such a condition being imposed the proposal is considered to comply with Policy BE16 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 – 'Archaeology and Planning.'

TV, Radio and Communications Reception

To accord with the requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 8 'Telecommunications' which suggests that the potential impact of tall buildings on television signals can be a material planning consideration the impact of the development on reception for the above has been considered. The PPG confirms that applicants can, if necessary, normally mitigate any impact by installing higher-gain antennae or pointing the antenna towards another transmitter such as the Reigate repeater. This is not, therefore, considered to be a reason for withholding permission. Where there is an expected impact mitigation measures have been put forward. Subject to these being secured by condition the proposed development will have no significant impact.

S106 and infrastructure contributions

In addition to the highways and Victoria Arch & Pedestrian Tunnel contributions outlined above, the S106 will secure the following:

Public Art

Policy WTC6 of the Local Plan requires the Council to have regard to the contribution made by Public Art in town centre developments. The policy encourages at least 1 per cent of the costs of major developments to be made available for the provision of works of art as an integral part of the development. This policy reflects the general thrust of PPS1 which states that design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted

The application proposes a contribution of **£50,000** towards the provision of public art. The layout of the site provides opportunity for this to be provided on site as part of the fabric of the buildings or alternatively, relevant provision could be made elsewhere within the town centre. This provision is linked to the general improvement of the public realm that is associated with this proposal. The proposal is accordingly considered to be acceptable in this respect.

CCTV contribution

In accordance with the objectives of local plan policy BE2 (Crime Prevention) and IMP3 (Planning Benefits) the proposal will secure a contribution towards the provision of CCTV.

The overall package of financial benefits amounts to £1.5m. The viability of the proposal has been assessed by the council's consultant valuer who has advised that this is a reasonable figure.

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CONCLUSION

The proposal for the redevelopment of the site with a multiple tower combination has been fully appraised and it is considered that it will have a positive affect on the image and identity of the town and in view of its location within a designated regeneration area it is likely it will act as a beacon of regeneration thus setting the way forward for further redevelopment. The building as amended is considered to have a distinctive elegant architectural form and an attractive building silhouette. Overall the building design is of high quality and is matched by high quality material finishes, The supporting information indicates that the building will not create adverse environment impacts and has high energy sustainability credentials. The proposed building has appropriate scale and massing, with balanced proportions and will makes a positive impact on the visual character of the area without detriment to neighbouring properties.

The proposal has been assessed as a stand alone application and on its own merits. The recommendation is made taking only the application details into account. However the recommendation to approve has been reinforced, in terms of the impact of the development on the redevelopment of the wider site, through consideration of the supporting illustrative masterplan which is considered to demonstrate that the scheme does not prejudice the redevelopment of adjacent sites at higher density or for a variety of uses. The viability appraisal indicates that such redevelopment would provide greater value (although as this does not form part of the application the appraisal has not been tested). It should be noted that the details and benefits identified in the Design and Access Statement as summarised in the Proposed Development section of this report cannot be secured under the current application and that there is no guarantee that it will be progressed either in its current form or any other.

Accordingly, on the basis of the above appraisal it is considered that the proposal complies with relevant Local Plan policies and national planning guidance. Therefore, subject to the appropriate use of conditions and a S106 agreement to secure the aforementioned financial contributions, and other benefits detailed in the report it is recommended that planning permission be granted for this proposal.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Memo – WBC Environmental Health Contamination 18.07.07
2. Memo – WBC PPO Design 14.08.07, 21.09.07, 18.01.08
3. Letter - Environment Agency 26.06.07
4. Letter – Campsie (Valuers) 20.09.07
5. Memo – SCC Archaeology 25.07.07
6. Letter – SCC Policy 06.08.07
7. Email – Natural England 18.07.07
8. Letter – National Grid 05.07.07
9. Letter – Guildford Borough Council 17.07.07
10. Memo - WBC Waste Services 27.06.07
11. Letter - Surrey Heath Borough Council 15.08.07
12. Letter – Civil Aviation Authority, Directorate Airspace Policy 04.07.07
13. Memo – Civil Aviation Authority, Aviation Safeguarding 26.06.07
14. Letter – NATS 04.07.07
15. Email – WBC Tree Officer 29.06.07
16. Email - WBC Environmental Health 13.07.07
17. Memo – WBC Environmental Services 09.07.07
18. Letter – English Heritage 04.07.07
19. Letter- Applicant (S106 offer) 12.09.07
20. Letter – GOSE 18.12.07
21. Memo- WBC Principle Policy Officer 18.09.07
22. Letter – CABE 14.09.07

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PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

The following planning benefits and obligations have been agreed by the applicants and will form the basis for the Legal Agreement to be entered into between the relevant parties:-

| | Obligation | Reason for Agreeing Obligation |
|----|---|---|
| 1. | Provision of £700,000 contribution towards funding of transport works to address wider town centre transport impacts. | To accord with Structure Plan policies DN1 and DN2 and local plan policies WTC18 and IMP3 |
| | Contribution of £720,000 towards environmental improvement schemes within Woking Town Centre including the infrastructure for the proposed Victoria Arch pedestrian tunnels. | To accord with local plan policies WTC18 and IMP3 |
| 2. | A contribution of £50,000 towards the provision of public art. | To address Policy WTC6 |
| 3. | A contribution of £30,000 towards the provision of CCTV within the roads abutting the site | To address Policy IMP3 and BE2 |
| 4. | Implementation of the approved Travel Plan in accordance with the approved timetable. The applicant shall thereafter retain and/or develop the Travel Plan(s) to the reasonable satisfaction of the County Highway Authority. | To accord with Structure Plan policies DN1 and DN2 |
| 5. | Submission of a revised Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement which furthers the objectives of Structure Plan Policy SE2 by providing the entire energy supply for the site by means of off-site CHP and renewable energy sources. In the event that it is agreed between the applicant and the local planning authority that a revised statement cannot be agreed the development shall be completed in accordance with the Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement as amended | To comply with SSP policy SE2 and local plan policies BE6 and CUS8 |
| 5. | The provision of a community facility on the mezzanine floor | To comply with SSP policy LO3 |

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| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | above the ground floor restaurant. The nature of the occupier and the marketing details to be agreed by the local planning authority. | |
|--|---|--|

RECOMMENDATION

Grant planning permission subject to a legal agreement and the following conditions:

1. Standard Time Limit
2. Samples of Materials
3. Samples of Surfacing Materials
4. Completion of S278 Highway Agreement
5. Restriction of Use
For areas identified for Use Classes A3/A4
6. Restriction of Use
For the area identified for use as the reception area Use classes A1 and A2 kiosks are to be permitted subject to a limitation of no more than 20% of the usable floor area being used for such purposes.
7. Restriction of Use
For the areas identified for Use Class D1
8. Renewable Energy
The development shall be completed in accordance with the Energy Demand and Renewable Technology Statement.
9. Water Conservancy
10. Boundary Treatment
11. Provision of Car, Cycle and Motorcycle Parking
12. Provision of Service Area
13. Provision of Shower and Locker facilities
14. Allocation of Parking Bays
15. Storage of Waste
16. Method of Construction Statement
17. Details of Ventilation/filtration Equipment
18. Landscaping Details

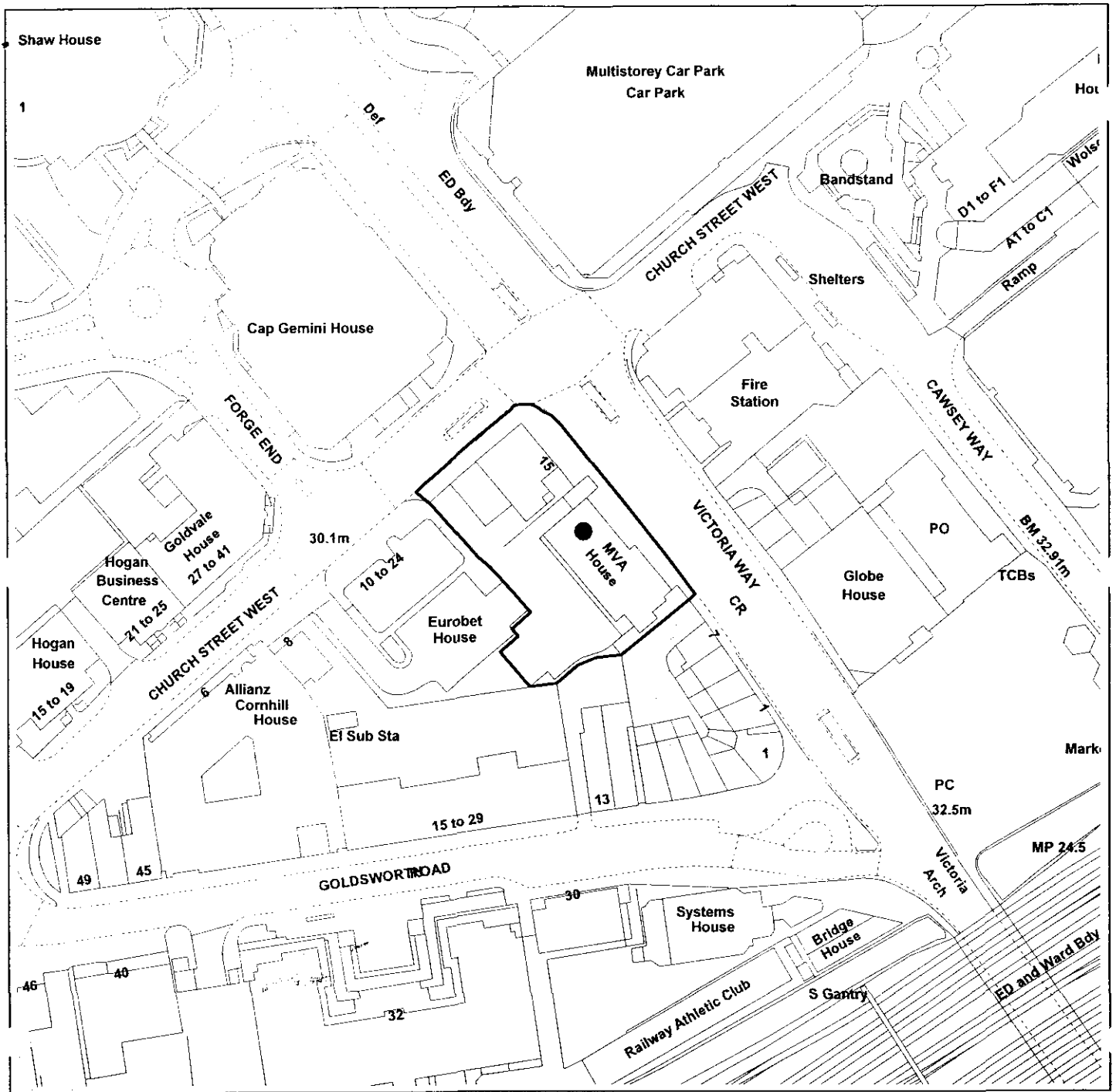
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19. Smoking Shelter Provision
20. Signage Strategy
21. Details of External Lighting
22. TV and Radio Interference Report
23. Foul and Surface Drainage
24. Closure of Existing Access
25. Highway Cleaning During Construction
26. Provision of Bird Boxes
27. Provision of Green Roof
28. Removal of PD Rights – Satellite dishes and antenna
29. Archaeology
30. Limit on External Noise
31. Survey of Road and Rail Noise
32. Details of Acoustic Containment Measures for Roof Top Plant
33. Provision of Litter Bins
34. Shop Fronts
35. Aviation Warning Light
36. Ground floor temporary screening
37. Sustainable Buildings
38. Compliance with Engineers Planning Report
39. Finished Floor Levels
40. Electric vehicle charging points
41. Highway work requirements prior to first occupation of 2500m² of floorspace
42. Highway work requirements and construction of access onto Church Street West.
43. Highway work requirements and site servicing strategy
44. Car and cycle parking, loading and unloading

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Informatives

1. Compliance with conditions
2. Local Plan Policies
3. Details of Planning Obligation
4. Approved plans
5. Water Resources Act 1991- discharge of sewage or trade effluent into controlled waters
6. Water Resources Act 1991 de-watering from any excavation or development to a surface water course.
7. Water Resources Act 1991 de-watering of any excavation.
8. Section 278 agreement under the Highways Act 1980
9. No signs, devices or other apparatus may be erected within the limits of the highway
10. Projections over or spanning the highway.
11. Reserved highways land
12. Obstruction of the public highway by the erection of scaffolding, hoarding etc
13. Authority to carry out works on the highway.
14. Temporary access approval or access closure
15. Offence to allow materials to be carried from the site and deposited on or damage the highway from uncleaned wheels or badly loaded vehicles.
16. Access is required to be 'completed' before any other operations
17. Detailed design of highway works –SCC may require accommodation works to street lights, road signs, road markings, highway drainage, surface covers, street trees, etc
18. Sections 60 and 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the associated British Standard Code of Practice BS 5228 : 1984 "Noise Control on Construction and Open Sites"



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Legend



Scale: 1:1250

| | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Title | PLAN/2007/0688 |
| Sub-Title | MVA HOUSE 11-13 VICTORIA WAY AND |
| Comments | VICTORIA WAY, WOKING |
| Date | 22 January 2008 |
| SLA Number | 100025452 |