

**Item 4d**                    **13/00882/FUL**

**Case Officer**            **Mrs Nicola Hopkins**

**Ward**                        **Euxton North**

**Proposal**                 **Construction of a grass overflow car parking area to the existing Business Park**

**Location**                **Chorley Business And Technology Centre East Terrace Euxton**

**Applicant**               **Buckshaw Court Management Company - Mr Tony Hayles**

**Consultation expiry: 29 October 2013**

**Application expiry: 15 November 2013**

### **Proposal**

1. The application relates to the construction of a grass overflow car parking area to the existing Business Park
2. The proposals incorporate the creation of an area of car parking adjacent to the existing office units utilising Terram Bodpave 85 Grass filled paver cells which is SUDS compliant and allows grass to grow through.

### **Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that this application is granted conditional planning approval

### **Main Issues**

4. The main issues for consideration in respect of this planning application are:
  - Background information
  - Principle of the Development
  - Parking
  - Crime
  - Trees

### **Representations**

5. **7 letters of objection** have been received raising the following points:
  - Will remove a large portion of the grassed frontage which also has a few remaining trees left (after many were felled to make the Buckshaw junction).
  - Even though the proposal is to create a grassed car park, when cars are on it, it will ruin what is left of the rural look of this area.
  - The current speed ramp is too far back from the junction to slow the traffic down.

- This proposal will create an eyesore for local residents.
- Don't wish to live next to a car park.
- The location is wrong as there is ample alternative space 50yds further up on this development that has been allowed to become overgrown and a dumping ground for rubbish.
- Putting a fence round the area only emphasises that it is a car park making it look permanent and not a last resort overflow.
- Why are an extra 45 spaces required?
- If spaces must be created there, use 1 - 20 , put them against the office and landscape with trees to hide the impact
- Dramatic modification to the landscaping from what must have been deemed necessary by the original planning application.
- The buildings have not extended and so the original head count limitations would still be the same; bus services continue unchanged; cycle lanes still exist.
- The only change since the original planning was agreed would be that public transport has in fact improved significantly with the Buckshaw Rail Station now being opened.
- I object to the inconvenience being shifted to the local residents rather than office workers being expected to make greater efforts to find alternatives to driving to work.
- The replacement of this landscaped area with car parking provision would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework clause 58 which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- The area of trees, shrubs and landscaping currently provides a small barrier to the business units which needs to be enhanced to ensure the rural nature of Euxton is kept.
- There are TPO on many of the trees and additional ones need to be considered due to the age and character they bring not to mention the habitat they provide to birds.
- Owls and bats are regularly seen at dusk and night flying in the area.
- Adding grass parking will create mud and mess every day of the year causing road hazards and danger to all motorists using surrounding routes.
- The replacement of this landscaped area with car parking provision would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework clause 58 which states that planning decisions should ensure that developments establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.
- There is sufficient land to the rear of the complex and also to the north of the complex that is suitable for development of car parking land

6. **1 letter of support** have been received raising the following points:

- Will ease congestion on the surrounding roads
- Will benefit the local economy

7. **Euxton Parish Council** objects to the 14 spaces due to the loss of green space and so the loss/impact for residents' amenity.
8. The Parish Council have also commented that there are alternative arrangements and positions which can be offered if the Borough Council is minded to refuse this application.

### **Consultations**

9. **The Architectural Design and Crime Reduction Advisor** has commented on ways to reduce the risk of crime and disorder at this site and wider community. This is addressed further below.
10. **The Council's Tree Officer** has commented on the proposals which is addressed below.
11. **Lancashire County Council Highways** object to the proposals for the following reasons:
  - I would re-iterate that the proposal would have significant environmental and transport impacts as it is apparent from the applicant's submissions that the site has no co-ordinated approach to managing travel demand.
  - As noted in the pre-application response, the site is in a sustainable location and the proposed car parking spaces are not associated with any new development. If allowed to go ahead, the proposal would only lead to increased car use and its associated problems of congestion and poor air quality.
  - The applicant should rather seek to reduce private car use through the introduction of smarter travel choices such as personalised travel plans, workplace travel plans, car clubs, car sharing and other incentives to change travel behaviour which should be developed alongside public transport, cycling, walking etc.
  - For the above reasons and those contained in the response to the pre-application enquiry, I recommend that you resist approval of the application.

### **Applicants Case (based upon the original submission for 48 parking space)**

12. The agent for the application has forwarded the following comments in support of the application:
  - There are currently 77 spaces within East Terrace business park's development which is already bursting past capacity and in realistic terms there are more than 120 vehicles visiting the development each day, a portion of these numbers are visitors and the need for internal visitor parking within the business park means that some employee's have no option but to park their vehicles on local estate roads and link roads causing congestion and health and safety issues to local residents.
  - Having carried out consultation with the Employers it is apparent that a further 50 overflow spaces are needed to ensure growth.
  - Having assessed the business park car parking capacity in the accompanying Travel Plan we feel that the park's management company and business employers have endeavoured to promote the use of safe and sustainable travel systems where possible with the likes of car sharing schemes and recommendations to use public transport but these measures are only usually viable to a select few in this sort of location. Whilst it can be argued that the site is located in a sustainable position, the existing public transport services aren't helpful or accessible to a large number of staff due to lack of direct links when using public transport.
  - Having viewed the situation on site we personally feel that this parking situation needs addressing before a serious crash or incident happens due to dangerous parking on public

highways. Additional staff gives a boost to the local economy, all companies consulted have indicated that they expect to grow their businesses in the future. This element alone will add further strain to the existing parking requirements of the business park.

- The employers have mentioned that they will encourage the use of car sharing, public transport links and cycle schemes wherever possible BUT the current expected growth and need for vehicles to fulfil job roles means more vehicle parking on site is required. If this situation is left unattended, more vehicles will have no option but to park on the nearby residential streets and feeder roads which in turn is a massive risk to local residents.

## **Assessment**

### Background Information

13. This part of the business park was approved as part of applications 02/00339/FULMAJ and 04/00589/FULMAJ. The officer report for 04/00589/FULMAJ confirmed that a landscaping strip was proposed on Euxton Lane which was considered in favour of the proposals. This grassed strip with associated landscaping has been established at the site.
14. When the planning application for the business park was considered it was noted that the car parking requirements were slightly above the parking standards, at that time, of 64 spaces however this was consistent with the previous approval and there was evidence of lack of space on the site at that time.

### Principle of the Development

15. The Framework states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit. Within a business park such as this the inclusion of areas of landscaping generally adds to the overall quality of the area in accordance with the principles of the Framework and the loss of such areas of landscaping is considered to be contrary to this guidance.
16. In the case of this site the landscaped areas to the front of the business park along Euxton Lane add to the overall visual amenities of the area and creates a visually attractive gap between the highway and the built development within the business park.
17. The proposed development incorporates replacing part of the grassed area with a new area of car parking which will inevitably impact on the character and appearance of Euxton Lane in this area.
18. There are mature trees on the site including a group of protected trees (TPO 1 (Euxton) 1996) located close to East Terrace, these will be retained as part of the proposals. The proposals do however involve the removal of one of the younger trees within this part of the site.

### Parking

19. Based upon the planning approval for the units in 2004 there is approximately 2,610 m<sup>2</sup> of office floorspace within the 6 units. Based upon Policy ST4 of the emerging Local Plan this equates to the following parking requirements:
  - 1 parking space per 30sqm
  - 5% of the total for disabled parking
20. The accompanying supporting documentation confirms the following staffing numbers along with their parking allocations however it should be noted that the parking requirements within

the Policy are based upon the size of the buildings not the staffing numbers. There are no current applications before the Council to extend the size of the six units within the part of the business park and as such the parking requirements are based on the size of the current units:

Unit	Company	Current staff	Proposed total number of staff envisaged	Current parking provision	Parking requirement (Policy ST4)
1	STC Energy	12	15	12	15.1
2	True Bearing	40	80	12	15.1
3	Studholme Bell/Derian House	20	23	12	15.1
4	Evamore Legal	20	20	13	15.1
5	Hearle House	8	36	15	15.1
6	Whitehead Solicitors	19	20	13	15.1
<b>Total:</b>		<b>119</b>	<b>194 (including existing staff)</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>91</b>

21. As noted above, based upon the current size of the office units there is the need for 91 spaces with 77 already provided. As such there is a deficit of 14 spaces.

22. It should be noted that Hearle House, Unit 5, has recently been subdivided into 12 smaller units as it is understood that the owner struggled to let the unit as one large unit. The reference to 36 staff is the envisaged number of staff which could be accommodated within the unit however at the current time only 3 of the units have been let and as such there are only 8 members of staff employed.

23. When this application was originally submitted concerns were raised in respect of the need for additional parking as, following several site visits, it was clear that there were numerous parking spaces available within the parking areas for this part of the site. In response to this the agent application has advised of the current situation at unit 5, as above, which is why there is currently available space. When this unit is fully let the allocated number of spaces for this unit will be occupied.

24. At pre-application stage The Highway Engineer at LCC was consulted and the agent was advised that The County Council would be unable to support that proposals as they would only increase the proportion of car-borne commuting to and from the site and would do very little in promoting sustainable travel in the area.

25. As set out above the Highway Engineer has reiterated his concerns with the proposals on the grounds that the proposal would only lead to increased car use and its associated problems of congestion and poor air quality. This is addressed further below.

26. In response to this the supporting document states that:

*There are currently 76 spaces within the development which is already past capacity and in realistic terms there are more than 120 vehicles visiting the development each day, some of*

*these numbers are visitors, the need for internal visitor parking within the business park means that some employee's have no option but to park their vehicles on local estate roads and link roads causing congestion and health and safety issues to local residents.*

27. Whilst the existing parking figure quoted is incorrect, the figure should be 77, it is acknowledged that people do park on the entrance to the site where there are no parking restrictions in place. It is clear from the submitted information and the experience on site that this business park attracts a significant number of car movements however it must also be noted that during several site visits there have been a number of vehicles spaces vacant and as such it is unclear why people are choosing to park on the access road to the site.
28. The originally submitted scheme incorporated a larger area of parking for upto 48 cars however the agent for the application was advised that there were concerns in respect of the visual impacts of the proposed additional parking provision and concerns in respect of the justification of additional parking spaces particularly when the high sustainability credentials (on a bus route, on a cycle route, close to a railway station) of the site are taken into consideration.
29. In response to this the scheme has been amended reducing the amount of parking proposed (reduced to 21 parking spaces) so that it is contained wholly behind the existing landscape buffers and grass banking's adjacent to the existing office buildings. This ensures that an element of open greenspace is maintained between the buildings and the highway in accordance with the original design concepts for this part of the site.
30. The scheme does still incorporate an access road along this greenspace frontage in order to provide a safe vehicular access point rather than a new access point directly off East Terrace itself however this will be constructed out of Biopave material which allows grass to grow through and maintains a green appearance.
31. However the amended parking provision still exceeded the Policy requirements without any justifiable need, such as additional provision based on actual staff numbers. This could have been in the form of a survey which identified:
  - How the existing staff Travel to work
  - Whether alternative transport modes are achievable for the staff
  - If they require a permanent parking space
32. This would demonstrate how many parking spaces are actually currently required based upon actual staff numbers. Without any justification the agent was advised to reduce the parking provision further so the scheme accords with the local Planning Policy (14 additional spaces). This reduces the land take required further and enables additional landscaping to be incorporated to mitigate the impact of the parking.
33. There are no current applications before the Council to extend the existing units and as such, based upon the floor area, 91 spaces on the site would be in accordance with Policy ST4 of the emerging Local Plan.
34. The site is considered to be a very sustainable one where a reduced parking arrangement could, in theory, be considered to reduce the amount of car-borne commuting to and from the site. Concerns that the proposals will actually increase car-borne journeys to this site have been raised by the Highway Engineer. The proposals now incorporate parking provision in accordance with the local plan policy which is considered further below.
35. Concerns have also been raised that cars park on the entrance road and it is unclear why this is occurring taking into account the above comments. The agent has been advised that the

Management Company should explore this issue and alternative measures to address this issue are being considered with Lancashire County Council.

36. It is noted that the neighbours have commented that there is space elsewhere within the business park which could be utilised for parking and is unsuitable. The remainder of the business park, excluding this part of the site, is within a different ownership and as such not within the control of the applicant for this to be a feasible option. The existing parking provided elsewhere on the site is utilised by the other uses present within the business park including the gym and nursery.

### Crime

37. The Architectural Liaison Officer has assessed crime figures for this area and confirmed that there are few reported auto-crimes within the last 12 month period. In order to reduce the risk of crime and disorder at this site and wider community the officer has made the following observations:
- Euxton Lane is a busy route, so passing natural surveillance is good in the location of the proposed car park. This helps to deter crime as the chances of detection are increased.
  - The proposed car park is overlooked from the blocks, again helping to optimise natural surveillance.
  - The hedgerows should be kept to a low level so that the car park is not hidden from view which would obstruct sight lines and hinder surveillance.
  - Low level lighting would be beneficial for use within the winter months. This would promote feelings of safety when using the facility during hours of darkness and deter crime.
38. Additional landscaping would be required as a condition attached to any positive recommendation and the officers comments in respect of hedges are noted. Additional lighting would further exaggerate the prominence of this overflow parking area along the frontage of Euxton Lane and is not considered to be essential given the level of existing street lighting in the area close to the application site.

### Trees

39. A number of the trees on site are protected by TPO 1 (Euxton) 1996 and these trees are proposed to be maintained as part of the proposals. To ensure the continued protection of these trees conditions can be attached to a positive recommendation.
40. The Council's Tree Officer has visited the site and confirmed that as the surface soil will need to be excavated to accommodate the Terram BodPave and the bedding layer and that the majority of the roots (90%) are within the upper 60cm of the soil the development has the potential to disturb the trees rooting area which could affect the trees health and stability. In response to this a condition has been attached requiring none standard method(s) of construction, where identified as necessary, to ensure the continued protection of the trees.
41. Although one young tree will be removed as part of the proposals the nature trees will be retained and as such will maintain the landscaped appearance of this part of the site. The Tree Officer has commented that to the south of the building on the grass verge there is a mature oak tree that is worthy of protecting and a mature poplar tree that is a good specimen. These are proposed to be maintained as part of the proposals and as such a TPO will be progressed for these two trees.

## Overall Conclusion

42. This proposal will result in the loss of a landscaped area of greenspace which acts as an effective 'gap' between the highway and the existing buildings. This space, in accordance with national policy, creates an attractive place to work and visit. The loss of this area of greenspace is therefore contrary to national policy. Additionally concerns have been raised that within this sustainable location the applicant should be seeking to reducing reliance on the private car in accordance with the Council's sustainability objectives.
43. This is considered to be a finely balanced decision. In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following table sets out the material considerations in respect of the proposals:

Positive Elements	Negative Elements
The provision of additional parking within an area where parking has been raised as a concern	The proposals may encourage car-borne related journeys reducing the need to consider alternative modes of transport within a highly sustainable location
Proposals will result in the loss of an area of an visually attractive area of greenspace which effectively separates the buildings from the highway	The amendments reduce the land take proposed incorporating materials which ensure a 'green' appearance is maintained.

44. The proposals will create additional parking provision within an area where concerns have been raised about parking. Whilst it is not clear why there are parking issues within the area taking into account the provision already provided (it may be that the 6 units on this part of the site are not creating the parking issues at this site) it is clear that, due to the size of the existing units, additional parking is justified.
45. It is considered in this case that 14 additional parking spaces could be provided adjacent to the existing office buildings whilst maintaining an open green frontage with additional landscaping to 'screen' the parking. This would ensure the existing office accommodation still provides a landscaped buffer area between the highway and the built development, accords with current parking policy whilst assisting in alleviating some of the parking issues within the area, as the spaces would be available for any users/ visitors to the Business Park.
46. Whilst additional parking provision at this site would further encourage car-borne journeys within this highly sustainable location, contrary to both national and local sustainability principles (Core Strategy Objective SO3 seeks to promote more sustainable modes of transport and reduce the need for car journeys) the additional provision reflects the parking standards associated with the 6 units in this part of the site. At pre-application stage it was considered that a work place travel plan would further assist in reducing car borne-journeys to the site and this can be requested as a condition to further reduce the potential for parking issues at this site, particularly taking into account the recent sub-division of unit 5.
47. As such, on balance, it is considered that the reduced scheme as currently proposed respects the most appropriate solution for this part of the site.



## **Planning Policies**

### National Planning Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework

### **Chorley Borough Local Plan**

The Chorley Local Plan Review was adopted in August 2003. It was saved in September 2007

The relevant saved Local Plan policies are:

- GN1: Settlement Policy- Main Settlements
- GN5: Building Design & Retaining Existing Landscape Features.
- EP4- Species Protection
- EP9- Trees and Woodland

### **Central Lancashire Core Strategy** (adopted July 2012)

Policies to be given weight are:

- Policy MP
- Policy 10- Employment Premises and Sites

### **Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026**

Relevant Policies are:

- ST4: Parking Standards
- EP3: Development Criteria for Business and Industrial Development
- BNE10: Trees

## **Planning History**

**99/00003/OUT:** Outline application for mixed development of site comprising Public House (Class A3) and office (class B1) with associated access and parking. Allowed on appeal

**02/00339/FULMAJ:** Erection of 4 linked office blocks with associated parking and landscaping. Approved 2002

**04/00589/FULMAJ:** To erect three linked two-storey office blocks and associated car parking and landscaping (part alternative to planning permission 02/00339/FULMAJ). Approved 2004

**Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission**

## **Conditions**

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission. *Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Title	Drawing Reference	Received date
Location Plan	417/ETB/LP Rev A	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2013
Proposed Overflow Car Parking Facilities	417/ETB/PL Rev C	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2013

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning*

3. The car parking area hereby approved shall not be utilised until all fences shown in the approved details, have been erected in conformity with the approved details. *Reason: To ensure a visually satisfactory form of development.*

4. A scheme for the landscaping of the development and its surroundings shall be submitted prior to the commencement of the development. These details shall include all existing trees and hedgerows on the land; detail any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of development; indicate the types and numbers of trees and shrubs to be planted, their distribution on site and those areas to be seeded, paved or hard landscaped. The scheme should aim to contribute to targets specified in the UK and Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plans. Landscaping proposals should comprise only native plant communities appropriate to the natural area.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of any buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species. *Reason: To ensure that a satisfactory landscaping scheme for the development is carried out to mitigate the impact of the development and secure a high quality design.*

5. During the construction period, all trees to be retained shall be protected by 1.2 metre high fencing as specified in paragraph 8.2.2 of British Standard BS5837:2012 at a distance from the tree trunk equivalent to the outermost limit of the branch spread, or at a distance from the tree trunk equal to half the height of the tree (whichever is further from the tree trunk). No construction materials, spoil, rubbish, vehicles or equipment shall be stored or tipped within the area(s) so fenced. All excavations within the area so fenced shall be carried out by hand. *Reason: To safeguard the trees to be retained on site.*

6. The car parking provision hereby approved shall be made available for all employees and visitors to the units of the Chorley Business and Technology Centre, East Terrace, Euxton. *Reason: To ensure the additional parking provision can be utilised to address the needs of the Business Park as a whole.*

7. Prior to the first use of the overflow car park hereby approved a Travel Plan for units 1-6 of the Chorley Business And Technology Centre, East Terrace, Euxton shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall include the following information:

- Appointment of a named Travel Plan Co-ordinator
- Travel surveys

- Details of cycling/pedestrian/public transport links to and through the site
- SMART Targets for non-car modes of travel
- Action plan of measures to be introduced, and appropriate funding
- Details of arrangements for monitoring and review of the Travel Plan for a period of at least 5 years

Units 1-6 thereafter shall be managed in accordance with the approved Travel Plan arrangements.

*Reason: Within this highly sustainable location a reduced parking provision could in theory be considered however to ensure that further parking issues are not created at this site the travel plan should seek to reduce the number of car borne trips and encourage the use of public transport*

8. The Terram Bodpave 85 paver cells for the construction of the access road and parking spaces, detailed on the approved plans, shall be used and no others substituted. *Reason: To ensure that the materials used are visually appropriate to the locality and to retain the open, green appearance of this landscaped area of the Business Centre.*

9. Before the development hereby permitted is first commenced full details of existing and proposed ground levels and proposed parking area finished floor levels (all relative to ground levels adjoining the site) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, notwithstanding any such detail shown on previously submitted plans. The development shall be carried out strictly in conformity with the approved details. *Reason: To protect the appearance of the locality and to ensure a visually satisfactory form of development.*

10. Notwithstanding the submitted details prior to the commencement of the development a plan detailing the root protection areas for the retained trees shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Any proposed works required within the identified root protection areas shall be undertaken in accordance with a construction method which has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to ensure the continued protection of the trees. *Reason: Disturbance within the trees rooting area could seriously affect the trees health and stability and as such to ensure the continued protection of the trees a non-standard method of construction may be required.*