#### F/YR15/0961/F

Applicant: Mr M Hayden Agent : Mr T Brand Whiting and Partners Brand Associates

Land North Of Mill Hill Garage, Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire

Erection of a 2-storey building for use as offices (supported by a preliminary broad concept plan for the South West March broad location for growth)

Reason for Committee: Councillor Skoulding call in as the proposal lies within the South West March Broad Location for Growth and is a prominent site at the gateway to March. Should be given proper consideration by elected Members.

#### 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 2-storey building for use as offices on land north of Mill Hill Garage, Wimblington Road, March.

The proposed development is located in a Broad Location for Growth. While a preliminary broad concept plan has been prepared to support the application, it falls well short of the requirements of Policy LP7. The consultation on the application has shown that there is limited interest from other landowners in progressing a broad concept plan for the area at this point in time.

The proposal would provide a high quality development, would enable jobs in an area identified for business development in the Local Plan (Policy LP9 refers) and as such complies with planning policy in this regard.

With regard to detailed considerations (such as amenity impacts and highway matters) the development would not lead to any unacceptable harm being evident.

The case is finely balanced, however, given the low level of land owner interest in progressing the concept plan, the economic benefits and the fact that the proposal is otherwise policy compliant, the scheme is supported.

Accordingly, subject to the visibility splay issue being resolved, and suitable planning conditions it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.

#### 2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies to the south of March, on the western side of Wimblington Road (B1101). The site forms part of the South West March Broad Location for Growth. It extends to around 0.4ha and comprises a rectangular shaped parcel of agricultural land. To the north, west and east agricultural uses predominate. There is a group of houses and a petrol filling station to the south accessed off Wimblington Road. There are also a few isolated dwellings, separated by further agricultural land to the north of the site.

The area is generally flat with limited vegetation, there are some trees located along the site frontage together with overhead electricity powerlines diagonally crossing the front area of the site. Overall the site is relatively open to views from the B1101 and the A141 March bypass. The site lies within Flood Zone 1.

#### 3 PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 2-storey building which would provide 785 square metres of office space. There would be a single point of vehicular access from Wimblington Road along the eastern boundary of the site which includes a footpath to be constructed. The proposal includes a 1.8 metre wide footpath along the site frontage.

The layout shows an access road running from west to east serving two car parks, to the front and the rear of the proposed office building. A garden area together with associated landscaping is proposed to the southern side of the building. Further open space together with public art is shown towards the front of the site. Landscape buffers are proposed around the northern and western site boundaries.

The application is supported by a range of reports and studies including:

- Preliminary Broad Concept Plan
- Preliminary Broad Concept Plan Statement
- Design and Access Statement (includes a sequential test in terms of other locations that have been investigated to accommodate the proposed development)
- Parking Statement

The applicants comprise a long established local firm of accountants with branches in March, Ely, Bury St Edmunds, King's Lynn, Ramsey and Wisbech. The application proposal is for new offices to provide a centralised hub servicing the north and west sector of the business, and will accommodate the existing March branch. Existing branches at other locations will be retained with the proposed offices accommodating technical specialists and support staff.

The business requirement is for a prominent and accessible location, with space for expansion to allow for future growth. The applicant considers that the existing premises at Dartford Road, March have insufficient parking and an inappropriate layout and therefore are not suitable for a centralised hub.

#### 4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

F/YR15/0705/F	Erection of a 2-storey building for use as offices	Withdrawn 16/10/2015
F/93/0060/O	Erection of a retail food store (4595 sq m) with ancillary parking (453 spaces)	Refused 13/06/1994
F/90/0687/O	Erection of a motel with associated sports facilities restaurant garden centre and car parking (siting of buildings committed at this stage)	Granted 20/06/1991

#### **5 CONSULTATIONS**

The application includes a "preliminary broad concept plan" for the South West March Broad Location for Growth. All landowners, consultees and neighbours affected by the concept plan have been consulted. The summary of consultations below distinguishes between comments on the planning application and the preliminary broad concept plan.

#### PLANNING APPLICATION

March Town Council: Recommend approval

**Highways Authority (CCC)**: **Initial comments:** The speed survey data is incomplete. Segregated pedestrian infrastructure should also be provided for the site. This should be formed as a footway along the site frontage and into the new office block along the site access. The proposed access geometry should be dimensioned (width and radii) as well as the parking and turning areas. To accord with FDC's parking provision 20 spaces are required. Queried the rationale for 43 car parking spaces.

Amended comments following revised plans and additional information: No objections subject to conditions.

**Cambridgeshire Countryside Access Team**: Public Byway number 22, March runs along Mill Hill Drove, March. No objections as the proposals in the planning application do not affect the Byway. If planning permission is granted request informatives are included with regard to the operation of the byway.

**Senior Archaeologist (CCC)**: The site lies in an area of high archaeological potential with a number of archaeological remains – cropmarks and artefact locations within the vicinity. An extensive Roman villa farm occurs 800m to the north of the site (MCB10798), the southward extent of which is unknown. Medieval ridge and furrow remains have been recorded to the north and north-west, and undated soil marks have been noted 400m to the east of the site (MCB225). A large enclosure is evident as a cropmarked site (MCB13689) 700m to the north-east. Stray finds of Roman pottery and a brooch (MCB16741) have been recovered from a garden at the north end of Wimblington village, 300m to the south of the development area indicating a continued trench of Roman material on

the low land spit that once connected Wimblington and March when the fen development was at its height. Recommend that the archaeological condition.

**Environment & Leisure (FDC)**: No objection. Recommendations made in relation to waste collection.

**Environmental Protection (FDC)**: No objection. The proposed development is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality or the noise climate. Contaminated land is not considered an issue.

Anglian Water Services Ltd: No comments to make on this application.

**Police Architectural Liaison Officer**: No objections, recommendations, or further observations.

**Valuation & Estates Officer (FDC):** Objects to the proposed application on that grounds that the preparation of the preliminary broad concept plan has not been undertaken in accordance with planning policy.

#### **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

Agent acting for the co-owner of the adjacent garage: Considers that the visibility splay to the south affects land owned by the adjacent garage and therefore is not deliverable. Support the application but consider that there are issues to be resolved.

#### PRELIMINARY BROAD CONCEPT PLAN

**Transport Assessment Team (CCC):** The information submitted does not meet the criteria set out in Policy LP7. Although this is a preliminary plan, the following information is required to assess the likely impact on the local and strategic road networks:

- The level of trips likely to be generated by the proposed land use mix,
- The distribution and assignment of these trips,
- An indication of the phasing of the development within the allocated area, and
- An indication of the highway mitigation required to cater for the quantum of development indicated and the phasing of this infrastructure.

**Growth & Economy (CCC):** Further information and details required in order to assess whether the plans and proposals are suitable. Would need to consider contributions for the following mitigation

- Transport
- Education (early years, primary, secondary, post-16, SEN)
- Libraries and lifelong learning
- Strategic waste
- Place making and community building provision
- Public health
- Sport, culture and art

Would welcome the opportunity to be involved early in the masterplanning process and to input and comment on any evolving proposals.

**Minerals and Waste Team (CCC):** The area identified as being the broad location for growth to the south west of March has within its eastern length a Mineral Safeguarding Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel designated by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Core Strategy through Proposals Map A and Policy CS26 Mineral Safeguarding Areas.

The MSA is close to residential development (to the north and east) and to commercial property (to the south), with roads also to the east and west. The presence of such development would require a standoff should the mineral be worked. When this is taken into account, together with the limited extent of the mineral it is unlikely that the resource could be worked as an economic resource. However, in the event that development of the area takes place and mineral is extracted the mineral which is extracted should be used in a sustainable way within the development or removed and ideally processed and then utilised.

**Housing Strategy (FDC)**: Affordable housing should be provided in line with the Local Plan Policy LP5.

Sport England (Eastern Region): No comments to make.

Valuation & Estates Officer (FDC): FDC owns around 2.5 acres of land within the scope of the preliminary broad concept plan area and, as landowner, has not been consulted by the applicant on the preliminary broad concept plan. Object on the grounds that the plan has not been prepared in accordance with planning policy

**Conservation Officer (FDC)**: More detailed consideration should be given to the setting of the listed barn within the Broad Concept Plan

### Agent acting for a Trust that owns land with the Broad Concept Plan (BCP) area:

- Fisher Parkinson Trust are a major landowner in the BCP area
- Understood that BCP should be prepared in consultation with surrounding landowners & other bodies such as highways.
- Unfair that the Trust & other landowners should be influenced by a BCP that has been prepared to support a planning application and that has not involved other landowners.
- Would actively support other landowners in promoting a BCP.

Agent acting for the co-owner of the adjacent garage: Has not been consulted by the applicant about the preliminary broad concept plan.

Landowner within the Broad Concept Plan Area: Support any business expansion in the District but request that the Council ensures that the supporting preliminary broad concept submission meets all that criteria detailed in Policy LP7 of the adopted Fenland Local Plan, something which the South Wisbech Broad Concept Plan did not fully address.

1 representation received concerning the ownership of the land where the southern visibility splay lies.

#### 6 POLICY FRAMEWORK

#### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

Paragraph 2: Applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 17: Seek to ensure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants.

Paragraph 20: Plan proactively to meet the development needs of businesses

Paragraph 21: Building a strong, competitive economy.

Paragraph 32: Development should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative transport impacts are severe.

Paragraph 64: Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area.

Paragraphs 100-104: Development and flood risk.

Paragraph 109: Minimising impacts on biodiversity.

Paragraph 128: Archaeological interests in a site.

Paragraphs 203-206: Planning conditions and obligations.

#### **National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)**

#### Fenland Local Plan 2014

LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP3 – Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside

LP6 - Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail

LP7 – Urban Extensions

LP9- March

LP13 – Supporting and Mitigating the Impact of a Growing District

LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the risk of Flooding in Fenland

LP15 – Facilitating the creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland

LP16 - Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District

LP17 – Community Safety

LP18 – The Historic Environment

LP19 – The Natural Environment

Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD (July 2014)

#### 7 KEY ISSUES

- Principle of Development
- Design and Layout
- Access and Parking
- Health and wellbeing
- Economic Growth

#### **8 ASSESSMENT**

#### **Principle of Development**

A key consideration for this proposal is the site's location within the South West March Broad Location for Growth. This area is identified in Policy LP9 as an area for a major urban extension in March. The application site is located in the southern part of the Broad Location, on the west side of the B1101 (Wimblington road) and this area is identified in LP9 as being suitable for some business development.

Policy LP7 requires all urban extensions to be planned and implemented in a coordinated way, through an agreed overarching broad concept plan, linked to the timely delivery of key infrastructure. The Policy provides that, with the exception of inconsequential minor development, proposals for development in advance of an agreed broad concept plan (BCP) will be refused. The Policy provides that the BCP can be approved alongside the consideration of the first application.

The applicant has sought to address the requirements of Policy LP7 by preparing a preliminary BCP which relates to the whole of the broad location and indicates land use (local centre, housing and employment areas), indicative roads and cycle/pedestrian routes and attenuation ponds.

As the application is supported by preliminary BCP, all landowners within the Broad Location and a wide range of statutory consultees have been consulted. This has highlighted that, in view of the limited time available, the applicant has been unable to prepare the BCP in accordance with LP7 requirements, i.e. it has not been prepared in conjunction with all significant landowners and relevant stakeholders. However, it should be noted that the council consulted all of the landowners on the application/preliminary BCP and only 4 responded. This suggests that there is limited appetite from significant landowners to progress a BCP at this time.

Accordingly, while the proposal accords with Policy LP9 as it is located in an area identified as being suitable for some business development within the South West March Broad Location for Growth, it conflicts with Policy LP7 as the broad concept plan has not yet been prepared and agreed. Notwithstanding this there is the difficult situation in that a landowner/business is seeking to progress a scheme which will secure jobs for the area in a location where other landowners have shown little interest in bringing their land forward at this stage and engaging in the progress.

#### **Design and Layout**

Policy LP9 identifies the southern part of the South West March Broad Location, within which the site is located, as a key gateway entrance into the town.

The proposed development seeks to introduce a 2-storey building for offices off Wimblington Road in March. The proposed building will be set back from the road with visitor and partner parking to the front and staff parking to the rear of the site. The layout also includes areas of open spaces and landscaping around the office building and bordering the northern and western boundaries. The layout of the site, subject to a scheme of appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments which can be secured by planning condition is considered acceptable.

The design of the proposed offices is a two-storey building with a mix of brickwork, render and cladding to the walls with a zinc roof. The full details of the external finishes will be secured by planning condition. Overall, it is considered that the application would provide for a high quality environment in accordance with Policy LP9 and Policy LP16.

#### **Access and Parking**

The application site is in a reasonably accessible location with a number of bs routes passing the site and is within walking and cycling distance of existing housing areas.

The proposed development involves the formation of a vehicular access off Wimblington Road to serve both cars and pedestrians. The access will serve a total of 46 parking spaces to the front and rear of the office building.

A speed survey has been submitted and visibility splays of 2.4m by 120m to the north and 2.4m by 83m to the south have been required. Subject to the provision of these visibility splays, the highways authority considers the proposed access to be acceptable. However, a query has been raised as to whether the applicant can deliver the required visibility splay due to land ownership issues. This matter is being assessed with the applicant and an update will be provided at committee.

The Local Plan appendix A requires 20 parking spaces for the size of development proposed whereas the application proposes 43 spaces. The applicant has clarified that the number of spaces is based on the anticipated use of the building which, due to an open plan format and use of hot desks will enable a higher density of use than a more traditional format. In view of these circumstances the provision for parking is considered acceptable.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of highway safety and complies with Policies LP13 and LP15 of the Local Plan.

#### Health and wellbeing

Policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 requires that development proposals should positively contribute to creating a healthy, safe and equitable living environment. The Policy seeks to create opportunities for employment is accessible locations and therefore the proposal is considered to comply with Policy LP2.

#### **Economic Growth**

Policy LP6 is relevant to applications for employment and seeks to maximise opportunities for job growth in the district. For office proposals, priority is given to locations in the centre of market towns, then edge of centre, then out of centre. Larger proposals will be subject to a sequential test.

The offices will initially employ 40 people, comprising 15 from the existing March branch office, and 25 transferred from other offices and new jobs. This is the first part of the company's growth strategy and the application site has capacity for an extension. The applicants advise that the offices are required urgently as leases run out the existing March and Ramsey Offices. In particular, the March offices have a break date of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016 with a flexible rolling break throughout 3 year period from then until May 2019.

The Design and Access includes a sequential test, with an assessment of a number of sites within and at the edge of March town centre. This concluded that there were no sites of sufficient size or accessibility. In terms of out of centre sites, the existing employment area at March Trading Park (Hostmoor) was assessed. Due to the industrial estate character this location was considered unsuitable for a Chartered Accountants Office.

The proposal is accords with Policy LP6 in that it would increase jobs in the District and is located within an area which is identified for some business development.

#### 9 CONCLUSIONS

The proposal has been assessed against policies in the Fenland Local Plan 2014, the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and the associated Planning Practice Guidance. The proposal would provide a high quality development, would enable jobs in an area identified for business development in the Local Plan and complies with planning policy in this regard.

The development is in a Broad Location for Growth. While a preliminary broad concept plan has been prepared to support the application, it falls well short of the requirements of Policy LP7. The consultation on the application has shown that there is limited interest from other landowners in progressing a broad concept plan for the area at this point in time.

The case is finely balanced, however, given the low level of land owner interest in progressing the concept plan, the economic benefits, the timescale for the lease on the applicant's existing premises and the fact that the proposal is otherwise policy compliant (subject to the visibility splay issue being resolved) it is considered that the proposal can be supported.

#### 10 RECOMMENDATION

1. The development permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

#### Reason

To ensure compliance with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development or preliminary groundworks of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme and timetable of archaeological work and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved programme shall then be implemented in accordance with the approved timetable prior to any other works taking place on site.

Reason – To secure the provision of the investigation and recording of archaeological remains threatened by the development and the reporting and dissemination of the results in accordance with Policy LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan.

3. A satisfactory scheme of external finishes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development commences on the site, and the work executed in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To safeguard the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

4. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved the vehicular access from Wimblington Road shall be sealed and drained 5m wide for the first 10m.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure satisfactory access into the site in accordance with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

5. The access from Wimblington Road shall be constructed with adequate

drainage measures to prevent surface water run-off onto the adjacent public highway, in accordance with a scheme submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent surface water discharging to the highway in accordance with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

- 6. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved the permanent space shown on the plans hereby approved to be reserved on the site to enable vehicles to:
  - 1. enter, turn and leave the site in forward gear
  - 2. park clear of the public highway, shall be levelled, surfaced and drained and thereafter retained for no other purpose in perpetuity.

Reason – In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

7. Adequate temporary facilities shall be provided clear of the public highway for the parking, turning, loading and unloading of all vehicles visiting the site during the period of construction in accordance with details to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

8. Prior to commencement of the development hereby approved, visibility splays shall be provided each side of the vehicular access. Minimum dimensions to secure the required splays shall be 2.4m, measured along the centre line of the proposed access from its junction with the channel line of the highway carriageway, and 120m north and 83m south, measured along the channel line of the highway carriageway from the centre line of the proposed access as shown on the approved location plan. The splays shall be maintained thereafter free from any obstruction exceeding 0.6m above the level of the adjacent highway carriageway.

Reason - In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policies LP15 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan.

9. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved a footway of minimum 1.8m width shall be provided on the west side of Wimblington Road as shown on the approved site plan in accordance with a detailed engineering scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and such a scheme shall include levels, forms of construction, surface water drainage and street lighting systems.

Reason: In the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety and in accordance with Policies LP15 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan.

10. Prior the commencement of the development hereby approved, a scheme for the provision of external lighting shall be submitted to and

approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such approved details shall be installed prior to the commencement of the use and retained thereafter in perpetuity.

Reason: In order to ensure this site meets crime prevention guidelines in accordance with Policies LP2 and LP17 of the Fenland Local Plan.

11. Prior to the first occupation of the development any gate or gates to the vehicular access shall be set back a minimum of 6m from the near edge of the highway carriageway. Any access gate or gates shall be hung to open inwards.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and in accordance with Policy LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan.

- 12. Prior to commencement of development full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Subsequently, these works shall be carried out as approved. The landscaping details to be submitted shall include:
  - a) hard surfacing, other hard landscape features and materials
  - b) existing trees, hedges or other soft features to be retained
  - c) planting plans, including specifications of species, sizes, planting centres number and percentage mix
  - d) proposed boundary treatments to all boundaries of the site
  - e) details of planting or features to be provided to enhance the value of the development for biodiversity and wildlife
  - f) details of siting and timing of all construction activities to avoid harm to all nature conservation features
  - g) location of service runs

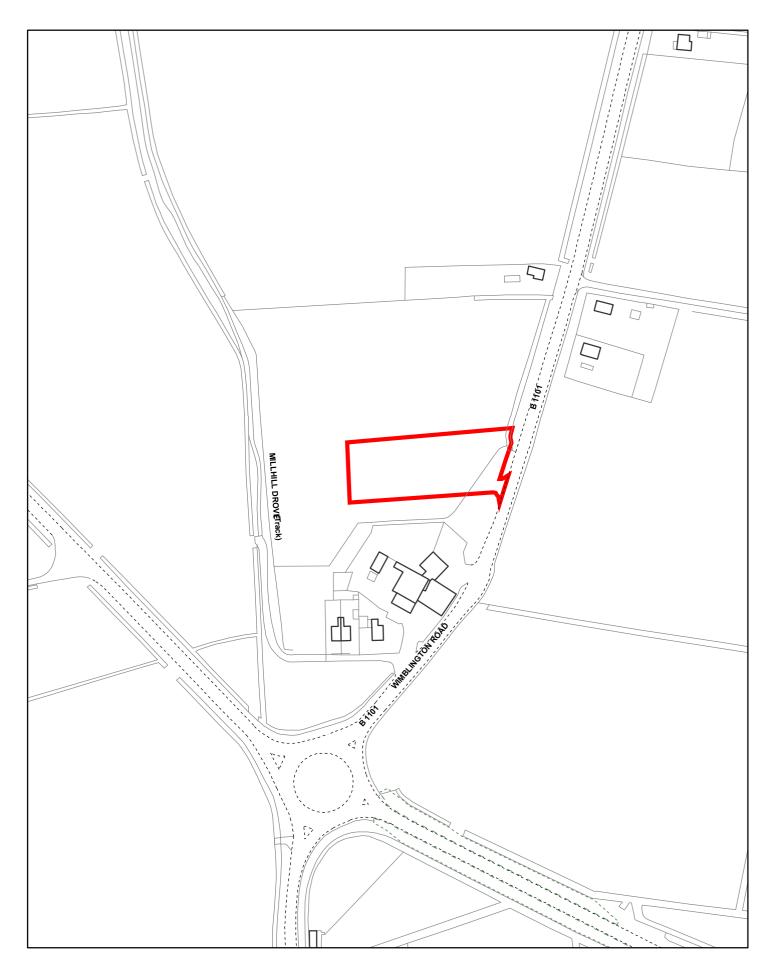
Reason - The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted and in accordance with Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

13. All hard and soft landscape works including any management and maintenance plan details, shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. All planting seeding or turfing and soil preparation comprised in the above details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings, the completion of the development, or in agreed phases whichever is the sooner, and any plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation. All landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the guidance contained in

British Standards BS5837:2012.

Reason - To ensure proper implementation of the agreed landscape details in the interest of the amenity value of the development and in accordance with Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

14. Approved Plans.



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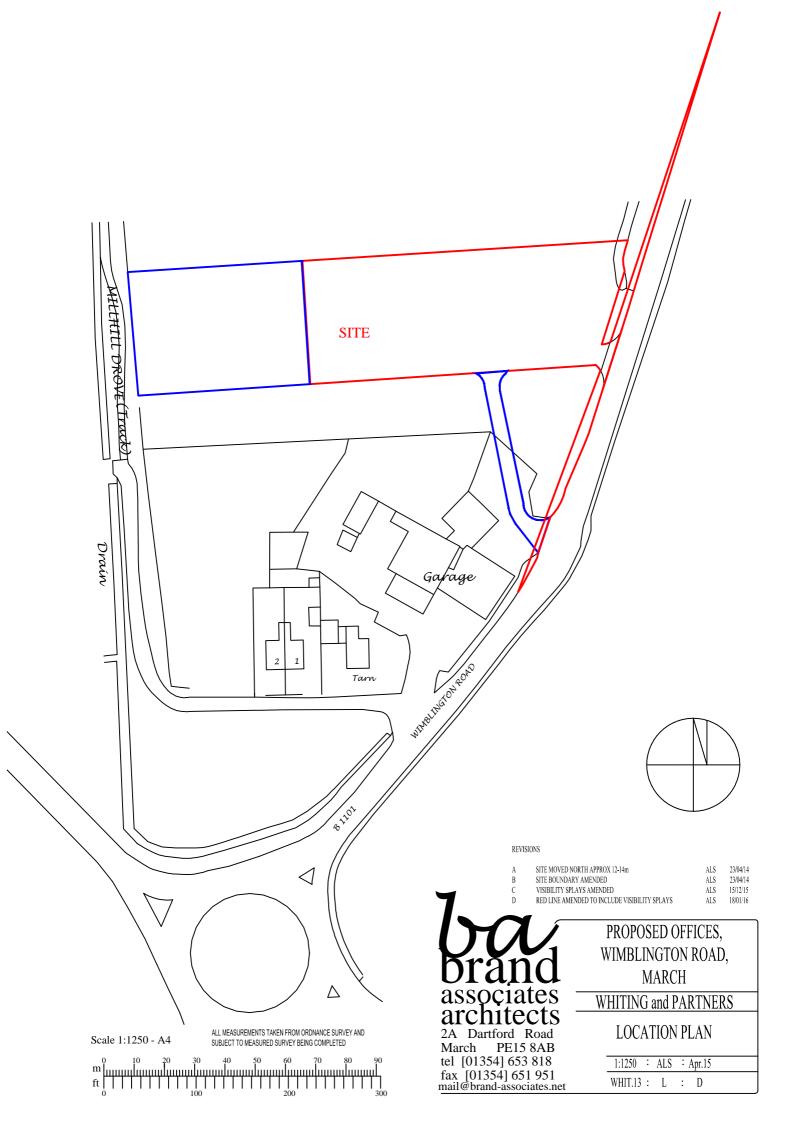
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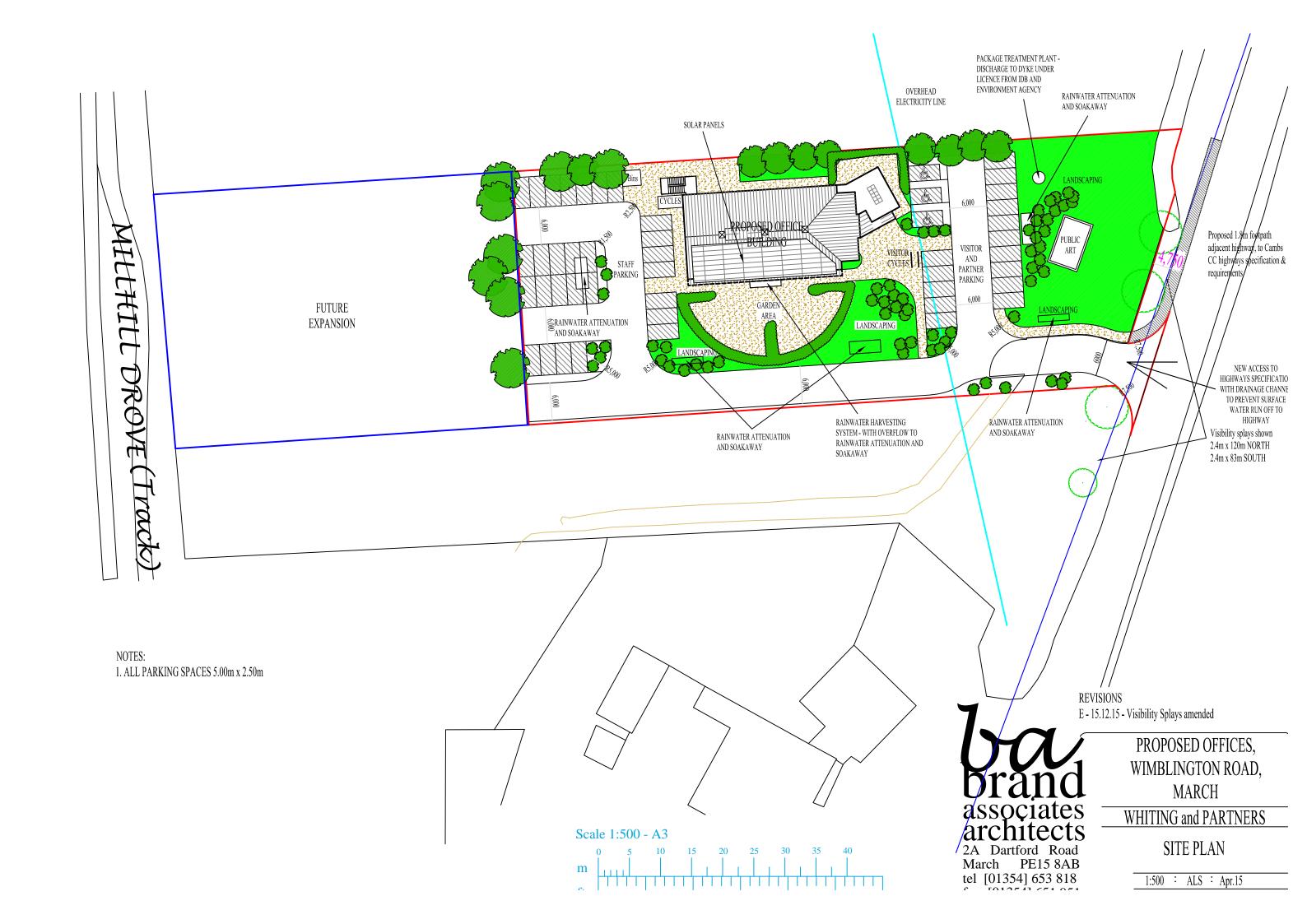
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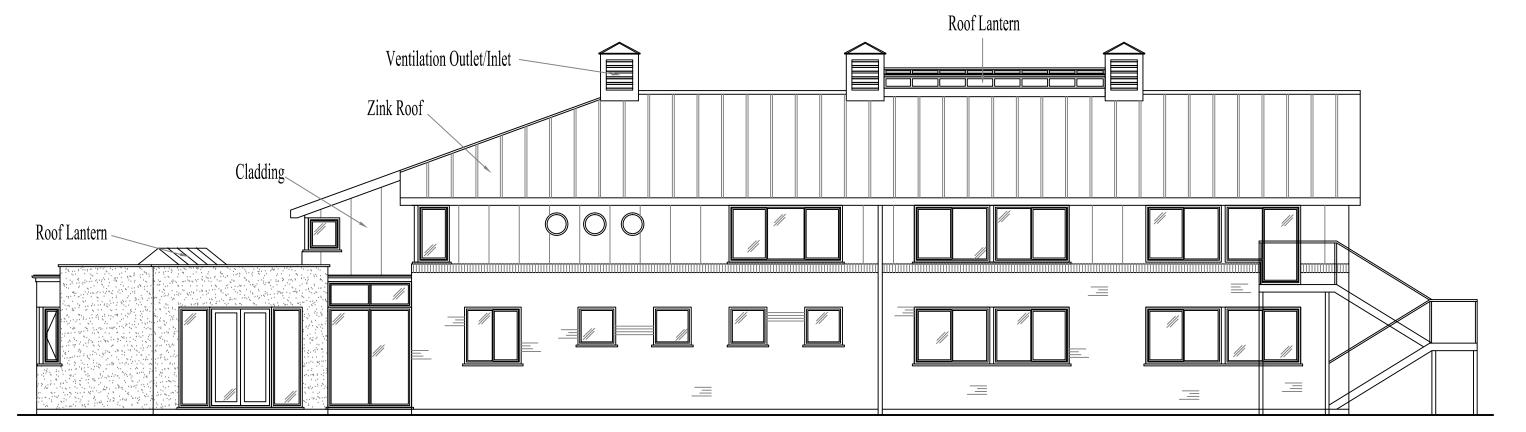
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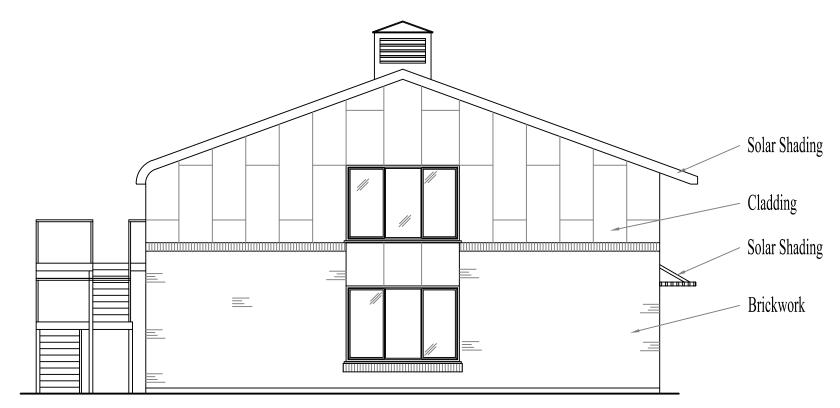
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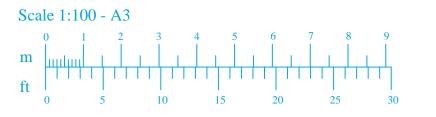




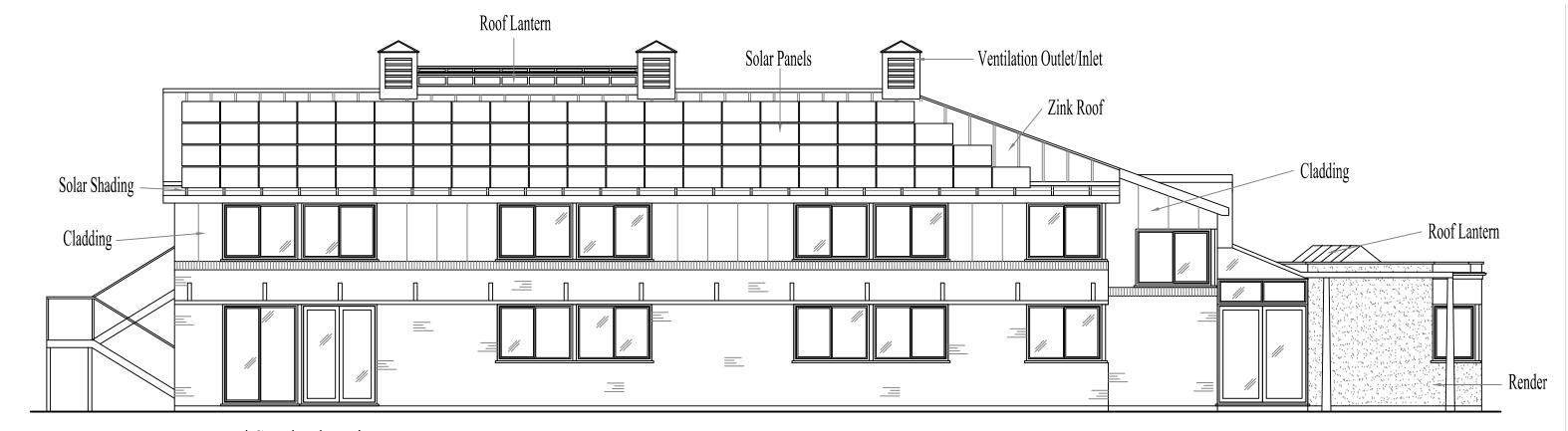
Proposed North Elevation



Proposed West Elevation



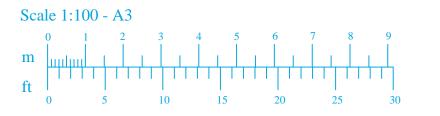


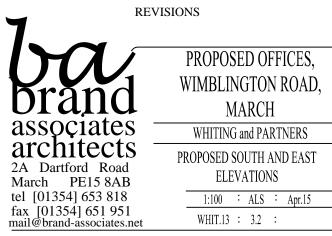


Proposed South Elevation

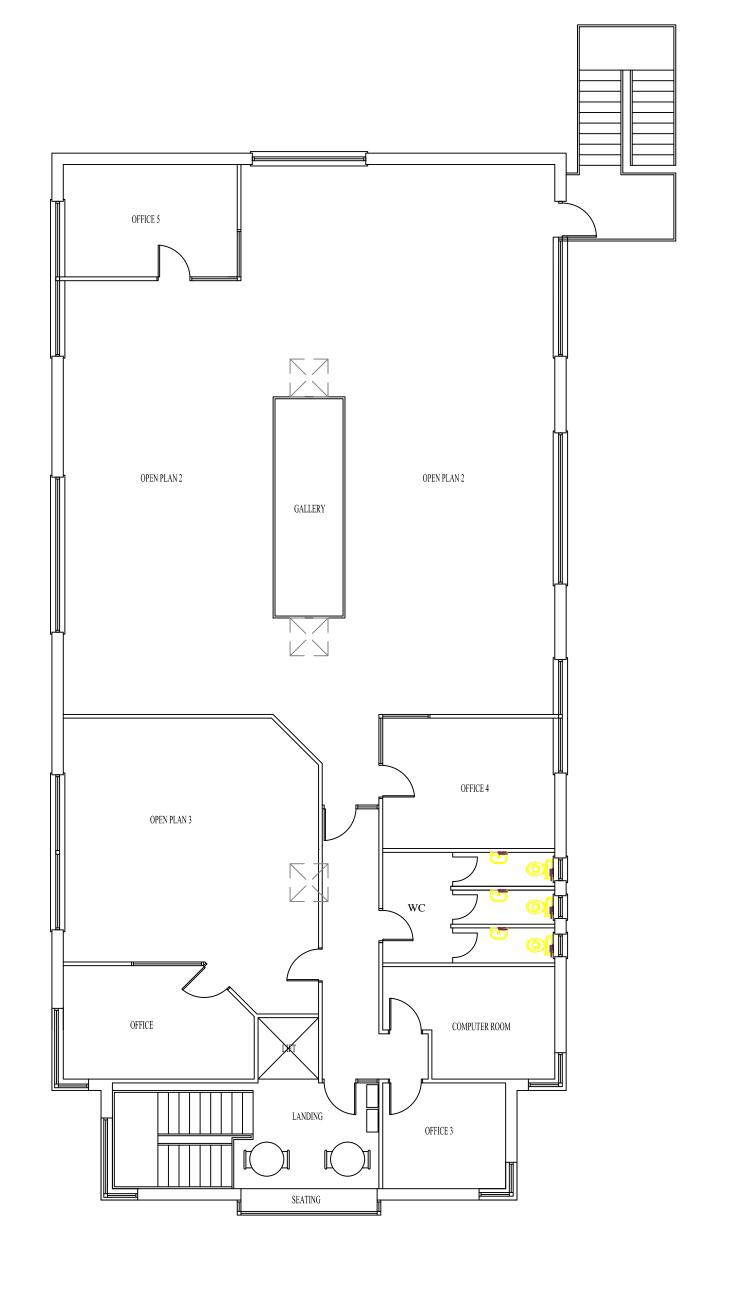


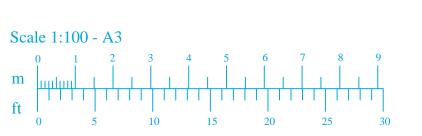
Proposed East Elevation











PR
WIN

Drand

associates

architects

2A Dartford Road

March PE15 8AB

tel [01354] 653 818

fax [01354] 651 951

mail@brand-associates.net

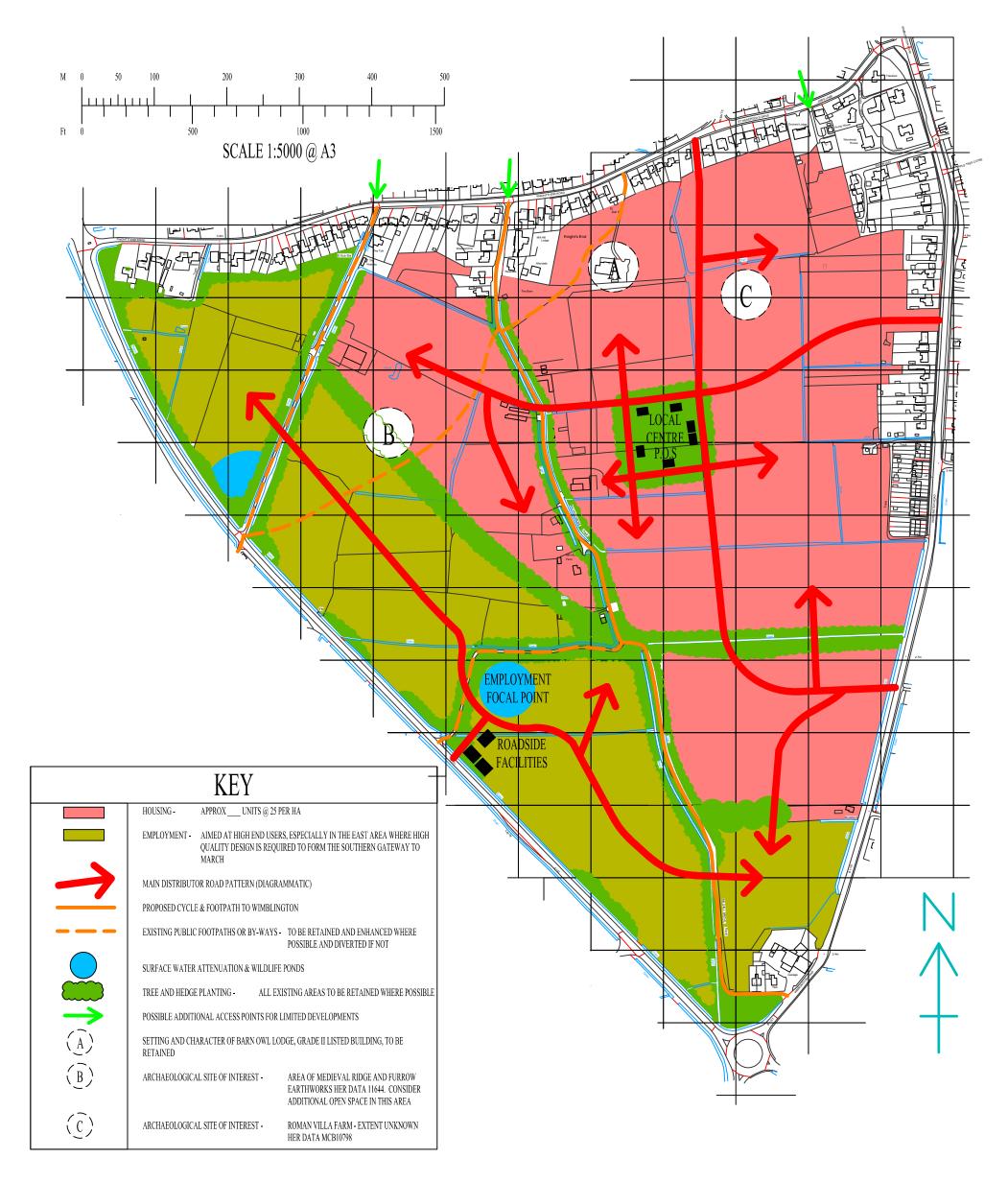
PROPOSED OFFICES, WIMBLINGTON ROAD, MARCH

WHITING and PARTNERS

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1:100 : ALS : Apr.15 WHIT.13 : 2.2 : F

# SOUTH WEST MARCH - BROAD LOCATION FOR GROWTH PRELIMINARY BROAD CONCEPT PLAN



## **BRAND ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS**

mail@brand-associates.net

MARCH SW / 01

01354 653818

**DATE - OCT 2015**