

Somerset County Council

Regulation Committee –

Report by Service Manager - Planning Control, Enforcement & Compliance :

Application Number: SCC/3775/2020

Date Registered: 23 December 2020

Parish: Taunton

District: Somerset West and Taunton

Local Member: Cllr Simon Coles

Case Officer: Colin Arnold

Contact Details: carnold@somerset.gov.uk

Description of Application:

Full planning application for the erection of a three storey building of 2,613 sqm floor space (Use Class E) including office, reception, meeting rooms and flexible collaboration workspaces with 159 sqm ancillary cafe use and external car parking area on land adjacent to Trenchard Way, Taunton.

Grid Reference: Easting - 322828, Northing - 125306

Applicant: John Houlihan Somerset County Council

Location: Taunton

1. Summary of Key Issues and Recommendation(s)

1.1 The application relates to the proposed erection of a three-storey office building to be used as a digital innovation centre on land adjacent to Trenchard Way, Taunton within the Firepool regeneration area.

1.2 The main issues for Members to consider are:

- Principle of development
- Highways and Transport
- Design, Mass and Bulk
- Landscaping
- Ecology
- Public Art

- 1.3 **It is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the imposition of the conditions listed in paragraph 9.1 of the report, and that authority to undertake any minor non-material editing which may be necessary to the wording of those conditions be delegated to the Strategic Commissioning Manager – Economy & Planning.**

2. Description of the Site

- 2.1 The site is in an area known as Firepool which lies in the centre of Taunton, between the railway station and County Cricket Ground.
- 2.2 The site itself is an empty site on the northern side of Canal Road adjacent to a terrace of properties on its western side. To the east is a large building currently covered in scaffolding. The site was formerly Goddard Garage Services and is part hardstanding/part scrubby foliage and there are two fairly mature fir trees to the rear of the site adjacent to the block of terraced houses.
- 2.3 The site at the Canal Road is at between 16m to 16.75m to finished floor level rising up fairly dramatically to the rear of the site (facing the NIDR) to 19 to 20m at the upper ground level. The northern end of the site fronts onto the NIDR and faces the rear of the Taunton Train station.
- 2.4 The surrounding area is a mixture of residential and there is a large car park to the south east. In terms of building heights this varies considerably from the domestic scale residential two storey properties to high rise flats development (up to five storeys in places).
- 2.5 Canal Road provides pedestrian and vehicular passage into the town centre of Taunton (northern part).
- 2.6 The site is within flood zone 1 which is land at the least risk of flooding as assessed by the Environment Agency. The site is not within any Conservation Area and the nearest Listed Building is some considerable distance away.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal relates to a proposed new Digital Innovation Centre for Taunton. It is understood that it will serve as a multi-purpose business centre 'aimed at catalysing commercial innovation and collaboration.
- 3.2 The building will be three storeys in height and have a flat roof. A mixture of materials are proposed for the walls including grey facing brickwork, bronze coloured metal cladding and precast concrete banding. In terms of fenestration there will be glazed curtain walling with capping and bronze coloured framing to windows with metal louvres. The doors on the façade will have glazed curtain walling with bronze coloured capping.

- 3.3 Vehicular access to the site is to be gained via Canal Road and a car parking area for 31 vehicles (including 2 disabled spaces) will be provided on the Canal Road side of the proposed building.
- 3.4 The scheme has a floor area of 2,613 square metres which includes office, reception, meeting rooms and flexible collaboration workspaces. There is a proposed café area of some 159 square metres which will be for the users of the building.

4. Background

- 4.1 Outline planning permission was granted in December 2010 on Priory Bridge Car Park for a mixed-use development of offices and residential, with an option for hotel accommodation in lieu of office space. All matters were reserved other than access into the site which would be derived from Priory Bridge Road. The maximum total amount of floorspace for the commercial development was be 11,200 sq m (gross external) with 112 car parking spaces and 65 cycle parking spaces. It also included a maximum of 49 residential units with associated parking.
- 4.2 Reserved matters consent was subsequently issued for the erection of the Viridor office building and 49 houses known as Waters Edge. The Outline planning permission has now expired and no further reserved matters applications can be submitted under that permission.
- 4.3 Full planning permission was granted for riverside public realm works along the River Tone corridor in January 2011 and these have been implemented on the southern side of the river, resulting in the creation of 'Pip's Park'.
- 4.4 Outline consent (38/17/0150) was granted on 13 March 2019 with some matters reserved, except for access for the NIDR only, for the redevelopment of the former cattle market site to provide up to 3500sqm of convenience retail development (Class A1), up to 6000sqm of non-food development (A1), up to 4000sqm of office (B1) or hotel (C1), up to 3900sqm of assembly/leisure (D2) and non-residential institutions (D1) (of which no more than 1500sqm shall be D1) , up to 2600sqm of food and drink establishments (A3/A4/A5), and up to 200 residential units (C3) with redevelopment of the former Priory Bridge Road car park and former 84-94 Priory Bridge Road to provide up to 2964sqm of office (B1) and 5525sqm of office (B1) or hotel (C1) uses and a further 1300sqm of A3/A4/B1 (office) D2 uses with car parking, landscaping, public realm, access, (in detail for the NIDR connection) highways, infrastructure works and relevant demolition at Firepool, Priory Bridge Road, Taunton (resubmission of 38/15/0475)

5. The Application

5.1 Documents submitted with the application:

- P18048-AWW-V1-XX-0100 – Site Location Plan - P02
- P18048-AWW-V1-XX-0110 – Proposed Site Plan – P5
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0120 – Street Scenes – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0130 – Proposed Landscape Plan – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0200 – Lower Ground & Ground Level – P3
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0201- Levels 1 & 2 – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0202 – Roof Plan – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0300 – Proposed Elevations – P4
- 1025-01 - Landscape Proposals
- Design and Access Statement – AWW – September 2020
- Planning Statement – Black Box Planning – September 2020
- Transport Statement – 14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-TP-4001 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Vehicle Tracking Plan – 14623-HYD-ZZ-ZZ-DR-C-0100 P01 – Hydrock
- Flood Risk Assessment and BREEAM – 14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-FR-0001 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Drainage Strategy – C-14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-DS-0100 P01 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Surfacing Specification Plan – C-14623-HYD-ZZ-ZZ-DR-C-0120 P01 – Hydrock – November 2020
- Phase 1 Desk Study Report – DIC-HYD-XX-XX-RP-GE-1000 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief – CR0561 – Cotswold Archaeology – December 2020
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Cotswold Wildlife Surveys – September 2020
- Tree Survey – 04511 – Aspect – September 2020
- Tree Constraints Plan – 04511 – Aspect - TCP 11.9.2020
- Layout Impact Plan – 04511 – Aspect – LIP 23.9.2020

- Project Environmental Plan – T01617 – Willmott Dixon - December 2020

5.2 It should be noted that originally a two phase scheme was proposed for a larger development. Phase two (now removed from the proposal) involved the development of 2000 sqm GIA of offices over 5 storeys with associated service access, highways and landscaping works. This was proposed to take place and be attached to the south of the main block of phase one and was in outline form. All bar the comment from Somerset West and Taunton Council are based on the original proposal but given that the scheme has been reduced in scale following the removal of this element it was not considered necessary to reconsult on the amended proposal.

6. Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 6.1. The Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 refer to various types of development in Schedules 1 and 2. Development proposals falling within Schedule 1 are regarded as 'EIA development' and trigger EIA procedures. For Schedule 2 development, consideration must be given to whether it is likely to have a significant effect on the environment by virtue of its nature, size or location in deciding whether or not the proposed development should be regarded as EIA development.
- 6.2. A three storey office building does not fall within the scope of Schedule 1 of the 2017 EIA Regulations. While paragraph 10 (b) of Schedule 2 includes urban development projects, the area of development does not exceed that listed in that Schedule, and the proposal is not within a sensitive area. The application falls below the indicative criteria and thresholds of more than 1 hectare of urban development which is not dwellinghouse development. The proposed development is therefore not regarded as 'EIA development' and submission of an Environmental Statement was not required.
- 6.3. It should be noted that Somerset West and Taunton considered that the matter was EIA development but that was on the larger scheme which was approximately twice the size of this proposal.

7. Consultation Responses Received

External Consultees (Please note that these comments were mainly based on a larger scheme of two phases – as this scheme has been reduced to phase one only reconsultation was not considered necessary)

7.1 **Canal & River Trust – no comment.**

7.2 **Avon and Somerset Police – no objection subject to comments.**

Designing out Crime Officer's (DOCO) working in partnership, have a responsibility for Crime Prevention through Environmental Design projects within the Somerset West & Taunton District Council area. As a Police Service we offer advice and guidance on how the built environment can influence crime and disorder to create safer communities addressing the potential of the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Sections 2, 8, 9 & 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework January 2019 refer to the importance of considering crime & disorder at the planning stage. Paragraph 127(f) states;

Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Guidance is given considering 'Crime Prevention through Environmental Design', 'Secured by Design' principles and 'Safer Places 'Lite'

Comments:-

Crime Statistics – reported crime for the area of this proposed development (within 200 metre radius of the grid reference) during the period 01/10/2019-30/09/2020 is as follows:-

Arson & Criminal Damage – 12 Offences

Burglary – 3 Offences

Drug Offences – 3

Possession of Weapons – 3 Offences

Public Order Offences – 30

Robbery – 1 Offence

Sexual Offences - 3

Theft – 14 Offences

Vehicle Offences – 2

Violence Against the Person – 38 Offences

Total – 109 Offence

ASB reports for the same area and period total 63.

Pre Application Consultation – I was consulted by Phillip Wing of AWW Architects on 26th August last who requested my initial advice regarding crime prevention measures which could be incorporated into the plans prior to the planning application being submitted. My initial observations, plus some additional comments, are as follows:-

Perimeter Treatment/Defensible Space – the development appears to be open-plan externally with no boundary treatment proposed. In view of this, greater attention should be paid to the security of the building shell itself, in particular, measures may be necessary to restrict access to the more vulnerable side and rear elevations.

Security Fence/Gates - the DAS now indicates that the southern boundary enclosing the lower ground floor and car park will be enclosed by a metal railing security fence and double gates at the vehicular access in Canal Road, in order to secure the site. Railings are recommended as they are aesthetic in appearance, difficult to climb or cut and allow surveillance through them. The security fence and adjacent gates should be a minimum of 1.8 metres in height and the gates lockable.

Building Layout & Natural Surveillance – the building appears to have good sight lines around it with the fenestration evenly distributed providing good all round surveillance opportunities. Any recessed areas which cannot be overlooked and which could provide areas of concealment for the potential criminal should be designed out.

Fixed Bollards – bollards of PAS 68 standard are recommended to protect the potentially vulnerable front of the building to deter and prevent any vehicle borne attack. Other alternatives to bollards include heavy duty planters, boulders or similar measures which can be more aesthetic in appearance whilst performing a similar function. I note that bollards are to be installed to protect the pedestrian route through the car park at the rear.

Street Furniture/Litterbins – any of such fitments provided should be of substantial construction, vandal-resistant and securely fixed away from the building to deter arson, vandalism and ASB.

Glazed Curtain Walling – the building appears to incorporate glazed curtain walling which should be fixed using a secure glazing panel retention system.

Roof – the building has a flat roof incorporating two terraces and a large PV cell array so any potential climbing aids should be designed out. I note that a fixed ladder in the plant area enables access to the roof for maintenance which should be borne in mind.

External Security Lighting – there is existing street lighting in Trenchard Way and additional low wattage, 'dusk to dawn' type security lighting should illuminate all elevations incorporating a doorset, which staff and visitors are expected to use, particularly at the sides and rear of the building. All lighting should be vandal-resistant and automatically controlled by photo-electric cell or time switch with manual override.

Car Parking – I note that the car park is of a temporary nature and parking will be absorbed into an external multi-storey car park in Phase 2. The Phase 1 car park has a single entrance/exit, which is recommended, is close to the proposed Centre and parking spaces are in straight lines which aids

surveillance from the building. I recommend that in Phase 2, the police approved 'Parkmark' Safer Parking guidelines be incorporated into the multi-storey car park. Disabled parking spaces and electric charging points appear to be included and facilities for motor cycle parking should also be provided close to the building in an area with good surveillance opportunities.

Landscaping/Planting - should not impede opportunities for natural surveillance and must avoid potential hiding places. As a general rule, in areas where good visibility is needed, shrubs should be selected which have a mature growth height of no more than 1 metre and trees should be devoid of foliage below 2 metres, so allowing a 1 metre clear field of vision. Open-branched trees should be used in areas where natural surveillance is required. Defensive planting (thorny shrubs) should also be used in appropriate areas where restricted access is necessary.

Cycle/Bin Stores – both are external, appear to be of substantial construction and secure, which is recommended, to prevent theft of cycles or theft from lockers and use of wheelie bins for climbing or arson. In Phase 2, the Bin Store will be relocated to near the vehicle entrance.

Doorsets – all external lower ground and ground level doorsets should be tested and certificated to PAS 24; 2016 security standard or equivalent as a minimum.

Windows – similarly, all external lower ground and ground level windows, plus any other easily accessible windows, should be tested and certificated to PAS 24;2016 security standard as a minimum.

Intruder Alarm System – a suitable, fit for purpose, monitored intruder alarm system should be installed to protect potentially vulnerable parts of the building.

CCTV – is not a universal solution to security issues, however, it can deter crime and ASB and assist with the identification of offenders when a crime has been committed, reduce the fear of crime and assist in the management of premises. I recommend such a system be considered to monitor potentially vulnerable internal and external parts of the building and the car park.

Electronic Access Control – as suitable, fit for purpose, form of electronic access control e.g. proximity fob, swipe card or similar should be installed for use by staff in order to manage and control access to the various parts of the building.

Secured by Design (SBD) – if planning permission is granted, the applicant is advised to refer to the 'SBD Commercial Developments 2015' design guide available on the Secured by Design website – www.securedbydesign.com – which provides further comprehensive guidance regarding designing out crime and the physical security of commercial developments.

7.3 **South West Heritage Trust- Suggest appropriate condition:**

The application area is situated upon the site of a former canal lift, elements of which are thought to survive at end of the garden of one of a row of cottages backing onto railway property. It is not known how much of the structure was removed by the railway company when the embankment was built inc.1900 and there may be a considerable amount of the structure buried beneath the old track bed.

For this reason, I recommend that the applicant be required to provide archaeological monitoring of the development and a report on any discoveries made as indicated in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 199). This should be secured by the use of the following conditions attached to any permission granted:

"Programme of Works in Accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (POW)

Before the commencement of the development hereby permitted the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, shall have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The WSI shall include details of the archaeological investigation, the recording of the heritage asset, the analysis of evidence recovered from the site and publication of the results. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme."

7.4 **Wessex Water- Comments**

We note the contents of the Technical Design Note submitted with the application: *"The site wide surface water drainage for the proposed overall development was previously agreed with the Environment Agency (EA) and Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) that attenuation is not required and a free discharge into the River Tone would be acceptable (refer to Appendix D of the Rodgers Leask Ltd Drainage Strategy 2015). Therefore, for Phase 1 and 2 the surface water drainage will be a positive drainage network which will connect to the site wide drainage system with an unattenuated discharge. Water quality and attenuation measures are to be dealt with outside of the Redline boundary as part of the overall masterplan drainage works."*

The site wide drainage system is unlikely to be available for connection prior to the construction of the Digital Innovation Centre. The applicant is seeking a "temporary" connection to the existing public surface water site close to the site which discharges to the River Tone. While a free discharge direct to the River Tone may have been agreed with the EA and LLFA a free discharge

has not been agreed with Wessex Water to the existing surface water sewer. The surface water sewer is of limited capacity and will be unable to accommodate predicted flows for all storm return periods. We are currently assessing capacity to agree a restricted discharge to the surface water network. Attenuation is likely to be required which if in the form of a sustainable drainage component will also have other benefits such as improving water quality (including reducing siltation), biodiversity and amenity.

Where these arrangements have yet to be agreed amendments to the application may be required.

Following further consultation with the applicant's agent a condition was agreed between the parties to read as follows:

"Prior to the temporary connection to the existing Wessex Water surface water drainage network being made, a drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the building is occupied."

Reason: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of the development, in accordance with paragraph 17 and sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015).

7.5. **Natural England**– No Comment

7.6 **Local Lead Flood Authority - Comments.**

We note the comments provided by Wessex Water in respect to the connection to the surface water sewer system. It is important to note that the principle of free discharge was previously agreed as with similar applications in Taunton town centre. However, we concur with Wessex Water comments that this will be determined by the existing sewer capacity, and note this is being assessed in order to agree rates. We support the view of utilising sustainable techniques to store and manage the flows.

Please see 7.4 above following further consultation the LLFA have agreed to use such a condition.

7.7 Environment Agency – suggests conditions and note to applicant:

The Environment Agency would have no objection, in principle, to the proposed development, subject to the inclusion of the following condition within the Decision Notice:

CONDITION:

No development shall commence until a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site in respect of the development hereby permitted, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority (LPA). This strategy will include the following components:

1. A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:

- all previous uses
- potential contaminants associated with those uses
- a conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptors
- potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site.

2. A site investigation scheme, based on (1) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off-site.

3. The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (2) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.

4. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (3) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the written consent of the LPA. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

REASON:

To ensure that the development does not contribute to, and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution.

CONDITION:

Prior to the development being brought into first use, a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the LPA. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met. REASON:

To ensure that the site does not pose any further risk to human health or the water environment by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is complete.

CONDITION:

No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for prevention of pollution during the construction phase has been approved by the LPA. The scheme should include details of the following:

1. Site security.
2. Fuel oil storage, bunding, delivery and use.
3. How both minor and major spillage will be dealt with.
4. Containment of silt/soil contaminated run-off.
5. Disposal of contaminated drainage, including water pumped from excavations.
6. Site induction for workforce highlighting pollution prevention and awareness.

Invitation for tenders for sub-contracted works must include a requirement for details of how the above will be implemented.

REASON:

To prevent pollution of the water environment.

NOTE:

Measures should be taken to prevent the runoff of any contaminated drainage during the construction phase.

In the event of planning permission being given we request that the Decision Notice contains the following information:

The previous use of the proposed development site as industrial/railway presents a medium risk of contamination that could be mobilised during construction to pollute controlled waters. Controlled waters are particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is:

- Located upon a Secondary aquifer A and B.

The application's Desk Study report demonstrates that it will be possible to manage the risks posed to controlled waters by this development. Further detailed information will however be required before built development is undertaken. We believe that it would place an unreasonable burden on the developer to ask for more detailed information prior to the granting of planning permission but respect that this is a decision for the LPA.

The foul drainage should be kept separate from the clean surface and roof water, and connected to the public sewerage system after conferring with the sewerage undertaker.

There shall be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage from the site into either groundwater or any surface waters, whether direct to watercourses, ponds or lakes, or via soakaways/ditches.

Any oil or chemical storage facilities should be sited in bunded areas. The capacity of the bund should be at least 10% greater than the capacity of the storage tank or, if more than one tank is involved, the capacity of the largest tank within the bunded area. Hydraulically inter-linked tanks should be regarded as a single tank. There should be no working connections outside the bunded area.

7.8 SCC Ecologist Comments:

With my uncertainty about employment sources for the Innovation Centre at Firepool Taunton and the potential for increased phosphates in wastewater due to users from outside the Ramsar catchment, the applicant has sent me further information on commuting to work.

With my understanding of the submitted and in the email below I do consider it very unlikely that a net increase would occur in wastewater given that this would mainly be a matter of transference between home and the proposed development within the catchment. I do not consider a Habitats Regulations Assessment necessary for the application in line with the principles applied to other commercial development within the Ramsar catchment.

7.9 Somerset West and Taunton Council Tree Conversation Specialists comments:

Re its effect on existing trees and hedgerow, I have no objection to this development proposal. In terms of the proposed landscape design, I would defer to the landscape and place-making specialists' comments.

7.10 Somerset West and Taunton Council Landscape Officer comments:

Good landscape scheme subject to three trees planted within the front landscaped area. I suggest one on the west of the access and two on the east.

7.11 Somerset West and Taunton Council Economic Development Team supports:

The planning application for a Digital Innovation Centre on Firepool in Taunton is fully endorsed and supported by Somerset West and Taunton's economic development team, with supporting rationale:

Strategic Fit

The economic development strategy, published in March 2020 with full Council approval, has made one of its major priorities the development of the knowledge economy and higher paid jobs, enabling young people and students to be able to remain in the area to build rewarding local careers in industries and sectors of the future knowledge economy.

The Taunton Garden Town Prospectus Chapter 4 “New Shoots” identified the need for Taunton to create and foster a creative, cultural and digital innovation environment which provided a Unique Selling Point for the town to help position it for the future and profile itself as a future knowledge economy location and exciting business environment, at the cutting edge of creativity and innovation and knowledge sharing and networking between business, academia and local and national Government.

Both these strategies are supported by the Heart of the South West Local Industrial Strategy which clearly identifies the UK Hydrographic Office with over 900 staff in Taunton as an Anchor business for R and D and commercialisation of big data linked to the maritime economy and supported one of three key opportunity areas of the LEP area, namely the Digital Economy. This has been proven to be key to the future of the local economy as a result of Covid19 and the drive to businesses going online but even more, in terms of the aspirations of Digital Taunton for this centre to support any business in its digital transformation journey. It is also reflected in the Somerset Recovery and Growth strategy as to help the economy build back better and become more productive, as well as linked to the education facilities and universities to support entrepreneurial start ups and enhance and build a local ecoinnovation infrastructure, owned and led by business and peer to peer learning and collaboration as well as the development of a STEM talent pool for the future.

The Digital Taunton strategy published in 2017 concluded that there was a significant cluster of digital related businesses in the District in support of developing a collaborative cluster further and this provided a roadmap on the key workstreams to take the cluster development forward.

This included having a physical innovation centre of excellence with facilities and innovation support services worthy of this growth cluster and to enable a collaborative and innovative environment at the heart of Taunton, forming part of a future hi-tech knowledge economy corridor along the M5, complementing other clusters within Exeter and Plymouth as part of a Tech Nation corridor.

Since 2019, Digital Taunton, the cluster network of over 400 businesses have helped identify the need for such a centre in its demand and need study and to inform the future innovation support services, with over 90 businesses helping to inform the business case, as well as regular meetings of Digital Taunton on a monthly basis with over 80 regular in person attendances.

Firepool and Taunton Regeneration

This application and the whole business case and funding packages have been developed with businesses, academia and between the County Council and Somerset West and Taunton to meet pent up demand and need and forms not only part of the Firepool regeneration site, but is also an integral part of a distributed Innovation Park, alongside healthcare and the clean low carbon economy. There is synergy and overlap with these two important strategic themes and sector opportunities for the LEP and the District supported, where synergies have been recognised by local healthcare stakeholders in terms of health and wellness, preventative healthcare and diagnostics including telehealth and telemedicine using digital technologies and also in terms of outreach to more rural, coastal and peripheral communities whereby event, networking and collaboration can be conducted digitally through outreach via digital connectivity both to people working from home and other enterprise and innovation centres across the patch, through a central platform hosted by Digital Taunton to build a community online as well as in the physical world, without the usual physical constraints of transport infrastructure and rurality.

This will be a beacon or inward investment, collaboration and at the entrance to Firepool right opposite the rail station to London and will create a thriving hub location for interaction amongst and between businesses and at the convergence of sectors where they have a digital interest and will finally begin to put Taunton on the map with some form of differentiation and position in the knowledge economy of the future in a major growth sector. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to stop the decline of Taunton as a dormitory for commuters to Bristol and Exeter and will exploit linkages sub-regionally and nationally, an opportunity not to be missed.

7.12 Somerset West and Taunton Council Placemaking Specialist comments:

This site forms the gateway to the proposed entrance boulevard for this important regeneration site and will set the design standard and tone for the future redevelopment of the immediate area.

In townscape terms any development proposal needs to provide a pivotal corner and provide active frontage to both Trenchard Way and the boulevard. It also needs to act as a landmark building in views along Trenchard Way in order to signify the entrance to this development, it also needs to relate to scale of neighbouring properties in Canal Road. In addition, I would expect an innovation centre to be of an innovative design, of the highest standard and at the forefront of sustainable building technology.

Boundary issues - Red line – is ownership correctly shown? I would expect that this would include the whole of the grassed area to Trenchard Way. Blue line - since SCC own the public highway, I think it reasonable to show the proposed new widened crossing linking the station and the Firepool site.

I would like to point out that given the extensive consultation that seems to have been carried out with various stakeholders, that it is disappointing that no preapplication was made to the LPA to seek informal advice. The LPA strongly advocate the use of Design Review for major proposals particularly at preapp stage and for RM's in the Garden Town. Given the significance of this scheme it is my strong recommendation that this scheme should be submitted to a DRP in order to gain independent advice, particularly given my concerns set out below:

Layout principles – A masterplan is currently being developed by SW&T for the wider Firepool area. This scheme does not accord with this masterplan since the layout does not provide two focal buildings – Trenchard Way and Canal Road. Whilst the Trenchard Way is addressed by building frontage, Canal Road has a frontage comprising largely of a large car park with security fencing and non-existent landscape and views of the rear of the 5 storey building. This in my view will not provide the sense of enclosure to the proposed plaza area and will not adequately address the frontage with Canal Road.

Storey heights – the draft masterplan states that this block should range between 2 and 4 storeys in height (not 5 as shown).

Land use – this does not comply with the draft masterplan which shows non residential development facing the boulevard with residential above and residential facing Canal Road and the boulevard.

Frontages – the boulevard is lacking in enclosure and active frontage to 40% of the frontage facing the boulevard. The parameter plans requires frontage the entire length of the boulevard with 60% minimum glazing to the ground floor.

Sustainability – sadly lacking in SUDs and water management. No mention of bike charging or car club. I'd also question the need for such a large car park given the town centre location, station and the likelihood of a large amount of new housing in this wider regeneration scheme.

Architectural appearance – I'd question the photo montages which don't appear to reflect the changes in level across this site. Whilst the design is ok in appearance, I would not conclude that this is in anyway innovative and providing a landmark building. There is no visual showing the building in views along Trenchard Way to show whether this is a gateway building. I am concerned at the overall storey height and the overall bulk and massing with little variation in the boxy form of the building. The roof top terrace has the potential to be noisy and overlooking existing neighbouring gardens.

Landscaping – the landscaping proposals are inadequate and poorly considered. There is an opportunity to enhance the existing green space along Trenchard Way and this has not been taken (tree planting, artwork, improvements to the 1.8m fencing). The overall landscaping scheme fails to showcase any Garden Town principles – rain gardens, tree planting, etc. The

security fencing and prominence of the bin store is a concern. There is a complete lack of consideration for boundary treatment.

Please can you request Design Review as a matter of urgency for this scheme.

7.13 Design Review Panel

The Design Review Panel comments were summarised by the original Somerset West and Taunton Case officer as below:

'The comments of the Placemaking Specialist are of particular relevance and in many ways reflects the comments of the Panel.

It is important that this is an exemplar building and it is welcome that the building is aiming for BREEAM excellence. It is considered you need to spell out in a specific statement how the building will address climate change given the Interim Policy Statement in light of the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration and the general requirements of policy DM5. The issue of the high level glazing to avoid overheating needs to be considered, as does the importance of the connection between the building's function and architectural expression. It is agreed that the building does not speak of innovation in its appearance and there is an opportunity to be more adventurous. That said there is still a concern regarding the relationship with its surroundings and further analysis and assessment of the character of the area needs to be considered.

There is a specific concern regarding the building's impact on neighbouring dwellings in terms of both overbearing and creating overlooking. I suggest massing studies and overshadowing studies need to be produced and submitted to ensure there would not be an adverse impact on the neighbours that would be contrary to policy DM1 and hence lead to a refusal. With that in mind further exploration of the massing and form of the building needs to be considered to create the most appropriate response to the external context. In addition cross sections through the site showing the relationship with the adjoining terrace should be submitted. Please note we would not be supportive on any increase in height and if anything a reduction should be looked at, particularly with regard to phase 2. The phase 2 development has a risk of causing overlooking of the residential properties and this, together with the visual appearance of the east elevation, needs to be looked at at this stage. I would suggest design parameters need to be agreed now in order to avoid restrictive conditions on height and obscure glazing.

The principle of providing an external roof terrace is supported, however its location to a more southerly location while still away from the western side of the building should be considered.

In terms of materials the use of a grey brick is not characteristic of the area and a red brick would be more appropriate, given the nearby disused

buildings. As suggested by the panel, clarification of the cladding colour will be required and a materials condition in respect of these aspects is likely to be imposed.

The Council agrees that the north eastern corner and entrance to the building needs to be re-considered as the entrance to the site and the boulevard is an important route. An opportunity also exists to improve the landscaped space on the northern side of the building so it is more cohesive.

With regard to parking it is noted that this is indicated as temporary, however the timescale of phase 2 is not known and the parking area has the ability to cause noise and disturbance to adjacent residences. A reconsideration of this should be looked at to allow for a better visual quality in terms of the main building, residential boundary and the Canal Road frontage. Policy A1 allows for 1 space per 100sqm which would equate to 25 spaces. However given the central location of the site, its proximity to the station and bus and pedestrian routes we would consider a reduction in numbers here below the maximum specified to be appropriate. This would allow for a redesign of the ground layout.

A main area of concern is the need for an active frontage on the east elevation facing the boulevard. I consider this aspiration is not being adequately achieved and needs to be reconsidered.'

7.14 County Highways Authority comments.

Highways Development Management is in receipt of the above application for an office / innovation centre scheme, for which we have reviewed the highways and transportation aspects of the proposal and have the following observations to make.

This application is a revision of the scheme that was previously submitted to Somerset West and Taunton as part of a hybrid planning application, see application 38/20/0305/HYB.

It is noted that the submission is now a full planning application, and that only the first phase of the development is included within the proposal. Having considered the latest submission, I can confirm that the review made in the highway response dated 22nd October 2020 remain valid.

Further discussions have been undertaken with the applicant since that time, and this has largely focused on the wording of the required planning conditions that would have to be attached to any permission. In particular, these have related to pedestrian access, vehicular access, cycle parking and the need for a Construction Management Plan. Subject to these conditions being attached to any permission, the highway authority would not object to the planning application.

The earlier comments relating to the possible Phase 2 element of the development are obviously no longer relevant and should be disregarded.

We are aware that there have been ongoing discussions regarding the number of parking spaces being provided within the site, and that the total number would be reduced. Given the site location, and subject to this according with the adopted parking standards, there is unlikely to be an objection to this. However, there would be a need to ensure that the onsite turning arrangement and the level of accessible parking spaces are retained.

The required conditions were noted to be as follows. It is acknowledged that the wording may need to be adjusted to suit the planning authority's standard requirements. Subject to the comments above, the highway authority would not object to the current planning submission.

Prior to occupation of the building, a temporary pedestrian access to the building (from Trenchard Way across land to the east of the site identified for the boulevard) shall be delivered in accordance with details which shall have been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, in the event that the relevant part of the boulevard is delivered prior to occupation.

Prior to occupation of the building, the Canal Road vehicular access shall be delivered in accordance with details which will have previously been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Prior to occupation, temporary visitor cycle parking, shall be provided in a publicly accessible location adjacent to the building, details of which shall have been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Upon delivery of permanent visitor cycle parking provision (on the identified boulevard to the east of the site), the temporary visitor cycle parking shall be removed. Unless otherwise agreed in writing, in the event that the relevant part of the boulevard is delivered prior to occupation.

The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with Somerset County Council). The plan shall include construction vehicle movements, construction operation hours, construction vehicular routes to and from site, construction delivery hours, expected number of construction vehicles per day, car parking for contractors, specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice and a scheme to encourage the use of public transport amongst contractors. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Construction Management Plan.

No occupation of the development shall commence until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be operated in accordance with the approved Travel Plan. Those parts of the Approved Travel Plan that are

identified therein as capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied.

In response to amended plan reducing the number of parking spaces:

'I can confirm that there is no concern with this amended layout. The revision provides a dedicated servicing area and this is an improvement over the previously presented plan. Given the site location, the parking levels are considered to be appropriate.'

7.15 **Somerset West and Taunton Council (on revised scheme)**

'With reference to the above proposal, The Local Planning Authority raise NO OBJECTION subject to suitable condition(s) covering: compliance with the EIA Regulations, improvements to the layout in terms of increased landscaping and reduced car parking spaces, clarification of compliance with climate change requirements of policy DM5 and a materials condition to ensure the use of a suitable red brick is used in the scheme.'

Public consultations (neighbours)

7.16 1 letter of objection citing

- Comments made by the consultants regarding public transport raises serious concerns
- It seems to be assumed that bus passengers will walk from Firepool to and from Station Road to use bus services.
- Route is not commodious – narrow pavements, bird dropping from under bridge to the rear of the station bus station which is a gloomy location
- Other bus stops are on narrow pavements with little opportunity for refuge (no seats or shelter)
- Environmental impacts on waiting passengers from vehicle emissions
- Impact of views from the development to the rear of a multi storey car park
- The local authorities may not (currently) have the control that is needed over the pattern of bus and rail services that they could expect in most other countries, but they must control the future layout and design of streets, and they must plan for the future based on safeguarding what will one day be needed, rather than short-term expediency.

8. Comments of the Service Manager – Planning and Development

8.1 The key issues for Members to consider are:

- Principle of development
- Highways and Transport
- Design, Mass and Bulk
- Landscaping
- Ecology
- Public Art
- Objections raised from public consultation
- Miscellaneous comments associated with application

8.2 The Development Plan

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework

Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012)

SD1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

CP2 - Economy

CP3 - Town centre and other uses

CP5 - Inclusive communities

CP6 - Transport and accessibility

CP7 - Infrastructure

CP8 - Environment

SP1 - Sustainable development locations

SP2 - Realising the vision for Taunton

DM1 - General requirements

DM4 - Design

DM5 - Use of resources and sustainable design

Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008)

FP1 - Riverside content

FP2 - Riverside transport

TR1 - New car parks

TR2 - Parking standards

TR3 - Accessibility

TR4 - Travel plans

F1 - Flooding

F2 - River corridor enhancements

ED1 - Design

ED2 - Public art

ED4 - Density

ED5 - Climate change

ED6 - Off-site public realm enhancements

TS1 - Training and skills

Taunton Town Centre Design Code (2008)

Coding Area CO7 - Firepool

Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

C6 - Accessible facilities

A1 - Parking requirements

A2 - Travel Planning

A3 - Cycle network

A5 - Accessibility of development

I4 - Water infrastructure

ENV2 - Tree planting within residential areas

ENV5 - Development in the vicinity of rivers and canals

D1 - Taunton's skyline

D7 - Design quality

D8 - Safety

D9 - A co-ordinated approach to development and highway planning

D12 - Amenity space

D13 - Public art

8.3 Materials Consideration

8.4 Principle of Development

In relation to this site, the Development Plan comprises of:

- Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (Further known as AAP) (2008)
- Taunton Deane Adopted Core Strategy (2011-2028)
- Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016)

The proposed site lies within the northern part of the Firepool Site Allocation in the AAP Policies FP1 and FP2. In relation to the site the AAP also envisages a 'boulevard' linking the railway station (to the north) with the river Tone and Priory Bridge Road. Public realm improvements are also proposed to link the train station and Allocation FP4 with the proposed boulevard into the Firepool site.

The policy considers that 4-5 storey buildings could be acceptable in this location and it should be noted that this falls under that threshold being three storeys in height.

The Taunton Deane Adopted Core Strategy (2011-2028) is a broad document and its Strategic Objective 3 (Towns and other centres) relates to this proposal. It states:

To enhance the role and function of Taunton town centre in the regional hierarchy through the promotion of regeneration opportunities, and direct development opportunities of an appropriate scale for retail, leisure, cultural, sporting, office and other town centre activities to a hierarchy of centres within the Borough, providing foci for employment provision and extending consumer choice to meet the needs of the entire community, in sustainable locations, well served by a choice of means of transport.'

The other policies pertinent to this proposal are listed under the policy section of the report.

The Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016) is a document containing all the development management policies that will be required to assess this proposal (listed above)

It is clear given the above guidance that an office use in this location accords fully with the development plan and such a proposed use can only enhance and improve the currently empty site. The use as a learning centre will promote opportunities for education and learning and will contribute to the attractiveness of the area as a whole.

There is also the associated boost to the economy that this proposal will bring through extra jobs and more economic prosperity as the Somerset West and Taunton Economic Development Team rightly note:

'This will be a beacon or inward investment, collaboration and at the entrance to Firepool right opposite the rail station to London and will create a thriving hub location for interaction amongst and between businesses and at the

convergence of sectors where they have a digital interest and will finally begin to put Taunton on the map with some form of differentiation and position in the knowledge economy of the future in a major growth sector. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to stop the decline of Taunton as a dormitory for commuters to Bristol and Exeter and will exploit linkages sub-regionally and nationally, an opportunity not to be missed.'

Whilst the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable there are other material considerations which must be taken into account when assessing the proposal and these are set out below.

Highways and Transport

The scheme has been amended and the parking reduced in scale so that it is now compatible with Highways Standards for what is a highly sustainable site very close to bus stops and train station etc with excellent and proposed enhance pedestrian access. This has led to a 'no objection subject to conditions' response from the County Highways authority and these proposed conditions are duly supported and included within the recommendation for approval.

Design, Mass and Bulk

The proposed office block is designed to reflect local context according to the submitted design and access statement. The use of grey brickwork however is not considered to reflect the local vernacular which is generally an orangey/red type brick which is reflected in the neighbouring railway building to the east of the site (currently covered in scaffolding). The use of this type of brick has been accepted by the agent in their response to the Design Review Panel comments (Further noted as DRP) (Jan 2021). Therefore a condition is proposed to ensure that these appropriately coloured alternative bricks are used for the walls.

There is no objection to the use of cladding as proposed which is synonymous with neighbouring residential blocks of flats within sight of the proposed site.

In terms of the west elevation facing the residential terrace to the west it is duly noted that this is a predominantly brick façade with only limited area of vertical slot glazing to reduce any perceived overlooking issues to the nearest terraced property. In response to the DRP concerns it is duly noted that to appear less monolithic recessed brick fenestrations have been added to give variety and interest to this elevation.

In terms of the northern elevation the Design Review Panel (DRP) commented as follows:

'The Council agrees that the north eastern corner and entrance to the building needs to be re-considered as the entrance to the site and the boulevard is an important route. An opportunity also exists to improve the landscaped space on the northern side of the building so it is more cohesive.'

The response to the DRP from the agent concentrates on the built element of the scheme and reads as follows;

‘Changes to this elevation include the change of the brick colour to the richer red mixed tone. In order to create contrast between the windows and the red brickwork, the windows and curtain walling have been darkened slightly. Additional windows have been added to further activate this elevation with a larger fenestration on the north/east corner further highlighting the entrance and corner of the building in line with the comments received, Signage and branding opportunities have been identified to help with the buildings identity while approaching from the train station’

The explanation and embellishment is seen as an appropriate response to the DRP concerns.

In terms of the East elevation the DRP stated:

‘A main area of concern is the need for an active frontage on the east elevation facing the boulevard. I consider this aspiration is not being adequately achieved and needs to be reconsidered’

The response to the DRP comments regarding the East elevation from the agent reads as follows;

Changes to this elevation include the brickwork and window/curtain wall colours and the buildings reduced height. At ground floor a wider opening has been added to activate the elevation at ground level facing onto the boulevard which also provides a separation in the articulation of the façade from the ground floor to above in line with the comments received. Branding and signage has been further developed to an area of the façade in front of the internal amphitheatre presentation stair to provide further visual interest to this elevation linking to the string relationship of the glazing above to the boulevard.’

Again, the explanation and embellishment is seen as an appropriate response to the DRP concerns.

In terms of massing it is noted that this in effect be a three-storey building near two storey domestic style dwellings. The impact therefore in terms of overshadowing and loss of light to these terraced properties needs assessing before considering granting consent. In the response to the Design Review Panel and the request of the Planning Officer a daylight impact assessment has been undertaken and the previously requested top floor removed from the scheme. The assessment shows that the 45 degree rule is satisfied and it should also be noted that the outline consent envisaged a 4/5 storey building which would have had a far greater impact.

In terms of possible overshadowing issues and overshadowing study has been produced which shows that due to the south facing orientation of the site the buildings overshadowing impact is minimal to the house to the west and its garden to the south of the proposed building. The overshadowing study

shows that from midday the shadows are cast away from the residential properties. Again it should be noted that the building has been reduced in height to minimise the impact of the proposed building on the existing properties.

The scheme is now considered acceptable in terms of scale and massing.

Landscaping

It is noted that two prominent trees adjacent to the existing residential terraced properties will be needed to be removed to facilitate this proposal. The trees have been considered unworthy of a tree preservation order and the SW&T landscape and tree conservation officers have not raised an objection to their removal. This is subject to replacement trees being provided. Currently these are shown to the rear of the existing terraced properties but the Tree Conservation Officer wishes for three trees to be planted around the vehicular access to the site. To achieve this a landscaping condition is proposed.

It should be noted that the trees to be removed due to their height and proximity to the residential terrace must cause a limited loss of light to these gardens so whilst their removal is regrettable in general landscape terms - it does offer a betterment to these properties in terms of extra light.

Ecology

The site has been classed as having (according to the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) 'low ecological interest, primarily because it was virtually all previously developed until spring 2020, when the last of the buildings were demolished and some of the ground cleared.

When considering the ecological impacts of the site one has to take into account the 'Dutch nitrogen case' *Cooperatie Mobilisation for the Environment UA v College van Gedeputeerde (C-293/17)* [2019] Env LR 27 (the 'Dutch Nitrogen' case) which is a case which is currently affecting most residential developments within catchment areas throughout the County. This however is for an office use and as the County Ecologist has stated (in relation to the need for an HRA):

With my uncertainty about employment sources for the Innovation Centre at Firepool Taunton and the potential for increased phosphates in wastewater due to users from outside the Ramsar catchment, the applicant has sent me further information on commuting to work.

With my understanding of the submitted and in the email below I do consider it very unlikely that a net increase would occur in wastewater given the this would mainly be a matter of transference between home and the proposed development within the catchment. I do not consider a Habitats Regulations Assessment necessary for the application in line with the principles applied to other commercial development within the Ramsar catchment.'

Public Art

Given the size of the commercial development Policy D13 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016) becomes relevant and it reads as below:

‘Policy D13: Public Art

All development in excess of 15 residential units or 2500 square metres (gross) commercial floorspace will be required to contribute towards the provision of public art and public realm enhancements through commissioning and integrating public art into the design of the buildings and the public realm. Locational decisions for public art in Taunton town centre will be informed by the Taunton Town Centre Design Code SPD.’

The agent has agreed to a suitable condition to ensure that the public art element required as part of this proposal is duly delivered in accordance with the Policy.

Objections raised from public consultation

It is noted that a member of the public raises concerns about certain elements of the scheme and these are addressed below:

Routes to bus stops are not commodious – this is not necessarily disputed but it would be beyond the scope of such an application to address such matters (i.e to widen pavements outside of the boundary and ownership of the site) and the fact remains that the route does have pavement access to the relevant bus stops and can be walked safely without having to step into the road.

Environmental impacts on waiting passengers from vehicle emissions – this would be the same for any bus stop in a town centre location and whilst regrettable with the widely publicised Government’s aspirations for electric vehicle use/alternative transport methods will not be such an issue in years to come.

Impact of views from the development to the rear of a multi storey car park – the proposed building itself is an attractive iconic building and whilst it cannot change the view to the multi storey car park it will change the view from the car park which can only be viewed as an enhancement to the area as a whole.

The local authorities may not (currently) have the control that is needed over the pattern of bus and rail services that they could expect in most other countries, but they must control the future layout and design of streets, and they must plan for the future based on safeguarding what will one day be needed, rather than short-term expediency – It is considered that the proposed pedestrian way to the east of the proposed site will enhance the pedestrian network and increase permeability to and from the site as a whole (and for the wider Firepool development)

Miscellaneous comments

It is duly noted that the Police Architectural Liaison Officer has mentioned some concerns (although these were based on the original scheme) but these are largely covered under building regulations and matters such as CCTV for instance would be a consideration once the building is erected and will not require planning permission in themselves. The comments relating to landscaping being of a suitable height to aid surveillance are useful and when considering the trees to the fore of the site (required by condition) the officer will need to consider that in the context of the need to achieve visibility splay also i.e. the trees will need setting back for instance). To install boulders in front of the building to prevent vehicles attacking the front of the building would also be a matter for when the building is constructed and would not usually require planning permission.

8.5 Conclusion

The proposed innovation centre has no formal objections from any statutory consultee and the matters which remain outstanding can be adequately addressed via appropriate planning conditions which have been agreed between the local planning authority and the applicants

An innovation centre will boost the economy through jobs and learning opportunities for those who visit. The use is compatible with the nearby residential terrace being a relatively quiet use thought suitable for such a location. Both massing and overshadowing studies show that there will not be an unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties and the design is now considered acceptable. The highway authority is content with the scheme subject to suitable conditions.

The scheme is considered to comply with Policies DM1, A1, A2, A3, A5, ENV2, ENV5, D1, D7, D8, D9, D12 and D13 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016) Policies SD1, CP2, CP3, CP5, CP6, CP7, CP8, SP1, SP2, DM1, DM4 and DM5 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012) Policies FP1, FP2, TR1, TR2, TR3, TR4, F1, F2, ED1, ED2, ED4, ED5, ED6 and TS1 of the Taunton Area Action Plan (2008), Taunton Town Centre Design Code and advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

9. Recommendation

9.1 It is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to the following conditions:

9.2 The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

9.3 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

- P18048-AWW-V1-XX-0100 – Site Location Plan - P02
- P18048-AWW-V1-XX-0110 – Proposed Site Plan – P5
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0120 – Street Scenes – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0130 – Proposed Landscape Plan – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0200 – Lower Ground & Ground Level – P3
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0201- Levels 1 & 2 – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0202 – Roof Plan – P4
- SDIC-AWW-V1-ZZ-0300 – Proposed Elevations – P4
- 1025-01 - Landscape Proposals
- Design and Access Statement – AWW – September 2020
- Planning Statement – Black Box Planning – September 2020
- Transport Statement – 14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-TP-4001 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Vehicle Tracking Plan – 14623-HYD-ZZ-ZZ-DR-C-0100 P01 – Hydrock
- Flood Risk Assessment and BREEAM – 14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-FR-0001 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Drainage Strategy – C-14623-HYD-XX-XX-RP-DS-0100 P01 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Surfacing Specification Plan – C-14623-HYD-ZZ-ZZ-DR-C-0120 P01 – Hydrock – November 2020
- Phase 1 Desk Study Report – DIC-HYD-XX-XX-RP-GE-1000 – Hydrock – September 2020
- Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief – CR0561 – Cotswold Archaeology – December 2020
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Cotswold Wildlife Surveys – September 2020
- Tree Survey – 04511 – Aspect – September 2020
- Tree Constraints Plan – 04511 – Aspect - TCP 11.9.2020
- Layout Impact Plan – 04511 – Aspect – LIP 23.9.2020

- Project Environmental Plan – T01617 – Willmott Dixon - December 2020

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning

- 9.4** No wall construction shall commence until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved samples.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development does not harm the character and appearance of the area in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy.

9.5 Trenchard Way Temporary Pedestrian Access

The building shall not be occupied until a temporary pedestrian access to the building (from Trenchard Way across land to the east of the site identified for the boulevard) shall be delivered in accordance with details which shall have been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, in the event that the relevant part of the boulevard is not delivered prior to occupation. If required the temporary access will be retained and maintained in situ until the boulevard is delivered.

Reason: In the interest of highway safety and in accordance with Policy TR3 of the Taunton Area Action Plan (2008) and Policy A5 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

9.6 Canal Road Vehicular Access

Prior to occupation of the building, the Canal Road vehicular access shall be delivered in accordance with details which will have previously been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy A1 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

9.7 Temporary Visitor Cycle Parking

Prior to occupation, temporary visitor cycle parking, shall be provided in a publicly accessible location adjacent to the building, details of which shall have been submitted and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Upon delivery of permanent visitor cycle parking provision (on the identified boulevard to the east of the site), the temporary visitor cycle parking shall be

removed, unless otherwise agreed in writing, in the event that the relevant part of the boulevard is delivered prior to occupation.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy A3 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

9.8 Construction Management Plan

The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by Somerset County Council (in consultation with the Local Planning Authority). The plan shall include construction vehicle movements, construction operation hours, construction vehicular routes to and from site, construction delivery hours, expected number of construction vehicles per day, car parking for contractors, specific measures to be adopted to mitigate construction impacts in pursuance of the Environmental Code of Construction Practice and a scheme to encourage the use of public transport amongst contractors. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved Construction Management Plan.

Reason: To ensure adequate measures have been adopted to mitigate the impacts of construction traffic on the road network, in the interest of highway safety and in accordance with Policy DM1 of the Taunton Deane Adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016)

- 9.9** No occupation of the development shall commence until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be operated in accordance with the approved Travel Plan. Those parts of the Approved Travel Plan that are identified therein as capable of implementation after occupation shall be implemented in accordance with the timetable contained therein and shall continue to be implemented as long as any part of the development is occupied.

Reason: In the interest of encouraging sustainable travel methods and in accordance with Policy A2 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

- 9.10** Within 12 months of commencement of development a drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the building is occupied

Reason: To ensure that the development is served by a satisfactory system of surface water drainage and that the approved system is retained, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details throughout the lifetime of

the development, in accordance with paragraph 17 and sections 10 and 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 103 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2015).

9.11 No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for prevention of pollution during the construction phase has been approved by the LPA once approved the scheme shall be adhered to in full for the lifetime of the development. The scheme should include details of the following:

1. Site security
2. Fuel oil storage, bunding, delivery and use
3. How both minor and major spillage will be dealt with
4. Containment of silt/soil contaminated run-off
5. Disposal of contaminated drainage, including water pumped from excavations.
6. Site induction for workforce highlighting pollution prevention and awareness.

Invitation for tenders for sub-contracted works must include a requirement for details of how the above will be implemented.

10 Reason: To prevent pollution of the water environment and in accordance with advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

9.12 Prior to the development being first occupied, a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the LPA. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met.

Reason: To ensure that the site does not pose any further risk to human health or the water environment by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is complete and in accordance with advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

9.13 No development shall commence until a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site in respect of the development hereby permitted, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority (LPA). This strategy will include the following components:

- A preliminary risk assessment which has identified:
- All previous uses
- Potential contaminants associated with those uses
- A conceptual model of the site indicating sources, pathways and receptor
- Potentially unacceptable risks arising from contamination at the site
- A site investigation scheme, based on (1) to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off-site.
- The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (2) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
- A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (3) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.
- Any changes to these components require the written consent of the LPA. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: To ensure that the development does not contribute to, and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of water pollution and in accordance with advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

9.14 Within six months of the first use of the proposed development a scheme for public art in accordance with Policy D13 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016) shall be submitted to and approved by Somerset County Council (in consultation with Somerset West and Taunton Council). When approved the scheme shall be fully installed and retained and maintained for a period of at least five years within six months of the date of its approval.

Reason: in the interests of visual amenity and adequate art provision for community benefit in accordance with the provisions of Policy D13 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

9.15 Prior to the use hereby permitted first being brought into use details of a revised landscaping scheme showing three native trees planted next to the vehicular access to the site (two to the east and one to the west) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by Somerset County Council. The planting shall be carried out within the next available planting season following the development first being brought into use and for a period of five years following their planting the trees/shrubs shall be protected and maintained, and any trees/shrubs which die, or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the following planting season with others of similar size and species, unless Somerset County Council gives written approval to any variation.

Reason: In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

9.16. A programme of archaeological work must be implemented in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Somerset Digital Innovation Centre, Taunton, Somerset Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief, Cotswold Archaeology CA Project: CR0561). The WSI includes the details of the archaeological investigation, the recording of the heritage asset, the analysis of evidence recovered from the site and publication of the results.

Reason: In the interests of archaeology and advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

INFORMATIVES

The Environment Agency advises:

The previous use of the proposed development site as industrial/railway presents a medium risk of contamination that could be mobilised during construction to pollute controlled waters. Controlled waters are particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is:

- Located upon a Secondary aquifer A and B.

The application's Desk Study report demonstrates that it will be possible to manage the risks posed to controlled waters by this development. Further detailed information will however be required before built development is undertaken. We believe that it would place an unreasonable burden on the developer to ask for more detailed information prior to the granting of planning permission but respect that this is a decision for the LPA.

The foul drainage should be kept separate from the clean surface and roof water, and connected to the public sewerage system after conferring with the sewerage undertaker.

There shall be no discharge of foul or contaminated drainage from the site into either groundwater or any surface waters, whether direct to watercourses, ponds or lakes, or via soakaways/ditches.

Any oil or chemical storage facilities should be sited in bunded areas. The capacity of the bund should be at least 10% greater than the capacity of the storage tank or, if more than one tank is involved, the capacity of the largest tank within the bunded area. Hydraulically inter-linked tanks should be regarded as a single tank. There should be no working connections outside the bunded area.

10. Relevant Development Plan Policies

10.1 The following is a summary of the reasons for the County Council's decision to grant planning permission.

An innovation centre will boost the economy through jobs and learning opportunities for those who visit. The use is compatible with the nearby residential terrace being a relatively quiet use thought suitable for such a location. Both massing and overshadowing studies show that there will not be an unacceptable impact on neighbouring properties and the design is now considered acceptable. The highways authority are content with the scheme subject to suitable conditions. The scheme is considered to comply with Policies DM1, A1, A2, A3, A5, ENV2, ENV5, D1, D7, D8, D9, D12 and D13 of the Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016) Policies SD1, CP2, CP3, CP5, CP6, CP7, CP8, SP1, SP2, DM1, DM4 and DM5 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012) Policies FP1, FP2, TR1, TR2, TR3, TR4, F1, F2, ED1, ED2, ED4, ED5, ED6 and TS1 of the Taunton Area Action Plan (2008), Taunton Town Centre Design Code and advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

10.2 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 the decision on this application should be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The decision has been taken having regard to the policies and proposals in:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012)

Taunton Deane Site Allocations and Development Plan (2016)

Taunton Area Action Plan (2008)

Taunton Town Centre Design Code

The policies in the development plan particularly relevant to the proposed development are:-

See above (section 8.2)

- Somerset County Council has also had regard to all other material considerations.
- Statement of Compliance with Article 35 of the Town and Country Development Management Procedure Order 2015
- In dealing with this planning application the County Planning Authority has adopted a positive and proactive manner. The Council offers a pre-application advice service for minor and major applications, and applicants are encouraged to take up this service. This proposal has been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, Minerals Local Plan and Local Plan policies, which have been subject to proactive publicity and consultation prior to their adoption and are referred to in the reasons for approval. The County Planning Authority has sought solutions to problems arising by liaising with consultees, considering other representations received and liaising with the applicant/agent as necessary.