

	<p align="center"><b>REPORT TO PLANNING &amp; DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</b></p> <p align="center"><b>TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 January 2015</b></p>	
<p><b>APPLICATION REFERENCE NO:</b></p> <p><b>14/01708/FL</b></p>	<p><b>TARGET DATE:</b></p> <p><b>12 December 2014</b></p>	<p><b>GRID REF:</b></p> <p><b>501233-486830</b></p>

## **REPORT OF THE PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER – PSM/15/30**

**SUBJECT: Development of a new visitor reception centre, vehicle inspection bay, delivered goods store, guardhouse kiosk, vehicle entrance and exit points, and parking facilities. for Mr Tony McGovern Government Communications Headquarters Racecourse Road East Ayton Scarborough NORTH YORKSHIRE YO12 5TQ**

### **1.0 THE PROPOSAL**

1.1 GCHQ Scarborough is situated at Riggs Head on the Northern side of Racecourse Road between East Ayton and Jacob's Mount. It is a prominent, large concrete flat roofed building dating mainly from the 1960's, of little architectural merit and typical of its era. It is not in keeping with its open landscape setting. It has a large secure curtilage, which is brightly illuminated during the hours of darkness. The surrounding area, along with the secure boundary contains a wide variety of aërials and masts.

1.2 The existing car parking and reception facilities are located off Riggs Head, to the West of the main building. Staff parking is within the curtilage of the building and a separate visitor car park is situated on the western side of Riggs Head away from the compound.

1.3 This proposal involves the provision of a new staff and visitor car park, reception, and goods delivery building and vehicle inspection bay to the South of the existing building. It would be situated outside of the existing secure compound/curtilage of the building on a 1.9ha site.

1.4 Vehicular access would be taken directly from Riggs Head at the South Western Corner of the site. The car park would provide 40 visitor spaces, 217 staff spaces (inc. accessible spaces) and 10 overflow spaces. There would also be 20 motorcycle spaces and 26 bicycle spaces.

1.5 The visitor reception building would be situated on the northern edge of the car park, between the car park and main building. It would be a single storey building with a maximum height of 5.9 metres and a floor area of approximately 651 sq m. It has a barrelled aluminium raised seam sheet roof which curves into the north - south slope of

the site. A variety of contemporary sheet cladding materials would be used for the walls, the predominant one being a white Rain Screen cladding. A sheet showing photographs of the proposed materials has been submitted and can be viewed on the Council's website.

1.6 The goods delivery bay is situated towards the North Eastern Corner of the site. It would have a floor area of approximately 148 sq m. and a shallow mono pitch roof with a maximum height of 5.3 metres. Materials would match those of the reception centre, but the roof would include solar panels.

1.7 Close to the entrance, in the Western part of the site would be a vehicle inspection bay. This would have a floor area of 135 sqm. This also has a shallow mono pitch roof with a maximum height of 5.6 metres. The sides would be clad entirely in safety glass and the ends open. The roof would match that of the proposed visitor centre

1.8 A very small gatehouse would be sited within the car park at the barrier to the staff parking area constructed in materials to match the reception building.

1.9 The existing staff car park to the North West of the existing main building will remain as a hard surfaced area, brought within the secure envelope of the complex and used for container storage.

1.10 There are no proposals for the existing visitor car park on the western side of Riggs Head.

1.11 The application has been accompanied by: a landscaping masterplan and management plan; drainage details; tree survey; heritage report; and, geo environmental assessment

## 2.0 SCREENING OPINION REQUIRED?

2.1 No

## 3.0 PRE-APPLICATION COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3.1 None.

## 4.0 CONSULTATIONS AND COMMENTS

The following is a summary of the key and relevant comments received from consultees and interested parties. Their full comments and any accompanying documentation are available to view on the Council's website.

4.1 Seamer Parish Council - No objections.

4.2 Highway Authority - The design standard for the proposed site is DMRB and the visibility splay required is 90 metres by 4.5 metres. The available visibility is 90 metres at 2.4 metres, and would necessitate some removal of hedging and trees to achieve the

required highway visibility standard. It should be noted that the existing visitors car park entrance should be closed off and reinstated as this does not meet the required visibility safety standard and a new visitor car-park is proposed as part of this application, with a new revised access. Recommend 4 conditions concerning verge crossing specification; closing off the existing visitor car park; provision of visibility splays; and. prevention of mud on the road.

4.3 Environment Agency - No objection subject to conditions requiring submission and approval of a construction environmental management plan and preventing ground infiltration of surface water drainage.

4.4 Yorkshire Water - No comments.

4.5 Drainage Engineers (SBC) - No response.

4.6 Parks and Countryside Services (SBC) - No response.

4.7 County Archaeologist - The area has a proven archaeological potential, particularly for sites of the Bronze Age and Iron Age. The development area is bordered by several Scheduled Monuments that demonstrate that the landscape was extensively utilised for funerary and settlement activity in these periods. The Heritage Statement carries the closing comments that 'possible further work is required' (para 3.2) under the information requirements of the NPPF. In order to identify the significance of heritage assets within the site boundary and the impact of the development upon them the developer should have provided an archaeological field evaluation as the Desk Based Heritage Statement is insufficient to properly assess the archaeological potential. I would advise, therefore, that a scheme of archaeological evaluation should be undertaken to identify and describe the nature and significance of any surviving archaeological remains within the proposed development area, and enable an understanding of the potential impact of the development proposal upon their significance. In the first instance, I would advise that this evaluation should comprise geophysical survey, to be followed by trial trenching, as appropriate. In accordance with the historic environment policies within Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, this evaluation should be undertaken prior to determination of the planning application. This will enable an informed and reasonable planning decision to be taken as to whether the development should be permitted in its proposed form. If so, the above information will assist in identifying mitigation options for minimising, avoiding damage to, and/or recording any archaeological remains. The applicant/developer is advised to commission a professional archaeological contractor to prepare a written scheme of investigation (WSI) for, and to carry out, the archaeological work. I would request that a copy of any resulting reports from the archaeological fieldwork be forwarded to the Historic Environment Record Officer at North Yorkshire County Council for inclusion in the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record. I would be happy to comment upon the geophysical survey and trial trenching reports and advise you further.

Following submission of the requested pre-determination information:

I have read the geophysical survey report with interest. Significant areas of magnetic disturbance were detected at the site due to modern developments, including the metal perimeter fence, concrete structures and piles of rubble. Several curvilinear and irregular positive magnetic anomalies were detected crossing the survey area, the

nature of which is uncertain. It is possible that these represent soil-filled features of archaeological origin. However, given the developed nature of the site it is possible that these relate to modern ground disturbance. Therefore, I would advise that a scheme of archaeological mitigation recording is undertaken in response to the ground-disturbing works associated with this development proposal. This should comprise an archaeological strip, map and record to be undertaken in advance of development, including site preparation works, top soil stripping, to be followed by appropriate analyses, reporting and archive preparation. This is in order to ensure that a detailed record is made of any deposits/remains that will be disturbed. This advice is in accordance with the historic environment policies within Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, CLG. In order to secure the implementation of such a scheme of archaeological mitigation recording, I would advise that a condition be appended to any planning permission granted. If a programme of geotechnical investigation is proposed on site in due course, I would advise an archaeological response may be appropriate. I would request that a copy of any resulting reports from the archaeological fieldwork be forwarded to the Historic Environment Record Officer at North Yorkshire County Council for inclusion in the North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record.

4.8 Publicity - Consultation period expired on 15 October 2014.

## 5.0 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

5.1 None directly relevant.

## 6.0 PLANNING POLICY

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Attention is drawn to the following Development Plan and other planning policies and guidance which are considered to be particularly relevant to the consideration of this application:-

### **Scarborough Borough Local Plan (Saved Policies)**

- E1** - Protection of Open Countryside
- E5** - Road and Rail Approaches to Resort Towns
- E11** - Protection of Water Resources
- E12** - Design of New Development
- E39** - Development Affecting Hedgerows and Trees

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- NPPF7** - Requiring good design
- NPPF11** - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- NPPF12** - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

## **Scarborough Borough Supplementary Planning Documents**

None relevant

### **Local Planning Policy Guidance**

None relevant

## **7.0 ASSESSMENT**

### **The Principle of Development**

7.1 This site is situated in the open countryside outside the Defined Development Limits of any settlement. The facility is an important part of the national security network. The applicants have explained that these proposals are directly linked to improving and enhancing security at the facility and bringing it up to present day requirements, for example by positioning parked vehicles the requisite distance from the main buildings and having the ability for easier transfer of incoming goods from outside the site into the secure area.

7.2 On the basis of the information given, your Officers are satisfied that this proposal represents essential development in the interests of national security. The facility already exists, so there are no more suitable alternative locations and, as such, the principle of the development is acceptable.

### **Design**

7.3 Local Plan policies E1 and E12 require that the design of new buildings is in character with its surroundings. The existing building on site is a product of its time and function. It is not in keeping with its open rural surroundings, the area in general, nor visually appealing; it is what it is. The proposed new buildings first and foremost need to meet their functional needs, but should also relate to the main building, and avoid having a harmful appearance in the context of the landscape. The proposed buildings have a more contemporary appearance than the existing, but will be viewed against the backdrop of the main building. It is felt that they will not look out of place in that context. On balance it is considered that (subject to samples) the white wall cladding will be acceptable when viewed in the context of the older larger building and offer a fresh, new appearance. Once weathered the aluminium standing seam sheet roof is also considered appropriate. The 4 buildings have common elements and will form a cohesive group.

7.4 The buildings are of a modest scale, relative to the main building and the open, expansive landscape setting. They are also low, which will reduce their visual impact. They have been located to sit into or against the slope up to the existing main building which helps them blend into their surroundings. As will be discussed later they will not be overly prominent within the landscape.

7.5 For these reasons it is considered that the siting, scale and architectural style of these buildings is appropriate to their context and setting.

## Visual and Landscape impact

7.6 The main public viewpoints of the application site itself are from the A170, Racecourse Road and Riggs Head itself. The areas to the North and East lie within the GCHQ complex and are not publicly accessible.

7.7 The existing building is very prominent within the landscape from both Racecourse Road and Riggs Head during daylight and, due to site illumination, after dark. It is surprising therefore that, notwithstanding the area covered, these proposals will not be particularly prominent. Due to the undulating nature of Racecourse Road, the distance between the road and site, general topography and intervening buildings and vegetation, only glimpses of the car park and proposed buildings would be available to anyone travelling along Racecourse Road. The main views would be from the area just West of Pinewood Holiday Park and these would be distant and fleeting to car borne travellers. Any views and glimpses of the development would also be seen against the backdrop of and in the context of the existing building and would appear as an integral part of the complex and would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the wider landscape. Any such means will also be mitigated by the boundary planting which forms part of the proposal.

7.8 Due to the alignment of Riggs Head, the car park and buildings would mainly be visible from the new access point. The Highway Authority's requirement to provide a visibility splay will necessitate the removal of part of the existing hedgerow along the western boundary of the site which could open up views into the site. The applicants were asked to provide a plan illustrating the length of hedgerow to be removed, but have not responded to that request. However, it can be required by condition along with a requirement to reinstate the hedgerow behind the line of the splay.

7.9 It is considered that any adverse landscape impact of this proposal is justified by the essential need for the development. However, notwithstanding the scale of development, that impact is minimal and will not adversely affect the A170 road approach to Scarborough, in accordance with Local Plan policy E5 aimed at protecting road and rail approaches to resort towns. The loss of hedgerow is necessary to meet highway safety requirements and can be mitigated by replanting and thereby meet the requirements of policy E39 which seeks to minimise hedgerow loss.

## Highways

7.10 The Highway Authority has no objections to the proposal. Critically, they have not required any improvements to the junction of Riggs Head and the A170 Racecourse Road. They have recommended a condition requiring the provision of a visibility splay at the entrance to the new car park. This is considered to be reasonable, provided the hedgerow is reinstated behind the splay, thereby, restricting views into and across the car park.

7.11 They have also recommended a condition requiring the stopping up of the existing visitor car park on the western side of Riggs Head, opposite the existing site entrance because the access doesn't meet safety requirements. (This was not the subject of a planning application to the Borough Council). The application makes no proposals for this car park, but as it will be replaced and no case has been made for its retention, it is considered reasonable to require the whole of this car park to be removed and the site remediated. This would be particularly beneficial as it occupies an isolated

position, not well related to the rest of the complex, therefore its removal would represent a landscape enhancement, to offset some of the impact of the new car park.

#### Drainage and Groundwater Protection

7.12 The site lies within the recently extended Source Protection Zone 2 (SPZ) for the aquifer which provides much of Scarborough's drinking water. Local Plan policy E11 requires measures to be taken to protect such water resources. The Environment Agency has requested a condition requiring submission and approval of an environmental management plan for the construction phase of the development to avoid the risk of polluting the aquifer during that period. They have also recommended a condition restricting discharge of surface water to the ground to that from areas that have been specifically approved. In fact the application proposes that all surface water from the development is discharged to the ground via soakaways. This aspect of the proposal may need to be amended in response to that condition.

7.13 Foul drainage will be treated by a separate sewage treatment plant. None of the drainage authorities have raised concerns, but this will also need to be the subject of a separate discharge license from the Environment Agency.

#### Archaeology

7.14 The County Archaeologist identified the site as having proven archaeological potential and requested extensive pre-determination archaeological work including a geophysical survey and trial trenching. This led to a considerable delay while that work was undertaken and the results submitted. These have been considered by the Archaeologist who has recommended a subsequent scheme of archaeological mitigation recording be undertaken in advance of any development. This can now be adequately dealt with by planning condition.

#### The Existing Staff Car Park

7.15 The existing staff car park is situated to the North East of the main building. The applicants have explained that this area will be brought into the secure boundary of the site and used for operational purposes; the storage of containers associated with the work of the facility. This is considered to be an acceptable justification for retaining this particular area of hardstanding. The existing visitor reception building will be demolished when the new building is operational. It is considered that a 12 month deadline should be imposed on demolition, to ensure that an unnecessary, unused building does not remain in situ.

#### Residential Amenity

7.16 The only residential property in close proximity to the site is situated to the South of the car park. This is a dwelling with a certificated caravan site. The boundary between the property and car park has substantial vegetation and a range of outbuildings, which together with an adjoining paddock provide an adequate buffer and separation to protect the amenities of those residents. In addition the southern site boundary will be reinforced by further planting. Your Officers are satisfied that these residents will not suffer unacceptable harm to their residential amenity as a result of the proposal and that the proposal accords with Local Plan policy H10.

7.17 There are no other residential properties in close enough proximity to be significantly harmed by the proposals.

## POSITIVE & PROACTIVE STATEMENT

The following steps were taken in an effort to achieve a positive outcome to this application. The applicants engaged in extensive pre-application discussions with the Local Planning Authority to agree most aspects of the scheme prior to formal submission. The Local Planning Authority allowed the application to go beyond the normal target time for determination to allow the applicants the opportunity to undertake the necessary further archaeological investigation work. Without this the applicant would have been recommended for refusal in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework.

## RECOMMENDATION

**PERMISSION BE GRANTED**, subject to the following condition(s)

- 1 Development to accord with submitted plans and supporting documentation except where superseded by planning conditions.
- 2 Materials samples
- 3 Detailed landscaping scheme including replacement hedgerow behind visibility splay
- 4 Removal and remediation of existing staff car park
- 5 Details of boundary treatment
- 6 Archaeological investigation
- 7 Consent to discharge surface water to ground
- 8 Construction Environmental Management Plan
- 9 Verge crossing specification
- 10 Provision of visibility splays at access
- 11 Demolition of existing reception building within 12 months of approved reception building first being brought into use.

*David Walker*

## Background Papers:

Those documents referred to in this report.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES ABOUT THIS REPORT OR WISH TO INSPECT ANY OF THE BACKGROUND PAPERS, PLEASE CONTACT MR N READ ON 01723 232483 email [nick.read@scarborough.gov.uk](mailto:nick.read@scarborough.gov.uk)



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