



BIDWELLS

Your ref: Call for Sites
Our ref: CF/Roxton
DD: 07880 187514
E:
Date: 14/08/2020

Bedford Borough Council
Planning Policy Team
Borough Hall
Cauldwell Street
Bedford
MK43 9AP

Sent via Email:

planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk

Dear Mr Shortland,

**BEDFORD BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN
CALL FOR SITES SUBMISSION
LAND AT ROXTON, BEDFORDSHIRE**

On behalf of our clients,

we welcome this opportunity to submit the land at
Roxton, Bedfordshire for consideration to the Call for Sites.

The submission includes: this covering letter, a Call for Sites form which has been prepared on behalf of our clients and a red line plan showing the site boundary and the point of access.

This covering letter aims to provide some additional information to support the submission and demonstrate that the site is a suitable location for development. It should be read alongside our comments on the Issues and Options Paper, to be submitted in due course, which cover the high-level spatial decisions the Council will need to make in developing the Local Plan.

The site is located in a strategic position, to the south west of the Black Cat Roundabout between Bedford Road and the Great North Road (A1). Access to the site would be provided via two access points from the Bedford Road. An additional emergency access point could be provided if required.

The site benefits from exceptional access to the existing and proposed road network including the A421 which heads west towards Milton Keynes and the M1. The Black Cat Roundabout leads onto the A1 and the soon to be upgraded A428 which will improve connections between Oxford and Cambridge. In addition, improvements are proposed for the new Oxford to Cambridge railway line which will have stations at St Neots / Sandy and Wixams, both of which will be accessible from this site. The site is therefore considered to be well located to the Arc growth corridor and would enable much needed commercial space in the heart of this growth area.

This submission covers some 22.26 hectares of land. In terms of the indicative quantum of development, this site is considered suitable for approximately 7.4 hectares of commercial space and additional supporting infrastructure, possibly including the relocated services to the north east of the Black Cat, which will be displaced following the Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet road improvement scheme. The amount of commercial space is based on the assumption that approximately 40% of the site will be built

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form with the remaining area for service roads, loading bays and car parks etc. The level of proposed development will guarantee that appropriate supporting development and infrastructure can be provided ensuring that the existing road networks are not impacted by the proposed development.

This site is considered to have significant potential for commercial development and is available for development.

Site Description

This 22.26 hectare site is roughly triangular in shape and is located to the south west of the Black Cat Roundabout. The old A421 (Bedford Road) forms the western side of the site and the A1 forms the eastern boundary. To the south of the site is Roxton.

The majority of the site is currently in arable use. There is however also an existing garden centre. This garden centre would be demolished to accommodate the proposed development. There are limited landscape features on the site however Rockham Ditch runs west to east through the site and links to the Great Ouse river to the east.

Roxton is classified as a 'Rural Service Centre' and as such is a Group 2 village. The existing services include a Post Office and a primary school. The site is located in close proximity to a number of larger settlements including: Bedford, Wyboston, St Neots and Sandy.

The site has exceptional links to the wider road network, linking it to both the A1 and M1 as well as the A421 and A428 providing good road connections in all directions.

This site is therefore considered to be in a strategic location which is well located to both the existing and planned infrastructure development for Bedford Borough and beyond.

Topography & Landscape

The majority of the land is flat and in arable production. The existing garden centre is located to the west of the site and consists of a number of buildings and areas of hard standing. There are limited landscape features on the site, with a small number of trees and hedging limited to the field boundaries.

The land is classified as Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands and has been formed through amalgamated fields with many of the historic field boundaries being removed decades ago to make way for modern farming methods.

Ecology

In terms of ecology, there are a number of priority species including Corn Bunting and Lapwing, however the site's location sandwiched between two major roads is likely to act as a hard barrier to wildlife, making it a poor habitat for many species. In addition, as stated above, there are limited landscape features and the land has been in arable production for decades.

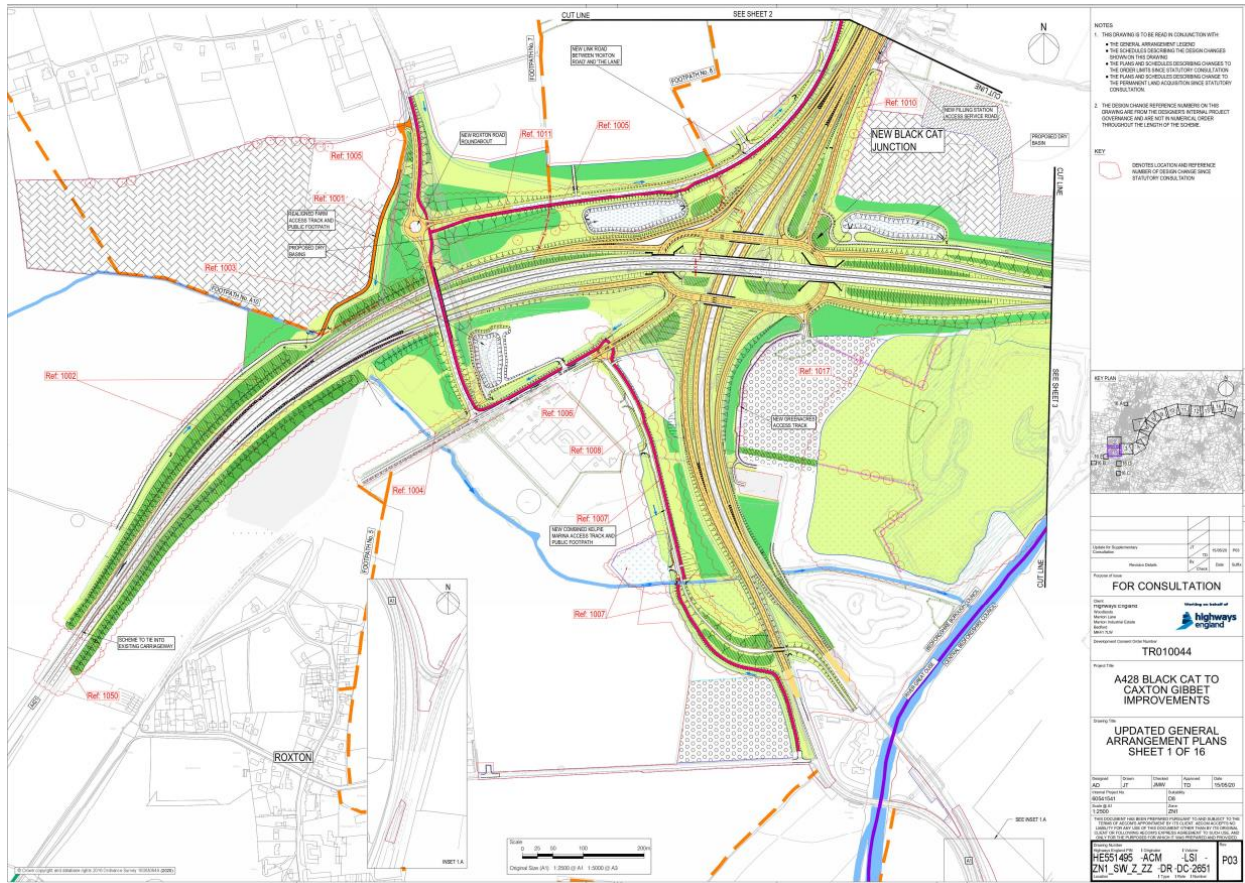
A full ecological survey would be provided alongside any planning application and appropriate mitigation measures would be proposed if necessary.

Access

Highways England are proposing to upgrade the route between the Black Cat roundabout and Caxton Gibbet roundabout. These improvements include a new 10-mile dual carriageway and a number of junction improvements. It aims to improve journey times between Milton Keynes and Cambridge. The A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements – supplementary consultation closes on the 26 August 2020. It is anticipated that the road will open in 2025/26. The current consultation includes the following

plan which illustrates the proposed changes. This includes a new access road to Kelpie Marine Boat Yard.

Plan Taken from the Highways England Consultation on the A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet Improvements, Supplementary Consultation: Updated General arrangement Plan, Sheet 1 of 16



There are three main existing vehicular accesses from Bedford Road, including the existing access into the garden centre which has a right-hand turn lane into the site. The other accesses are both existing field accesses. As shown above, there is likely to be an access for Kelpie Marine Boat Yard running through the north and eastern edges of the site.

It is likely that two access points will be required to service the proposed development. These will be designed to ensure the safety of the existing and proposed vehicle movements as well as any pedestrians or cyclists. The two accesses will be the existing access into the garden centre and the existing field access to the north of the garden centre access that is proposed to be upgraded to serve Kelpie Marine Boat Yard. A third, emergency access, could be provided if necessary.

Although detailed access drawings have not been prepared, it is clear that given the existing road alignment and good visibility splays, safe vehicular access can be formed. Furthermore, improvements could be made to the wider road network through the inclusion of a new roundabout to link Roxton Road with Bedford Road and the site, this would significantly improve the wider access to the realigned Black Cat roundabout.

There are a number of existing bus services to Roxton, linking it to Biggleswade, Tempsford, Blunham, Great Barford, St Neots, Bedford and Milton Keynes. These include bus services: 5, 6 112 and the X5 which links Cambridge to Oxford via Milton Keynes.

Given the sites location on the junction between the A421 / A1 and then the A428, the site is well connected to the existing road networks. In addition, the east – west rail is due to link Oxford to Cambridge and have stations in St Neots / Sandy and the Wixams, both of which are well located to this site. The site is therefore considered to be located in the heart of the Arc which is a strategic growth corridor.

Heritage Assets

There are no known heritage assets on this site. An archaeological desk-based assessment would be undertaken to understand what level of archaeological surveys would be required should a planning application be prepared.

In terms of listed buildings, there are no listed buildings on the site, with the closest listed building being College Farmhouse to the south west of the site. In addition, Tempsford Bridge which is located over the old Great North Road has a Grade II listing. The proposed development would not impact on these listed buildings, their curtilage or their setting.

Flood Risk

The entirety of the site is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore is not identified as an area at risk of flooding. Notwithstanding this, foul and surface water drainage will be carefully considered during the design process to ensure that there are no adverse impacts of the development in terms of drainage.

Other Considerations

There are overhead cables to the east of the site, although these are within the field boundaries, due consideration would be given to ensure they are appropriately included within the design.

Although the land is within the ownership of five landowning parties, there is a collaboration agreement between the landowners which will ensure that all parties are supportive of the development.

The landowners are working with Highways England in relation to the proposed A428 Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements and the new access road to the Kelpie Marine Boat Yard will be incorporated within the design.

A number of approaches have been made to the landowners by developers and as such it can be demonstrated that there is significant commercial interest in the site.

Conclusions

This site is located in the heart of the Arc and ideal for commercial uses given its location at the crossroad created by the A1 and the A421 / A428. The site lends itself to businesses, particularly distributors, who operate nationally given its unparalleled access to roads leading north, south, east and west. Given the level of infrastructure proposed for this area, the provision of much needed commercial space provides an excellent opportunity for the Borough.

The site would be able to accommodate 7.4 hectares of commercial space and would lend itself to B8 'storage and distribution' uses given the excellent positioning and growth in the B8 market in particular. In addition, it would be possible to accommodate approximately 1ha of mixed use, this may include the relocated hotel and food outlets that will be displaced as part of the A428 realignment.

We have not identified any significant constraints to development and as such the site would be deliverable in the short term (years 0-5 of the Local Plan). This would align with the construction of the Black Cat to Caxton Gibbet improvements which are due to open in 2025/2026.

The site is located in close proximity to the services and facilities of the surrounding villages and towns and would provide employment opportunities for the local area.

This site is therefore considered suitable for development and should be considered favourably in the review of the Local Plan.

We trust that the detail within this letter and the enclosed form is helpful for the consideration of the site. Should you have any queries in respect of this submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

We very much welcome this opportunity to participate in the preparation of the Bedford Local Plan and would be most grateful if you could confirm receipt of these representations as well as informing us of the next phases of consultation and preparation.

Kind regards

Associate

Enclosures:

- Completed Call for Sites Form
- Location Plan Detailing Proposed Site Access Points