

Development Control Committee 2 March 2022

Planning Application DC/22/0276/DE1 – West Suffolk Council, Gym and Library, College Heath Road, Mildenhall

Date registered: 11 February 2022 **Expiry date:** 11 March 2022

Case officer: Connor Vince **Recommendation:** Prior Approval Required

Parish: Mildenhall **Ward:** Mildenhall Kingsway And Market

Proposal: Notification under Part 11 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 - demolition of district offices, health and library

Site: West Suffolk Council, Gym and Library, College Heath Road, Mildenhall

Applicant: West Suffolk Council

Synopsis:

Application under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the committee determine the attached application and associated matters.

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Background:

The notification is made under regulations contained within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, specifically Schedule 2 Part 11 Class B.2. In such instances, an application is required to be submitted to the local planning authority for their determination as to whether the prior approval of the local authority is required in relation to the method of demolition and any proposed restoration of the site.

The application is presented before the Development Control Committee since it relates to an application made by and on behalf of West Suffolk Council.

Proposal:

1. It is proposed to demolish in full the former District Offices building including outbuilding, the former NHS Health Centre and adjacent former Public Library building.

Application supporting material:

2. The application has been supported by –
 - Site plan
 - Bat survey
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Tree report
 - Planning Statement.

Site details:

3. The site incorporates the former Forest Heath District Council (latterly West Suffolk Council) District offices, the former NHS Health Centre for Mildenhall and District and the former Public Library serving Mildenhall and District.
4. The council building was constructed circa 1980 and is constructed from a steel frame and precast concrete infill wall panels, external clad with facing brickwork walling and details. All ground and first floors are precast concrete 'planks' supported off steel frame. External windows and doors are generally powder coated aluminium sliding sash windows, double glazed, along with timber boarded, louvred doors to ancillary and plant room areas.
5. In June 2021, West Suffolk Council and partnering agencies opened the new Mildenhall Hub complex located to the west of Mildenhall Town centre forming a single site incorporating district offices, health centre and public library with modern facilities. The existing buildings located in Chestnut Close Mildenhall and College Heath Road Mildenhall therefore became redundant. The District offices closed in July 2021 with the Health Centre and Library closing in August / September 2021. All three buildings are now vacant and empty of furniture.

Planning history:

Reference	Proposal	Status	Decision date
DC/21/1536/FUL	Planning application - Installation of two metre high security fencing including personnel and vehicle access gates, to external boundary	Application Granted	17 November 2021
DC/22/0087/DE1	Notification under Part 11 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 - demolition of district offices, health and library	Application Withdrawn	8 February 2022
F/79/304	Office development for proposed District Council Headquarters	Approve with Conditions	12 July 1979

Consultations and Representations:

No consultations are required to take place and no representations have been received. However, consultations have taken place in relation to ecological and arboricultural matters.

Ecology – Comments awaited, these will be reported verbally.

Arboricultural Officer – No objection subject to details of Arboricultural method Statement.

Legislative Context

6. The notification is made under regulations contained within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015, specifically Schedule 2 Part 11 Class B.2. In such instances, an application is required to be submitted to the local planning authority for their determination as to whether the prior approval of the local authority is required in relation to the method of demolition and any proposed restoration of the site.
7. The issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:
 - Method of Demolition
 - Restoration of the site
 - Impacts on Biodiversity

Officer comment:

8. As set out above, the works proposed are permitted development, subject to confirmation from the Local Planning Authority as to whether or not 'prior approval' is needed. Consideration in this regard can only be given to the method of demolition and to the restoration of the site following demolition. Additionally, as part of its statutory duty, the Local Planning Authority must also have regard to biodiversity.

Method of Demolition

9. It is proposed to demolish in full the former District Offices building including outbuilding, the former NHS Health Centre and adjacent former Public Library building.
10. The proposals include the termination of the gas supply and electrical supply to the former District offices building along with the termination of the gas supply, water supply and electrical supply to the Health Centre and Library building. This will be undertaken via a combination of UKPN, Utility companies and West Suffolk Council appointed contractors
11. The entire site will be securely fenced by the appointed demolition contractor and dust screening added. All public highways adjoining the site including College Heath Road to the west and north of the site and Chestnut Close to the south will remain unaffected by the works and will remain operational and 'live' at all times.
12. The buildings in question will be initially 'soft stripped' of their fixtures and fittings with emphasis on recycling where possible. The buildings will be reduced to a structural shell. Limited levels of asbestos is noted within the buildings and this will be safely removed via Licenced Asbestos contractors where necessary in accordance with Health and Safety Regulations guidance
13. The buildings will then be reduced to ground level via the use of mechanical machinery working solely within the 'footprint' of the buildings. All rubble / debris and the like will be crushed and removed from site and steelwork recycled. The floor slabs to the three buildings will be removed along with the foundations and all arisings crushed and removed from site.

Control of Dust

14. There are in excess of 80 residential occupied properties within 100m of the site as well as an industrial premises and an operational ambulance station. Within a 350m radius of the site there are significantly more residential properties. The potential for dust pollution has been noted as high.
15. The activities on site with risk potential will comprise of demolition and debris removal. Materials arising from soft strip and from dismantling the frame have a small dust release potential. The dust risk from demolition of the brickwork and the concrete elements of the buildings does give rise to a medium potential dust emission magnitude.

16. These parameters combined give rise to a medium dust pollution risk from the site during the demolition process.

17. The following controls to reduce this risk will include:

- 1) Engagement with neighbours and provision of contact details
- 2) Compliance with any planning conditions imposed by the Local Authority
- 3) Keeping track of any complaints and actions taken.
- 4) Recording any instances where there is high visible dust pollution
- 5) Routine site inspections to ensure dust risks are controlled
- 6) Site layout and machine positions to reduce potential dust
- 7) Thorough soft strip
- 8) Using the existing building(s) as screens particularly keeping the Library / Health Centre standing until last as well as the northwest perimeter wall of the Council offices.
- 9) Enclosing and screening any high dust generating processes.
- 10) Soaking prior to dismantling
- 11) Water suppression on attachments during machine use as well as targeted hand-held sprays.
- 12) Atomiser or fog cannon use across the site area.
- 13) Preventing double handling of masonry and concrete stockpiles.
- 14) Sheeting of waste lorries.
- 15) Isolation cutting being water suppressed.
- 16) Preventing dry sweeping.
- 17) Road sweeping on site routes where required.
- 18) Adhering to note 3/16 (12) by Defra for any mobile crushing.

Noise Control / Abatement

18. The nature of demolition work on site in the crushing of the residual materials including brickwork and concrete will result in noise build up for a period of time.

19. Noise levels will be monitored throughout and all repetitive methods creating significant noise levels will be limited to normal working hours (8.00am to 17.00pm) Monday to Friday only. There is no planned weekend working.

20. Officers are satisfied that demolition undertaken in the terms specified above will be acceptable in general terms.

Method of Demolition in relation to Trees

21. All trees on site are intended to be retained. The Principal Demolition Contractor appointed will be required to supply and erect 'Heras' type fencing, fully secured and stable, to surround all trees within 5 linear metres (measured from extremity of canopy) to prevent damage occurring from the demolition works.

22. The Arboricultural Officer has advised that this manner of protection is not going to be viable due to the proximity of certain trees to the footprint of the various buildings and hard surfaces that are to be removed. There are numerous facets of the demolition process outlined in the Planning Statement that have the potential to have a significant detrimental impact

on important trees, and these will need to be subject to specialist input via a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) to cover the following matters –

- Dust screening –the design and method of installation will need to be demonstrated where it is inside of any Root Protection Areas (RPAs).
- The floor slabs to the three buildings will be removed along with the foundations – This will require additional consideration of how the removal of foundations may affect the stability of certain trees, namely T36-T40. Any demolition or subterranean works within RPAs will need to be supported by a detailed specification of working methods and require a schedule of supervision from an appropriately qualified arboriculturalist.
- On completion of the demolition works, the resulting trenches and surface depressions will be infilled with a combination of crushed debris and topsoil. The entire site will be levelled and grass seeded accordingly – ‘Crushed debris’ should not be used to infill any depressions within any RPAs, nor should there be any changes to existing ground levels within currently unsurfaced areas of RPAs.
- Any services left on site will be secured and made weather tight – This should be detailed within the AMS if it involves excavations within any RPAs.
- All paving slabs forming footpaths strictly within the boundary will be uplifted and crushed – The methods of this should be detailed in the AMS.
- All foul drainage located within the site boundary will be grubbed up and capped accordingly - This should be detailed within the AMS if it involves excavations within any RPAs.
- All surface water soakaways to within the site boundary will be infilled and levelled - This should be detailed within the AMS if it involves excavations within any RPAs.

23. Therefore, absent a specific Arboricultural Method Statement covering these matters the ‘method of demolition’ cannot be confirmed as being satisfactory. An Arboricultural Method Statement is awaited from the applicant.

24. Prior Approval for this element of the proposal is therefore required.

Restoration of The Site

25. On completion of the demolition works, the resulting trenches and surface depressions will be infilled with a combination of crushed debris and topsoil. The entire site will be levelled and grass seeded accordingly. All temporary fencing to the site boundary will be removed.

26. The existing security fencing will be altered locally to infill gaps and the site left secure.

27. Any services left on site will be secured and made weather tight via the installation of Glasdon style cabinets.

28. All paving slabs forming footpaths strictly within the boundary will be uplifted and crushed.

29. All inner service roads and existing car parking areas will be retained in their current condition and will not form part of the demolition works.
30. All street lighting to within the site boundary will remain in situ.
31. All foul drainage located within the site boundary will be grubbed up and capped accordingly.
32. All surface water soakaways to within the site boundary will be infilled and levelled.
33. The site will be levelled removing trenches and surface depressions.
34. All areas affected by the demolition and within the 'footprint' of the buildings will be finished with graded topsoil and grass seeded.
35. The site will be left secured.
36. Officers are satisfied therefore that in the context of this site the proposed restoration of the site is acceptable and that Prior Approval is not therefore required for this element.

Biodiversity

37. A bat survey has been submitted which confirms the absence of any roosting bats on the buildings or at the site. Furthermore, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been provided which indicates no likely effect upon and protected species subject to recommendations in the appraisal.
38. The Principal Contractor will also allow for the safe removal of all temporary fencing and associated parts from site on completion of the demolition works.
39. The soft landscaping around all buildings is to remain undisturbed and protected, as far as is practical.
40. In this regard Officers are satisfied that the impacts upon biodiversity will be acceptable albeit a consultation response is awaited from Place Services Ecology, which will be updated in due course, or at the meeting as appropriate.

Archaeology

41. No specific details have been submitted in relation to Archaeological deposits at the site. The LPA have been notified by Suffolk Archaeology informally at this stage that the more recent development of the site has likely had an impact on archaeological remains which may have been present. Some historical work may be advisable to confirm given the historical background of the site and also the wider site in general.
42. Discussions are ongoing between the applicant and County's Archaeological service in this regard. Should archaeological information be required to be submitted, prior approval as to the method of demolition and impacts on archaeological deposits will be required.

43.A formal response from the archaeological service is expected, and an update will be provided as a late paper or at the meeting as appropriate.

Conclusion:

44.In conclusion, it is considered that the method and manner of demolition is generally acceptable, but that having regard to the presence of trees on site and the lack of specific information it must be confirmed that prior approval for these further details is required. It is considered that the manner of restoration for the site will be acceptable and that the impacts upon biodiversity will be acceptable.

45.Accordingly, Prior Approval for restoration is not required, but that Prior Approval as to the method of demolition, with regard specifically to the trees on site, is required. Prior approval may also be required in relation to archaeological deposits, as above.

Recommendation:

46.It is recommended that:

1. It be confirmed that Prior Approval as to the method of demolition is **REQUIRED**; and
2. It is further recommended that Delegated Authority be given to Officers to confirm the method of demolition as being acceptable upon satisfactory receipt of further tree protection measures and potentially archaeology.

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online.