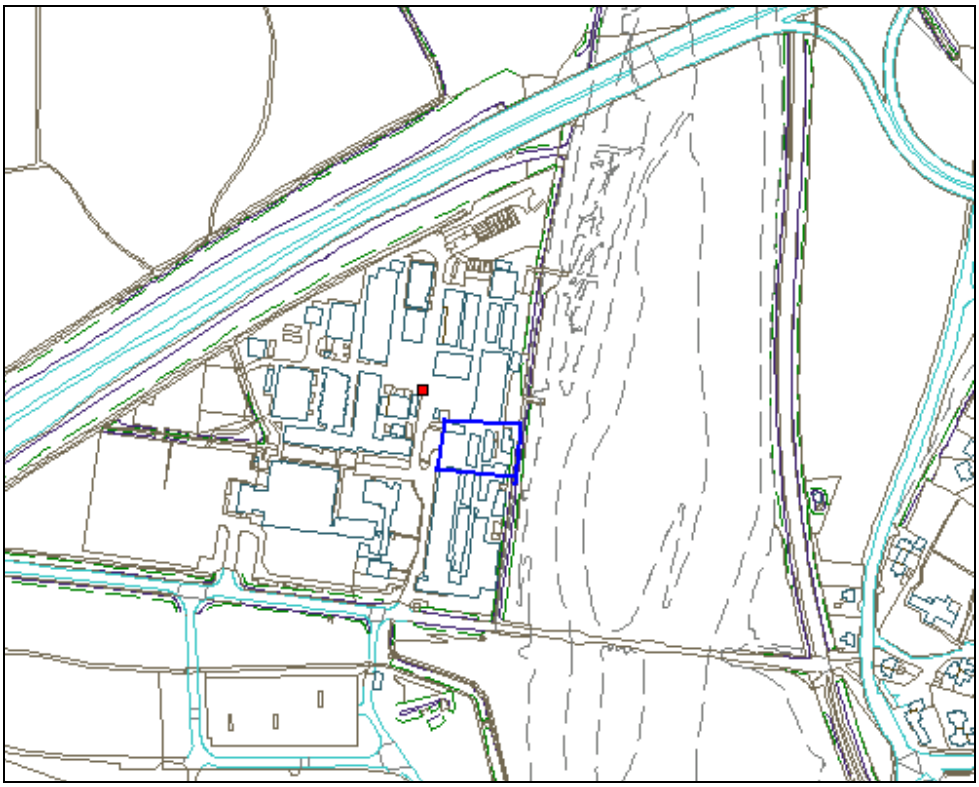
Application Number: AWDM/0441/13 **Recommendation – APPROVE**

Site: **Ricardo UK Ltd, Shoreham Technical Centre, Old Shoreham Road, Lancing, Shoreham-By-Sea, West Sussex, BN43 5FG**

Proposal: **Construction of a 2 storey externally clad building on eastern side of Ricardo site for full emissions testing of cars, light commercial vehicles and motorcycles, with ancillary office and meeting space. External plant to be mounted at eastern end at first floor level and enclosed by a metal louvre screen**

Applicant: Ricardo UK Ltd Ward: Mash Barn

Case Officer: Peter Barnett



Not to Scale

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Proposal, Site and Surroundings

The application site forms part of the larger 6.3ha site occupied by Ricardo UK Ltd, an engineering development and testing firm. The overall site is triangular in shape and is bounded by the A27 and South Downs National Park to the north, the River Adur to the east and Shoreham Airport to the south.

The application proposes the construction of a Vehicle Emissions Research Centre (VERC) on the east side of the site, adjacent to the River Adur. The site formerly contained a number of older buildings but these have already been demolished to clear the land in preparation for the new building. Vehicle testing currently takes place elsewhere on the site within a building unsuited to meet modern test standards.

The proposed building will have approximately 2800sqm of internal floor space on two floors. It is to be used primarily for testing vehicle emissions on the ground floor, plus ancillary office and meeting space, with plant located and largely enclosed on the first floor. An area of external plant is to be provided at the eastern end of the building at first floor, to be screened by powder coated metal louvres.

The building measures approximately 48m long, 31.5m wide and 10.6m high at the western end, dropping to 5.8m high at the eastern end with a 2.4m high screen above. It is to have a shallow pitched roof hidden behind parapet walls and finished in white smooth Kingspan insulated panel cladding at the front (west end) with white profiled cladding for the remainder of the building. These materials will match those used on the relatively recent main entrance building and assembly facility building at the site.

The site is at a lower level than the riverbank and footpath which runs along the eastern site boundary (approximately 1.8m lower) and there is a mix of maple, fir and hawthorn along the bank within the site.

Consultations

West Sussex County Council: No objection from a transport/highways aspect. Comments that it is understood the development is aimed at complimenting the existing work on-site, as opposed to significantly expanding operations. As a result, it is not anticipated that there would be a significant increase in employee numbers.

Adur & Worthing Councils: The ***Environmental Health*** officer has no objection but recommends that a full contaminated land condition is imposed should permission be granted.

Environment Agency: The development should incorporate flood proofing measures in the design of the building.

Lancing Parish Council: Committee had no objections to this proposal and was pleased to see that Ricardo's are continuing to invest in the area and wished them every success with this venture.

South Downs National Park: From a National Park perspective, in the context of the existing industrial area and its location they do not consider the scheme to be detrimental to the setting of the South Downs National Park. However soft scape screening of the building and controls over external floodlighting and prevention of night glow from internal lights would be appropriate.

Shoreham Airport Manager: To be reported.

Representations

No representations received

NB The applicants carried out a community consultation event prior to the submission of the application and received responses relating to the height and mass of the building and its visual impact; the need for screening/evergreen planting and noise concerns.

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adur District Local Plan 1993-2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AC1, AC4, AE18, AB25
National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The site is outside of the defined built-up area and within the strategic gap of countryside separating Shoreham from Lancing. As a major employment site within the District the site is subject to a specific policy AE18 of the Local Plan. This allows for business or industrial development as an exception to countryside policies provided:

"1. The development is essential to the economic viability of the occupier of the entire site;
2. the proposal does not conflict with the requirements for safeguarding the runway flight path at Shoreham Airport;
3. the development is of a design and construction appropriate to the locality and is unobtrusive in the landscape, and
4. on-site car parking arrangements and access to the public highway are acceptable."

The Local Plan recognizes that Ricardo UK Ltd plays an important part in the local economy, being a significant source of employment, and that this is a factor in considering applications notwithstanding the location in an area where development would normally be resisted.

One of the core aims of the NPPF is to encourage a strong, responsive and competitive economy, to create jobs and prosperity. The planning system should do everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Significant weight should therefore be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

Visual amenity

The building will be substantial and prominent, being located on the eastern boundary and visible from the riverside paths and the old bridge. The applicants are restricted however by the limited space available within the site to accommodate a building of this size. The size of the building is also dictated by its function as a vehicle emissions test facility where there are a number of fixed processes that are required which necessitate a certain floor area and clear height from floor level, plus space for plant and offices. Negotiation over the size and location of the building is therefore not possible on this occasion and consideration must therefore be given to its appearance and whether its visual impact can be mitigated.

The building will have a similar form as other buildings which have recently been constructed at the site and this is a result of the applicants desire to have a coherent design approach for new buildings, as they gradually replace the older buildings on the site.

The front of the building will therefore have white Kingspan cladding to match the reception building. However, the front of the building faces into the site and the public end of the building is therefore the rear elevation. The sides and rear are to be clad in white profiled panels rather than the smooth cladding at the front and the applicants were asked to consider using the smooth cladding around the whole of the building. However, they have responded by arguing that the distance at which the building is most visible is in excess of 125m and at that distance it would be difficult to clearly notice the difference between the smooth and profiled cladding. There is also a cost implication, with the change to the cladding likely to cost in the region of an additional £80,000 which is not available in the budget for this project. A partial change to the cladding was considered, on the rear elevation only, however this was considered to be detrimental to the visual appearance of the building as the rear and sides will be seen together and the difference in materials would be visually incoherent.

An improvement to the scheme has been the replacement of the originally proposed timber louvre screen to the external plant areas with metal louvres which will complement the building more successfully and be more in keeping with other buildings on the site. The timber louvres had a more alien appearance which would not have matched the overall design concept for the building.

The site is approximately 1.8m lower than the level of the footpath to the east which will help to reduce the height of the building when viewed from outside the site. Furthermore, the taller part of the building is positioned 12m into the site with the eastern end over 5m lower, but containing 3m high louvres. It should be noted that the roof ridges of some of the demolished buildings that previously occupied the site were similar in height to the proposed building. The building will appear bulkier with greater massing however as a result of its box-like form.

There is some tree screening within the site (hawthorn, elder and maple) which is not evergreen and which does leave the site exposed during winter months. This is

supplemented by trees along the riverside path which add a further layer of screening and it is considered that with additional planting, the impact of the new building can be softened.

From public views by the river and from Mill Hill, the building will be seen in the context of the wider Ricardo site where there is a large number and variety of buildings. Consequently, it will not be an isolated building in the landscape and will appear less intrusive then it would otherwise. Views towards Lancing College chapel will remain from the south east, albeit with the proposed building prominent in the foreground.

Overall, while the building is large and will be visible from public viewpoints along the river, it is considered that, on balance, its harm to the wider area is not significant.

Residential amenity

The site is sufficiently distant from residential properties to not have an adverse impact on light or outlook. The nearest dwellings are on the other side of the river, approximately 240m to the east on Steyning Road. The proposed building will test vehicle emissions and noise from the test activities is not anticipated to be any louder than a car running normally. Noise from the external plant at the east end of the building will be attenuated by the proposed louvred screen and the submitted acoustic report concludes that the proposal will not have an adverse effect on residential amenity.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has no concerns about the application.

Accessibility and parking

The development is not expected to result in an increase in traffic as the use is being transferred from another building on the site to the new facility. There may be an opportunity to create a small amount of additional employment but traffic impact will be slight. The applicants already have a Sustainable Transport Plan in operation and it will be updated to include any activity arising from this building.

West Sussex County Council has no objection from a highways point of view.

Flood risk

A flood risk assessment was submitted with the application which confirms that the building will be flood resilient. The site area is currently hard surfaced and the proposed development does not increase the impermeable area. The Environment Agency has no objection to the proposal.

Sustainable and resource efficient buildings

The building will be insulated to meet the Building Regulations, with low energy fittings. The building will be energy efficient as a result of using a Heat Pump to reduce

electrical consumption. Hot and cold water generated by the process systems will be used for heating/cooling office and meeting rooms in the building.

Contaminated land

The site is historically known to have been contaminated and remediation will be necessary. This can be controlled by planning condition.

Recommendation

APPROVE for the reason:-

The proposed development would help meet the need for economic and environmental regeneration without detracting to an unacceptable degree from the local environment. It can take place without resulting in unacceptable detriment to the landscape of the South Downs National park or to the open character of countryside within which the premises are located, without generating additional vehicular traffic, and without compromising airport safety. It consequently does not conflict with the saved policies of the Adur District Local Plan (AG1, AC1, AC4, AE18, AB25) or the National Planning Policy Framework

Subject to Conditions:-

1. 5 year time limit
2. Details of external louvres to be submitted prior to installation and erected prior to first use of building
3. Protect existing trees on site
4. New tree planting to be agreed prior to occupation
5. Full contaminated land remediation
6. Development to be carried out in accordance with FRA
7. No external lighting without consent
8. Approved plans

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by identifying matters of concern within the application (as originally submitted) and negotiating, with the Applicant, acceptable amendments to the proposal to address those concerns. As a result, the Local Planning Authority has been able to grant planning permission for an acceptable proposal, in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.