

**Application No:** [W 23 / 0798](#)

**Town/Parish Council:** Hunningham  
**Case Officer:** Jack Lynch

**Registration Date:** 01/06/23  
**Expiry Date:** 27/07/23

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**Mace Buildings Ltd, Long Itchington Road, Hunningham, Leamington Spa, CV33 9ER**

Proposed portal frame extension of approximately 965 Sq.m. to existing workshop building to enclose existing site storage area/crane. Resubmission of planning application W/22/1701. FOR S and H Steel Frames

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This application is being presented to Committee due to the number of comments of support received.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Committee are recommended to refuse planning permission for the reasons set out at the end of this report.

**DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The applicant seeks planning permission for the proposed portal frame extension of approximately 965 Sqm. to an existing workshop building to enclose an existing site storage area/crane.

This is a resubmission of planning application W/21/1701 which was withdrawn because the proposed works were deemed inappropriate development, and the applicant did not present a case for very special circumstances.

**THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION**

The application site relates to Mace Buildings Ltd. The application site is located on Green Belt land in the parish of Hunningham with access off Long Itchington Road, southeast of the junction where the road is met by the B4455.

The site is host to a workshop for S & H Steel Frames who manufacture steel frames that are supplied to multiple markets. The workshop and ancillary office building are both visible from Long Itchington Road. The workshop is completed with red brickwork at its base with steel cladding on the upper walls and roof, with the rear of the building being completed in green steel cladding. The ancillary office is a two storey building completed in red brick.

**PLANNING HISTORY**

**Application site:**

W/22/1701 - Proposed portal frame extension of approximately 965 Sq.m. to existing workshop building to enclose existing site storage area/crane - WITHDRAWN

### **RELEVANT POLICIES**

- National Planning Policy Framework

#### Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029

- DS18 - Green Belt
- BE1 - Layout and Design
- BE3 - Amenity
- TR1 - Access and Choice
- TR3 - Parking
- NE2 - Protecting Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Assets
- NE3 - Biodiversity
- NE4 - Landscape

#### Guidance Documents

- Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Document- June 2018)
- Air Quality & Planning Supplementary Planning Document (January 2019)

### **SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**WCC Landscape** – Neutral comment.

**WCC Ecology** – No objection. Advisory notes attached.

**WCC Highways** - Objection. Insufficient information provided to demonstrate how vehicles/HGVs enter and exit the site safely.

**Cllr Simon Shackleton** – Supporting comment. Points include:

- Improvement of visual appearance,
- Requirement of additional planting,
- Extension appears similar to existing building,
- Reduction in traffic movements, and
- Proposal would not be visually intrusive in the Green Belt.

**Public response**– Five comments in support of the application have been received. Points include:

- Maintains and increases employment opportunities,
- Allows for expansion of business operations, and
- The proposed addition would improve the design of the workshop.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Whether the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances which would outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm identified

Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts being their openness and their permanence. Paragraphs 147-151 of the NPPF set out the requirements for assessing proposals that affect the Green Belt. Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (NPPF, paragraph 148).

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that all new buildings in the Green Belt are unacceptable unless they meet one of the exceptions set out. It goes on to state one of the exceptions are, the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

With regards to local planning policy, Policy DS18 echoes the requirements of the NPPF.

The applicant seeks planning permission to increase the size of the existing building by approximately 965 sqm. to enclose an existing site storage area/crane, this will increase the total gross internal floor area to approximately 1,600 sqm. The existing building has already been extended from its original form, of which the gross internal floor area was approximately 360 sqm. Therefore in this application, the applicant is seeking permission for an increase of gross internal floor area by 344%.

The development would therefore represent a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building and officers conclude that the development would reduce the openness of the Green Belt both visually and spatially, meaning that the proposal would conflict with exception C in paragraph 149 in this regard.

The development is considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt by reason of not falling into any of the exceptions listed under paragraph 149 of the NPPF. The proposal would therefore result in unacceptable harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and reduced openness. An assessment of whether any very special circumstances exist to outweigh this harm will now be made.

The submitted economic report states, "The Development will secure the long-term success and growth of the business, it will secure the retention of the existing employment, as well as generate four additional rural jobs. Enabling the Development presents an excellent opportunity to support rural enterprise, enabling growth through expansion on previously developed land."

The applicant explains that the extension proposed in this planning application will enable the business to "function effectively, grow and expand". They highlight that the extended part of the building will be used to, "allow steel to be bought in bulk, which will reduce the number of deliveries and will help to increase the profitability of the business".

The benefits of the proposal as summarised above are recognised and weigh in favour of the proposal. However, in planning policy terms, as also set out above, weighed against that is the significant harm to the Green Belt which would result from this proposal which the Committee are required to give substantial weight to.

For that reason, there is an objection in principle to the development and planning permission should therefore be refused unless Very Special Circumstances can be demonstrated.

Whilst the benefits of the proposal are acknowledged, Officers do not consider that they comprise very special circumstances sufficient to outweigh the significant harm to the Green Belt.

In order to comprise such circumstances, the applicants justification must be sufficiently compelling to demonstrate that it outweighs the harm to the Green Belt to which substantial weight must be given, for example by demonstrating the clear economic benefits of the proposal which can only be achieved at this location by means of an extension of this scale.

The purpose of the proposal is to provide additional storage capacity at the site which will improve the efficiency and effectiveness with which the business operates.

The applicant, in seeking to demonstrate that there are no alternative sites that would be suitable to meet the commercial needs of the company has submitted a marketing review.

As part of that the applicant notes that their requirements include:

- i. A stand-alone site,
- ii. A minimum of 15,000 sq ft of covered building space,
- iii. Suitable for heavy industrial use,
- iv. The building would require a minimum eaves height of 6 metres to allow operation of their crane hoist system to allow handling of steel work,
- v. A large external area suitable for lorry and trailer deliveries,

- vi. Close proximity of employee's houses. The business employs 20 members of staff, the majority of which live within 5 miles.

The marketing review completed a search at a 10-mile and 15-mile radius of the application site and concluded that there were no commercial properties currently available to meet the commercial needs of Mace Building Limited.

Officers have reviewed this document and consider that the parameters set regarding the site requirements are restrictive, not only in terms of the radius of search but also the nature of the specific requirements used.

Officers note that Leamington Spa and Coventry are 5 miles and 11 miles away respectively, with potential brownfield sites available, some of which have been referenced in the marketing review and discredited. Furthermore, other large towns in Stratford Upon Avon and Nuneaton are within 20 miles of the site, both also offering brownfield sites for such operations.

Officers therefore consider that the case advanced related to the lack of alternative appropriate sites isn't sufficiently robust to demonstrate that there are Very Special Circumstances in this case sufficient to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

Officers therefore conclude that the development would be inappropriate development and would, therefore, by definition be harmful to the Green Belt. It is harmful by reason of harm to openness. As instructed by the NPPF, substantial weight must be given to this harm. The justifications for the proposal advanced is considered to carry limited weight in Green Belt terms and is not considered to sufficient to comprise Very Special Circumstances so as to outweigh the substantial weight which must be given to the harm identified. Subsequently, the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal are not considered to exist.

#### Impact on character of surrounding area

Notwithstanding the harm identified to the openness of the Green Belt, the proposed design is considered to reflect the design of the existing workshop. The appearance of the workshop by way of its design does not have a negative impact on the character of the area due to the setting of the existing development.

The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Local Plan policy BE1 and the NPPF.

#### Amenity of neighbouring properties

The nearest residential property is approximately 100 metres away. Therefore due to the relationship between the proposed building and neighbouring properties, the proposal would not have a materially harmful impact on these adjacent occupiers. The proposed would therefore be acceptable in this regard.

The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Local Plan policy BE3 and the NPPF.

#### Access, Traffic and Parking

The existing business fabricates steel framed buildings and the proposal will allow easier storage of the product, which includes enclosing an existing site storage area/crane. As a result of the proposal one additional employee will be required and a further two new employees will be necessary in the future, thus the requirement for an additional three parking spaces. The parking layout is shown on the drawing entitled "Swept Path Analysis", and it is confirmed within the Design and Access Statement that the existing car park will remain the same.

As per the parking standards, this application site will require a parking space per 50 m<sup>2</sup> (industrial use). The proposed extension would create floor space of approximately 1600 m<sup>2</sup>, requiring 32 spaces.

The parking standards also require a parking space per 20 m<sup>2</sup> of office space. So as the internal floor space of the office is approximately 120m<sup>2</sup>, these 6 spaces would be included in our assessment. Therefore, the spaces required would be 38, sufficient spaces have been shown to be available on the site.

Warwickshire County Council Highways have objected to the proposed scheme. The swept path analysis shows the path of a HGV entering and exiting the site. The applicant has not provided a swept path analysis showing more than one vehicle entering and exiting the site. The Highway Authority acknowledge that the number of steel loads would reduce from approximately 500 to 65, which equates to a change of 2 HGV deliveries a day to 2 deliveries a week. However, they remain to have concerns over the movement of HGVs into this site and the risk of more than one vehicle using this access at one time, which would have a detrimental impact to highway safety and that the access would not provide a safe and suitable access point.

The swept path analysis also identifies how HGVs will manoeuvre around the site. The LPA consider the route that is shown on the swept path analysis as inappropriate. The vehicle cannot enter and exit the site comfortably in forward gear, as part of the vehicle will have to access the building internally. The "Lorry Reversing Bay" as identified on the floor plans, does not have a clear distinction between the workshops and there does not appear to be a physical barrier separating them. The route shown on the swept path analysis, combined with the additional built form of the proposed extension would generate significant safety concerns for users of the site. The layout would neither be safe or secure for motor vehicle users and or pedestrians and does not provide acceptable standards of amenity for future users and occupiers of the development.

The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary with Local Plan policy TR1 and BE3.

### Ecology

WCC Ecology note that whilst they do not have an objection to the proposal, they have highlighted the importance of care to be taken during completion of the works if approved. They have recommended the relevant notes are attached to any approval.

## Landscape

Landscape have submitted a neutral comment. They have highlighted their recommendation that hedged boundaries should be gapped up and planting should be completed to filter and screen glimpsed views of the development.

## **Conclusion**

The proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt and fails to preserve the openness of the Green Belt by virtue of being of an excessive height, bulk and scale. The very special circumstances presented are considered to be insufficient in clearly outweighing the potential harm to the Green Belt. The proposal also generates significant safety concerns for users of the site. The layout would neither be safe or secure for motor vehicle users and or pedestrians and does not provide acceptable standards of amenity for future users and occupiers of the development, based on the limited space available for HGVs to access the site and manoeuvre.

The development is therefore considered to be contrary to the NPPF and Local Plan policy TR1, BE3 and DS18.

## **REFUSAL REASONS**

- 1 The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Local Plan policy DS18 echoes the requirements of the NPPF.

It is considered that the proposal represents inappropriate development, which is harmful by definition. There would be substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt in both visual and spatial terms and the development would represent encroachment which would conflict with one of the purposes of the Green Belt. It is not considered that there are very special circumstances which exist that clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.

- 2 Policy TR1 requires development to provide safe, suitable and attractive access routes for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport users, emergency vehicles, delivery vehicles, refuse vehicles and other users of motor vehicles, as appropriate. Policy BE3 states that development will not be

permitted that has an unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of future users of the site.

The proposal fails to provide sufficient facilities for the access of multiple HGVs nor the safe movement of vehicles within the application site. The proposed arrangement would have a negative impact on the safety of the public highway and would be harmful to amenity of future users of the site.

The development is thereby considered to be contrary to the aforementioned policies.

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