

Application No: 25/1373/FUL
Application Type: Full Planning
Location: Land To West Of David Whitby Way , Basford East , Crewe,
Proposal: Erection of a two-storey office building and deployment base (sui generis) including associated storage facilities, car parking, landscaping, plant and ancillary works
Applicant: Hannah Payne, Cheshire Constabulary

Expiry Date: 04 July 2025

SUMMARY

This application is submitted by Cheshire Constabulary and seeks full approval for the development of a new office and deployment base to replace the existing police station in Crewe town centre which no longer meets operational policing requirements.

The site is located within allocation LPS 2 Basford East, Crewe of CELPS for the delivery of employment use including office space together with 850 new homes and a local centre.

The proposed deployment base is essentially an office-based use, and although it will have the additional function of providing a frontline response through the deployment of officers, this proposal will accord with the overall objectives of Policy LPS 2 as they relate to this site.

There are siting and design concerns which weigh against the proposal, and it is disappointing that the direct line of the proposed east-west active travel route is disrupted. The large expanses of parking and constraints of the site also limit availability of landscaping which is driven by the requirements and understandable security needs of police operations.

Whilst important issues, these matters do need to be balanced against the benefits resulting from the new Crewe deployment base in this location. Such benefits include the provision of modern purpose-built facility to accommodate frontline response and key investigatory departments. It will allow the deployment of officers across the whole of the local policing area (LPU) with better access to the to the strategic road network with easy access into Crewe town centre and throughout the wider urban area.

The applicant considers that the proposed deployment base will address key problems facing the Cheshire Police arising from the limitations of inadequate accommodation at Crewe Police Station and will lead to improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of local policing.

Whilst new homes located opposite the site may be subject to noise and disturbance from police vehicles ('blue light') leaving the deployment base, including during the night, this

would be on a very infrequent basis, and consequently the proposals would not amount to an unacceptable impact on residential amenity.

Traffic generation from the proposal would not result in an adverse impact on the local highway network, suitable and safe access arrangements are provided from Mill Farm Drive with the provision of adequate on-site car parking and cycle storage.

Issues relating to ecology, trees, drainage/flood risk, air quality, contaminated land and the provision of the active travel link through the site have been addressed through and are subject to conditions where necessary.

On the basis that the disbenefits of the proposed development are outweighed by substantive improvements to efficiency and effectiveness of local policing, the proposal is acceptable. However, it is important that the landscaping and SuDs along the service strip to the front of the site is provided enabling a more effective landscaping belt as well as water management. This can be secured through a condition (and s278 agreement).

The proposal is therefore acceptable in the context of the relevant policies of the adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, Site Allocations and Development Plan Policies Document and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE Subject to conditions

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The site lies within the Basford East Strategic Allocation defined under Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) Policy LPS 2.

The application site is a parcel (1.13ha) of undeveloped greenfield land comprising of a mix of native scrub with hedgerow planting and trees alongside the northern and southern boundaries including an Oak (category B) to the north-east corner.

The site is situated between David Whitby Way (A5020) to the east and Mill Farm Drive which runs alongside the site frontage.

An irregular shaped piece of land in different ownership will however remain between the eastern site boundary and David Whitby Way.

A large housing development (325 dwellings) is currently being implemented by Taylor Wimpey on land within the strategic allocation to the west. The approved housing development will extend up to Mill Farm Drive, with dwellings facing towards the application site.

2. PROPOSALS

This application seeks full approval for the development of a new office and deployment base to replace the existing police station in Crewe town centre which is aging and of a layout which is no longer fit for purpose in meeting modern policing needs.

A supporting statement sets out that Cheshire Police are however committed to retain a presence in the Crewe town centre, in the form of a of “police hub” to enable continued, direct public access to police service. Although details need to be finalised and suitable premises secured, it is stated that the hub will be operational prior to the closure of the existing police station.

The proposed development includes a two-storey, flat roofed building faced in brickwork and also incorporates a “living green wall” wrapping around three sides of an attached store adjoining its rear elevation.

The building is set back about 20-23m from Mill Farm Drive and is essentially set within secure car parking areas which provide a total of 206 spaces. Access to the site and car parking is from Mill Farm Drive via two security gated access points.

The building will accommodate approximately 300 staff, with staffing levels between 120 – 150 persons in the daytime, and fewer staff overnight reflecting typical shift patterns. The facility will operate 24-hours, 365 days a year, and also provide a base for the deployment of officers via response vehicles, across Crewe, Nantwich and South Cheshire. The road crime unit will also be relocated from Congleton to operate from the base on a countywide basis.

The application site also includes a pedestrian/cycleway (3m wide) running east/west alongside the northern boundary, but outside the secure operational area of the deployment base. This will enable a connection for the Basford East east-west active travel route to be provided around the application site between the Taylor Wimpey development and across third party to David Whitby Way. A toucan crossing is to be provided across David Whitby Way beyond which the route continues through the Onward Homes development and onto the South Cheshire growth Village site to the north-east.

The submitted plans have been amended during the course of the application due to the uncertainty as to land ownership, and what elements of landscaping including SuDs can be provided within a service strip along the site frontage with Mill Farm Drive.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

With respect to the site itself

20/0615N - Deed of variation in connection with outline planning permission 15/1537N. Approved to Modify S106 27-Mar-2020

19/0704N - Non-material amendment to approved application 15/1537N - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for a mixed-use development comprising residential use (Use Class C3) (up to 325 residential dwellings); employment use (Use Class B1), local centre comprising health centre and community facility (Use Class D1), food/non-food retail (Use Class A1), public house/restaurant (Use Class A4/A3) and associated works including construction of a new access road with access from the Crewe Green Link Road South, creation of footpaths and provision of public open space and landscaping. Approved 10-March-2019

15/1537N - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for a mixed-use development comprising residential use (Use Class C3) (up to 325 residential dwellings); employment use (Use Class B1), local centre comprising health centre and community facility Page 75 OFFICIAL (Use Class D1), food/non-food retail (Use Class A1), public house/restaurant (Use Class A4/A3) and associated works including construction of a new access road with access from the Crewe Green Link Road South. Approved 23-Dec-2016

20/0615N - Deed of variation in connection with outline planning permission 15/1537N. Approved to Modify S106 27-Mar-2020

With respect to adjacent sites within the LPS 2 Basford East, Crewe allocation

21/4434N - Reserved matters application proposing details of layout, appearance, scale and landscaping for the residential element (C3 use) of the outline development 15/1537N - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for a mixed-use development comprising residential use (Use Class C3) (up to 325 residential dwellings); employment use (Use Class B1), local centre comprising health centre and community facility (Use Class D1), food/non-food retail (Use Class A1), public house/restaurant (Use Class A4/A3) and associated works including construction of a new access road with access from the Crewe Green Link Road Page South, creation of footpaths and provision of public open space and landscaping. Approved 7- Oct-2022

20/0615N - Deed of variation in connection with outline planning permission 15/1537N. Approved to Modify S106 27-Mar-2020

19/5934N - Approval of Reserved Matters following Outline Approval 14/4025N - Outline application for the erection of up to 490 residential dwellings and a primary school - 2000m2 (D1) a pumping station, substation, recreational open space, ecological mitigation area, internal access routes, ground modelling and drainage works, parking provision, footpaths, cycle routes, landscaping and associated works including details of access at the Basford East site Crewe Approved 26- Nov-2020

19/2545N - Approval of all reserved matters following outline approval 15/1537N for the infrastructure works at Basford East. Approved 05-Nov-2019

19/3649N - Hybrid planning application for mixed use and residential development comprising; a) in full: the conversion, alteration and extension of the former mill and two farm buildings to business / professional services (Classes A2 and B1) and/or food and drink (Class A3) and/or non-residential community uses (Class D1) and/or leisure uses (Class D2), under Class V of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) with initial vehicular and pedestrian access from Mill Lane and permanent vehicular and pedestrian access from the future highway network serving the Basford East Strategic Site, and associated car parking and landscaping, and; b) in outline: residential development with vehicular access from the future highway network serving the Basford East Strategic Site and associated car parking and landscaping, and with all other matters reserved. (Crotia Mill) - NOT DETERMINED

19/2545N - Approval of all reserved matters following outline approval 15/1537N for the infrastructure works at Basford East. Approved 05-Nov-2019

19/0704N - Non-material amendment to approved application 15/1537N - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for a mixed-use development comprising residential use (Use Class C3) (up to 325 residential dwellings); employment use (Use Class B1), local centre comprising health centre and community facility (Use Class D1), food/non-food retail (Use Class A1), public house/restaurant (Use Class A4/A3) and associated works including construction of a new access road with access from the Crewe Green Link Road South, creation of footpaths and provision of public open space and landscaping. Approved 10-March-2019

16/2465N - Variation of Conditions 4, 5 and 6 on application 14/1366N - to fell additional trees as part of the Crewe Green Link Road Scheme. Approved 03-Nov-2016

15/3550N – Non-material amendment to 14/1366N - Dual carriageway road, known as the Crewe Green link Road (south) linking A500 with the A5020 and associated works. Approved 25-Aug-2015

15/1537N - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved) for a mixed-use development comprising residential use (Use Class C3) (up to 325 residential dwellings); employment use (Use Class B1), local centre comprising health centre and community facility (Use Class D1), food/non-food retail (Use Class A1), public house/restaurant (Use Class A4/A3) and associated works including construction of a new access road with access from the Crewe Green Link Road South. Approved 23-Dec-2016

14/4025N - Outline application for the erection of up to 490 residential dwellings and a primary school - 2000m2 (D1) a pumping station, substation, recreational open space, ecological mitigation area, internal access routes, ground modelling and drainage works, parking provision, footpaths, cycle routes, landscaping and associated works including details of access at the Basford East site Crewe. Approved 09-Feb-2016

14/1366N - Variation of condition 2 (plans) attached to planning application 2/4115N. Dual carriageway road, known as the Crewe Green Link Road (South) linking the A500 with the A5020 and associated works. Approved 06-Jun-2014

12/4115N - Dual carriageway road, known as the Crewe Green Link Road (South) linking the A500 with the A5020 and associated works. Approved 18-Jan-2013

4. NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published by the Government in March 2012 and has since been through several revisions. It sets out the planning policies for England and how these should be applied in the determination of planning applications and the preparation of development plans. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF is a material consideration which should be taken into account for the purposes of decision making.

5. DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires decisions on planning applications to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2010 – 2030) was adopted in July 2017. The Site Allocations and Development Policies Documents was adopted in December 2022. The policies of the Development Plan relevant to this application are set out below, including relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies where applicable to the application site.

6. POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

LPS 2 – Basford East

MP1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.

PG 1 - Overall Development Strategy

PG 2 - Settlement Hierarchy

PG 7 - Spatial Distribution of Development

SD 1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD 2 - Sustainable Development Principles

SE 1 - Design

SE 2 - Efficient Use of Land

SE 3 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity

SE 4 - The Landscape

SE 5 - Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
SE 6 - Green Infrastructure
SE 8 - Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
SE 9 - Energy Efficient Development
SE 12 - Pollution, Land contamination and Land instability
SE 13 - Flood Risk and Water Management
CO 1 - Sustainable Travel and Transport
CO 4 - Travel Plans and Transport Assessments
IN 1 - Infrastructure
IN 2 - Developer Contributions

Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD)

PG 9 - Settlement boundaries
GEN1 - Design principles
ENV1 - Ecological network
ENV2 - Ecological implementation
ENV3 - Landscape character
ENV5 - Landscaping
ENV6 - Trees, hedgerows, and woodland implementation
ENV7 - Climate Change
ENV12 - Air quality
ENV 14 - Light pollution.
ENV 16 - Surface water management and flood risk.
ENV15 - New development and existing uses
ENV16 - Surface water management and flood risk
HOU 12 - Amenity.
INF1 - Cycleways, bridleways and footpaths
INF3 - Highways safety and access
INF9 – Utilities

Weston and Basford Neighbourhood Plan 2015 - 2030

Modified plan made on 20th February 2024. However, the Modified Neighbourhood Plan states that, "For the avoidance of doubt, the policies in the Plan do not cover the land at the major allocations at Basford West, Basford East and South Cheshire Growth Village."

7. RELEVANT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS OR GUIDANCE

Supplementary Planning Documents and Guidance do not form part of the Development Plan but may be a material consideration in decision making. The following documents are considered relevant to this application:

Developer Contributions SPD
Biodiversity and Net Gain SPD
Environmental Protection SPD
SuDS SPD
Cheshire East Design Guide SPD

8. CONSULTATIONS

Environment Agency: No objection

United Utilities: No objection

Flood Risk: No objection subject to a condition requiring approval of surface water drainage strategy.

Environmental Protection: No objection subject to conditions with regard to the remediation of contamination, use of ultra-low emission boilers, implementation of mitigation measures of acoustic report (external plant). Standard informatives are recommended relating to hours of construction, Piling, floor floating and dust management.

CEC Highways: No objection subject to conditions.

Cheshire Archaeology: No objection

Weston and Crewe Green Parish Council: Requests clarification in relation to the following issues:

- The main concern relates to the additional numbers of vehicles which will converge on the central roundabout on David Whitby Way. This will be in addition to the traffic generated by the other uses currently approved on this part of Basford East (over 300 Wimpey dwellings, large scale warehousing / industrial development by Muse, and very large vehicles associated with Network Rail). It is understood that the current proposal will result in circa 95 arrival trips in the morning peak and circa 79 departure trips in the evening peak. All of this will in the Parish Council's opinion exacerbate the safety issues for pedestrians attempting to cross David Whitby Way at this point. There will be a two-form entry primary school on the east side of David Whitby Way along with around 460 new dwellings, and a potential food store on the west side of David Whitby way in the vicinity of the current application. The Parish Council takes the view that the proposed pedestrian crossing to ensure the safe crossing of the heavily trafficked David Whitby Way at this point will be totally inadequate. We request that a Section 106 Agreement is included as part of any permission to contribute to the upgrading of this facility.

- Noise and Disturbance to future residents living opposite the application site. The proposed use will be manned 24/7 but unclear as to the likely numbers of staff who will be deployed on-site outside normal daytime working hours. In addition, there is no statement that police sirens will only be used off site whilst travelling on the primary road network. Explicit assurances are sought on these points to safeguard residential amenity in the immediate vicinity of this site.

- The provision of lighting should be conditioned to protect the amenities of future residents living opposite. It is understood that lighting within the site curtilage could be operating 24/7.

- Landscaping. Semi-mature landscaping and planting is required alongside the western perimeter of the site to afford optimum screening to the proposed new dwellings on the opposite side of the new estate road.

9. REPRESENTATIONS

One representation has been received raising the following issues:

- A Section 106 Legal Agreement / conditions should secure the site of a town centre customer service desk and hub prior to the construction of the development, to ensure a presence in the town centre.

- no information has been provided regarding the disposal of the current site. Whilst not relevant to this application, leaving a building in the town centre abandoned should be avoided and a plan for the town centre network should be secured.

- The supporting statement states Deployment Base will primarily operate during standard 9am-5pm working hours, with reduced overnight shift working and deployment of operational vehicles. Despite this, the only feasible mode of travel to get to the site is by car, due to the nearest bus stops being on Weston Road - 700m north of the site. Whilst future bus routes to the residential development is secured through S106, this is outside the parameters of the bus station with no stops within 400m of the site, as recommended in the Local Plan. As such, Cheshire East Council should look for a S106/S278 agreement to install a northbound bus stop on David Whitby Way (outside the site), and obtain funding to divert the 85 bus Monday-Friday to serve the site for the office hours, thus reducing car dependency of the site.

- The short and long stay cycle parking, and EV provision (including EV for public parking) should be conditioned.

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

10.1 Principle of development

This site is located within the western part of allocation LPS 2 - Basford East, Crewe of CELPS for the delivery of employment use including office space together with 850 new home and a local centre.

Outline Planning Approval 15/1537N relating to the development of a large part of the western area of Basford East incorporated this site and the parcel of land located between housing development (TW) and David Whitby Way. The indicative masterplan showed the site being occupied with commercial/office units with a local centre adjoining the northern site boundary. However, Reserved Matters were not submitted in respect of this site, and it is no longer possible to do so, given the time limits of the outline approval (15/1537N) have expired.

The proposed deployment base is an office-based use, albeit including the function of providing a frontline response through the deployment of officers. It will not however have a public facing 'helpdesk'. It is considered that as the proposal primarily comprises an office use, this proposal with accord with the overall objectives of Policy LPS 2 as they relate to this site.

10.2 Siting and Design

The siting, design and general layout of the proposal has been a source of concern, but the functional requirement and needs of the use means there are limited options for change. This is also reflected in comments from Design Officers.

Although this is a public development its design is not however especially innovative. The proposed building has a function led design, being a flat roofed, brick construction of simple contemporary design/detailing with living walling to a section of the building. It will appear quite utilitarian and does not have a positive relationship with the street, being positioned at the centre of the large parking, access and manoeuvring areas. The application clarifies that this is not a "public interface" police station and therefore most staff will arrive by car and there will be modest numbers of visitors to the facility. This arrangement is also determined by security requirements.

The siting of the development will mean a compromise in the routing of the strategically important east-west active travel connection linking within Basford East and connecting to the future South Cheshire Growth village. Its location on the northern edge of the site will mean there will be limited natural surveillance, and the route will not be as direct as it could have been with better planning of the commercial zone. As noted in the applicant's crime impact assessment, at times the facility will not be fully occupied with less activity. That and the non-direct alignment could therefore impact the sense of safety and effectiveness as an active travel route.

The development will also be located in close proximity to dwellings which will be sited on the opposite side of Mill Farm Drive and be delivered as part of the Taylor Wimpey scheme. There is potential for associated nuisance arising from emergency response, notwithstanding that the permitted use of the land is for commercial/industrial purposes (this is addressed elsewhere in the report).

A positive aspect of the scheme is the proposed SuDS strategy, set out in the submitted drawings and the drainage strategy, comprising linked components (SuDS ponds, living walling, permeable paving and water tolerant landscape areas). This could be weakened if the proposed landscaping and wet areas on the Mill Farm Drive frontage are no longer deliverable, but it is hoped a solution can still be found for this along the service strip. It is considered that if the application is recommended for approval, then the final SuDS design should be conditioned to ensure the multi-component train as outlined in the drainage strategy is achieved.

There are still extensive areas of car parking and hard surface that would benefit from additional screening via tree planting as recommended by the landscape officer. Similarly, it is hoped that recent changes to omit landscaping and wet areas from the scheme can be retained to improve the appearance along the frontage of the development from Mill Farm Drive.

10.3 Highways

The site is located on the southern edge of Crewe, approximately 4km from the town centre, with access to the adopted highway via Mill Farm Drive/Basford Brook Way and then onto David Whitby Way.

The proposal is for a new Cheshire Constabulary Deployment Base to replace the existing Crewe town centre police station and also transfer a number of departments that are currently spread across the region to a more central location. It is understood the Police will retain a presence in the Crewe town centre in the form of a Public Help Desk/Hub. to enable continued, direct public access to police service, and this is intended be operational prior to the closure of the existing police station.

The deployment base will contain a number of offices and departments which will primarily operate during standard 9am-5pm working hours, with reduced overnight shift working.

Sustainable access - Public Transport

The nearest bus stop is on Weston Road approximately 1km (15-minute walk) from the site and provides an hourly service to locations including Newcastle Under Lyme, Keele, Weston, Crewe, and Nantwich. There is existing footway/cycleway infrastructure from the bus stop to the application site.

An approved residential development on the opposite side of David Whitby Way, as part of the wider Basford East site, will provide a S106 financial contribution to the delivery of

an hourly bus service to connect the site to the wider area. The exact location of the bus stop is yet to be determined but would likely provide a bus stop within approximately 400m of the police deployment site.

Sustainable access - Basford East east-west active travel connection

A specific policy requirement of LPS 2 (Basford East, Crewe) is for development of pedestrian links (allowing for cycle access) to the South Cheshire Growth Village (LPS 8) to the east and the wider development with the Basford East Strategic Allocation to specifically provide a safe and secure environment for children to travel to school.

There is existing footway/cycleway infrastructure connecting the site to the wider area. Importantly an active travel route for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided from the South Cheshire Growth Village and through the Onward Homes site to the east of David Whitby Way. The route has also been incorporated within the residential area (Taylor Wimpey) to the west of David Whitby Way through to Croatia Mill and the Muse employment site, albeit with a “missing link” remaining through the parcel of land now proposed to accommodate the Police Deployment Base.

Although the application proposes a cycle/pedestrian way to run alongside the northern site boundary to form part the Basford East east-west active travel route, it does not provide as direct a route as it could through the site to/from the toucan crossing on David Whitby Way. As set out above, Highways Officers agree this also potentially reduces the attractiveness of using this sustainable route through the Taylor Wimpey housing development and beyond.

Between the land to be dedicated as a cycle/pedestrian way and David Whitby Way, there is a section of land within third party ownership currently preventing the completion of this connection. Discussions are ongoing but there are several potential options to overcome this issue including purchasing the land from the owner using previous agreed S106 money. Also, as an additional option, under S26 of the Highways Act 1980, the Council as the Highway Authority can create a PROW without the landowner’s agreement. The process would involve informal consultation on the proposal ahead of a Highway Committee decision.

This third-party land issue is a matter outside of the applicant’s control and would need to be overcome even if the police deployment site does not progress, and as set out above there are a number of ways the Council can progress this. The Highway Officer also advises that this section of pedestrian/cycleway along the northern boundary of the site will need to be closed off until these details can be resolved and details of this can be conditioned. The active travel route will also need to be complemented with additional dropped kerbs, and/or signage, and/or highway surface markings, and details of this can be secured through a condition.

Sustainable access - Toucan Crossings

As part of already approved development a signalised crossing for pedestrians/cyclists will be provided across David Whitby Way forming part of the Basford East east-west active travel of the route. The Highway Officer has advised previously that notwithstanding the concerns raised by the Weston and Crewe Parish Council that the toucan crossing can be satisfactorily provided.

In addition, to further improve pedestrian/cycle connectivity, the Highway Officer has already advised in the consideration of 23/0539N (Muse employment development) that a further Toucan crossing is to be provided on David Whitby Way in a position to the north

of the roundabout junction with the spine road (Basford Brook Way). It will be funded through existing S106 contributions. The additional crossing will significantly improve accessibility from the northern part of the Taylor Wimpey residential development to the proposed primary school on the opposite side of David Whitby Way.

Safe and suitable access

Vehicle access and egress from the site will be provided from two points on Mill Farm Drive and pedestrian accesses adjacent to each of these also provided. The northern access will provide for a small number of visitor parking spaces as well as from the main car park. The southern one will provide access to the main car park only.

The Highway Officer advises that the access points will have adequate widths and visibilities. The local highway network was recently constructed and adopted and is capable of safely accommodating the development traffic.

Suitable refuse, servicing, and delivery arrangements will be available which include a drop-off area within the site.

Parking

A total of 206 parking spaces within the site are proposed (36 operational spaces; 166 staff parking spaces and 4 visitor spaces). Due to the nature of the site there will be a requirement to park response vehicles when not in use within the site and this represents the 36 operational bays.

The applicant carried out a recent staff travel survey where 100% of staff who answered the survey indicated that they would be travelling to the site via private vehicle. This high percentage will be due to the nature of the development; shift working occurring at the site; and the wide area from which specialist staff will travel from. The Highway Officer considers that assuming all staff, during shift changeover, arrive and leave at the same time then there would be a short-term peak demand of 194 parking spaces. In reality, the applicant has stated that many staff have flexible working arrangements in terms of start and finish times. Along with overtime provisions, and due to the nature of the services the police provide (case and report deadlines, response call outs etc), and arrivals/exits will be staggered, and the parking provision is considered acceptable.

Cycle parking will also be provided for staff and is considered by the Highway Officer to be sufficient.

Network Capacity

The applicant has assessed the impact of the development on the local highway network capacity taking into consideration the local committed development recently approved. It was assessed taking into consideration likely staff shift patterns and also as an office development. The assessments concluded that there would not be a significant highways impact.

It is also important to note that further to outline planning approval 15/1537N, financial contributions have been secured through a variation to S106 agreement to mitigate the highway impact of both the housing and commercial elements.

Highways Conclusion

The Highway Officer considers the proposal is acceptable and would not result in an adverse highway impact. No objection is raised subject to conditions being attached as set out below.

The Highway Officer considers a condition should be attached requiring that prior to occupation of the new deployment base details of a Crewe town centre public facing desk/hub should be submitted to and approved by the LPA. However, whilst it is acknowledged that the police station is being relocated, and an alternative public facing provision here has yet to be finalised, this is not considered a reasonable planning condition as it directly relates to operational policing matters and how resources are best deployed.

The Highway Officer considers that a condition should be attached requiring that the proposed active travel link shall be available for use from first occupation of the new deployment base. Although, as set out above the active travel link along the northern site boundary is required to remain closed until a link is provided from it to David Whitby Way. Details of how this will be closed should also be submitted and approved.

A further condition is recommended requiring details of how the active travel route will tie in with the approved route along Mill Farm Drive.

An informative is also recommended requiring a s278 agreement for the proposed access/off-site works, and a S38 Agreement regarding the construction and future adoption of the active travel link.

10.4 Amenity

SADPD Policy HOU12 (Amenity) states that new development should not be permitted if it is deemed to cause unacceptable harm upon neighbouring amenity such as from visual intrusion, noise and disturbance. Residential properties of the approved Taylor Wimpey development (21/4434N) will be sited alongside Mill Farm Drive directly opposite to the frontage of the site.

Given the significant distance between the new dwellings and the proposed building and the potential for enhanced landscaping to be provided within site to filter views of the scheme, the amenities of future occupiers of the Taylor Wimpey development would not be detrimentally affected in terms of an overbearing visual impact or loss of outlook.

In support of the application, the applicant has submitted an acoustic report. This confirms that the use of the deployment base which is essentially an office building and will generate limited noise or emissions, other than potentially from external plant which may operate during the night-time period (23:00 – 07:00) and for which its provision will be controlled through a condition.

Concerns have been raised with regard to the 24-hour operation of the deployment base and the impact this will have on the new homes sited opposite in relation to the movement of police vehicles leaving the site, with sirens (response vehicles) being used or not.

The applicant states that the staffing levels of the building would be between 120 -150 people during daytime and lower levels at night, reflecting operational requirements and shift working. The levels of vehicular movement associated with night-time office-based staff of the deployment base are unlikely to result in unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to neighbouring residential properties.

The applicant points out that many police vehicles may already be deployed on the highway network when called to attend an incident. This may explain the low incidences of 'blue light' vehicles leaving Crewe Police Station over a recent six month period with a daily average of 10 uses of lights and siren ('blue light') activations in a 24-hour period. The highest proportion of these activations were found to occur between 5pm and 7pm.

It is further stated that 'blue lights' are used by drivers as a warning to other road users and therefore sirens are most likely to be used in town centre given higher number of pedestrian and other road users, and secondly on main roads where police vehicles are moving at high speeds and need to overtake other road users.

Based on this analysis presented by Cheshire Constabulary, many police vehicles will already be deployed elsewhere when responding to call-outs with consequently few movements occurring from the Deployment Base. In addition, police response vehicles leaving the deployment base should not normally need to use sirens along Mill Farm Drive, a residential road, particularly at night-time.

Although the use of sirens may nevertheless still occur at night-time and would inevitably result in disturbance and inconvenience for residents at the time, it would be difficult to argue that such isolated incidents would amount to a significant adverse impact on residential amenity.

The potential impact could have been resolved with entry/exit arrangements directly from David Whitby Way. This was discounted by the applicant at the pre-application stage given constraints including the need to cross a culvert, the higher level of David Way, the use of third-party land and the "not insurmountable" construction costs of this access.

10.5 Ecology

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) applies in this instance. The submitted biodiversity metric predicts a habitat net loss of -19.28%. No hedgerows are recorded within the existing redline boundary; however, it is noted that hedgerow creation is proposed within the metric and provide a net benefit for wildlife.

However, given the subsequent omission of landscaping and suds features within the service strip along the site frontage an updated BNG calculation and report has now been provided. This is being assessed by the Council's ecologist and an update provided.

Full details of offsite mitigation must be provided to discharge the mandatory biodiversity gain condition. Furthermore, a Habitat Creation Method Statement & Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be required for retained, enhanced and newly created habitats on-site, and this will be secured through a planning condition.

Badgers

No evidence of badgers was recorded onsite during the submitted survey. However, Badgers are known to be present in the broad locality of the application site. The Council's Ecologist advises that a condition should be attached requiring the submission of an updated badger survey.

Basford Brook Local Wildlife Site

The application site is about 325m from Basford Brook Local Wildlife Site. Basford Brook was primarily designated due to the presence of White Clawed Crayfish (WCC), which is

regionally important threatened species. WCC are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and hence a material consideration.

Any pollution from construction works could result in an adverse impact upon White Clawed Crayfish present within Basford Brook. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (TEP, 2025) has been submitted which provides various mitigation measures throughout the construction, and operation phase of development which addresses pollution, run-off and biosecurity risks. Based on the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SBK, 2025) the works will not result in an increase discharge of metals and hydrocarbons into Basford Brook,

The Council's Ecologist recommend that conditions are imposed requiring full details of the drainage scheme and that the development is undertaken in accordance with the approved CEMP.

Great Crested Newts

Great Crested Newts (GCN) are known to be present locally. However, the wider site has been recently redeveloped. The waterbody within 250m of works was negative for the presence of GCN (ADAS, 2024). The Council's Ecologist advises that as a result of the negative eDNA test an offence is not considered likely. Consequently, the Council is therefore not required to consider the three tests set out within The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations.

Bats

The existing site has the potential to support commuting and foraging bats, with the nearby trees providing potential roosting opportunities for bats. To limit disturbance to bats a Sensitive Bat Lighting Strategy Input (TEP, 2025) been submitted which is considered to be broadly acceptable. A condition is recommended to secure the approved Sensitive Bat Lighting Strategy.

Birds

A standard condition is recommended to protect breeding birds.

Hedgehogs

The existing site has the potential to support hedgehogs, which are a priority species and hence a material consideration. It is advised that the proposed development would have an impact on hedgehogs through the loss of habitat and the risk of animals being killed or injured during the site clearance and construction phase. The Council's Ecologist considers that the implementation of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (TEP, 2025) is sufficient to safeguard hedgehogs throughout the construction process.

Reptiles

A regionally important population of slow worms, a reptile species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, has been previously recorded at Basford East. Whilst the existing site offers limited habitat for reptiles, with no basking opportunities, it was identified that the existing site does provide suitable sheltering and foraging habitats for reptiles.

The Council's Ecologist advises that due to the proximity to a known population of slow worms, reasonable avoidance measures will be required. These details have been

included within the submitted Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (TEP, 2025), which appear to be suitable to mitigate for the risk of slow worms being killed or injured during the construction process. Enhancement measures for slow worms will be requested within the below ecological enhancement plan.

Ecological Enhancements

The site falls within Cheshire East Council's ecological network core and restoration areas, which forms part of the SADPD. The below ecological enhancements are therefore recommended, to provide enhancements on site in line with SADPD policy ENV 1. These recommendations are separate to the requirements of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain.

A condition is recommended to secure an Ecological Enhancement Plan shall include (but are not limited to) the following:

Bat Bricks, universal Nest Bricks for swifts (to avoid any southern elevations),
Brash / log piles, enhancement measures for slow worms.

10.6 Trees

The site comprises of some natural regeneration central to the area, a section of the original field boundary hedgerow and several trees. No statutory protection applies to trees within the site edged red.

This application has been supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, described as 'Baseline', and does not confirm tree or hedgerow losses on the site. However, further information has been submitted to address issues originally raised by the Forestry Officer including the submission of a tree overlay plan. After reviewing the submitted information, the Forestry Officer advises that it appears that one dead tree and a moderate quality, unprotected Oak (T2) would be lost to accommodate the development. The hedgerow is shown for retention, and another moderate quality Oak (T3) is shown for retention, as is T4, T5 and group G1.

It is considered that the tree planting of the landscape scheme for the development will be sufficient to mitigate and off-set tree loss.

The Forestry Officer accepts that the trees are located outside the site edged red, however in the absence of an existing boundary between development and the trees and hedgerows, a condition is recommended requiring the submission of measures for tree protection.

10.7 Landscape

The Landscape Officer considers that the submitted proposals incorporate a lack of adequate buffer planting along the Mill Farm Drive frontage of the development. It is considered that the deployment base needs to be adequately screened with deciduous native trees and mixed native hedgerows to filter/block views into the scheme from the adjacent housing estate and the proposed active travel route alongside the northern site boundary.

The Landscape Officer also echoes the design concerns, as regards the provision of SuDs features within the site. A condition is proposed to be attached to ensure the SuDS design comprising of a multi-component train as outlined in the drainage strategy is achieved.

10.8 Flood Risk/Drainage

The development lies mainly within Flood Zone 1 with a localised area of the site recorded as being in Flood Zone 2. The site is at a low to medium risk of flooding from the Main River (Basford Brook)

The supporting Flood Risk Assessment sets reflects the approach of the NPPF that a sequential risk-based based approach (sequential test) should be undertaken with the overall objective of steering new development to areas of lowest probability of flood risk, and ensure development is in the most appropriate flood zone. However, in this case, as the site is part of the Basford East Strategic site and allocated under LPS 2 of CELPS, and it is therefore considered that the Sequential Test has been passed.

The Exception Test set out by NPPF paragraph 179 is also required to be met for this site due to the “highly vulnerable” usage category (police station required to operate at times of flooding) and its location partially in Flood Zone 2. However, based on the findings of the site specific Flood Risk Assessment and the associated sustainable drainage strategy, the site is considered to be safe for its lifetime and does not increase flood risk elsewhere.

In summary given the site is an allocated strategic site (LPS - Basford East) the needs and benefits to the community arising from this facility in terms of improved efficiency and effectiveness of local policing would outweigh any flood risk. The site is therefore considered to pass the Exception Test.

The Environment Agency raises no objection to the development. The LLFA consider that some river flooding may enter the drainage system here, but it is difficult to assess if this will cause any issues. The LLFA also considers that FFLs are set at least 600mm above top river flood level, to ensure there are no internal flooding concerns here.

Outfall and Drainage Strategy:

In principle, the LLFA considers the proposed drainage scheme is generally acceptable. It is understood that it is proposed to pipe surface water from the site via the highway surface water drain and then discharge to Basford Brook through an existing SuDs system including a balancing pond which is located at the junction of Mill Farm Drive and Basford Brook Way to the north of the site.

This in principle is an acceptable and probably the best solution, but the LLFA still requires further details of the drainage system and evidence from the owner of this infrastructure (pipe and outfall) that they consent to this connection. The alternative is a pumped solution to the river, which will again require consent from third party landowners.

SuDS:

This includes permeable paving within the site which will help with the filtering of brake dust/tyre/oil pollution from vehicles. Swales features are located within the northern side of the site and within some of the car park areas on the southern side.

In terms of further opportunities, potentially tree planting areas could be turned into SuDS tree pit planters. The proposed scheme is not considered fully compliant with the SuDS SPD, but there are opportunities for this to be met, should a swale be reintroduced within the highway service strip. Ideally all surface water should be going through 3 levels of treatment.

The LLFA recommends a condition be attached requiring that prior to the commencement of development a surface water drainage strategy is submitted which includes as a minimum;

- Enhanced suds provision/features within then site
- Demonstrates a viable surface water outfall, with evidence of agreement from any relevant riparian owners
- Discharge rates to be limited to 5.7l/s via flow restriction device
- Provision of full management and maintenance schedule for the drainage strategy

10.9 Air Quality

The Air quality impacts of the proposals have been considered within the air quality assessment submitted in support of the application.

The report considers whether the development will result in increased exposure to airborne pollutants, particularly as a result of additional traffic and changes to traffic flows. The assessment uses ADMS Roads to model NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} impacts from additional traffic associated with this development and the cumulative impact of committed development within the area.

A number of modelled scenarios have been considered within the assessment. These were:

- Model Verification (2023).
- Without Development with Committed Development.
- With Development, with Committed Development.

The assessment concludes that the impact of the future development on the chosen receptors will be **negligible** with regards to all the modelled pollutants. The developer has stated that electric vehicle charging points will be installed and a travel plan has also been included.

The Environmental Protection Officer accepts the findings of the assessment and raises no objection to the application subject to a condition being attached requiring the use of Ultra Low Emission Boilers to minimise the proposed development's impact on the surrounding air quality.

11. PLANNING BALANCE/CONCLUSION

The site is located within allocation LPS 2 - Basford East, Crewe of CELPS for the delivery of employment use including office space together with 850 new home and a local centre.

The proposed deployment base is an essentially office-based use, and although it will have the additional function of providing a frontline response through the deployment of officers, the proposal will accord with the overall objectives of Policy LPS 2 as they relate to this site.

There are siting and design concerns which weigh against the proposal, and it is disappointing that the direct line of the proposed east-west active travel route is disrupted. The large expanses of parking and constraints of the site also limit availability of landscaping which is driven by the requirements and understandable security needs of police operations.

Whilst important issues, these matters do need to be balanced against the benefits resulting from the new Crewe deployment base in this location. Such benefits include the

provision of modern purpose-built facility to accommodate frontline response and key investigatory departments. It will allow the deployment of officers across the whole of the local policing area (LPU) with better access to the strategic road network with easy access into Crewe town centre and throughout the wider urban area.

The applicant considers that the proposed deployment base will address key problems facing the Cheshire Police arising from the limitations of inadequate accommodation at Crewe Police Station and will lead to improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of local policing.

Whilst new homes located opposite the site may be subject to noise and disturbance from police vehicles ('blue light') leaving the deployment base, including during the night, this would be on a very infrequent basis, and consequently the proposals would not amount to an unacceptable impact on residential amenity.

Traffic generation from the proposal would not result in an adverse impact on the local highway network, suitable and safe access arrangements are provided from Mill Farm Drive with the provision of adequate on-site car parking and cycle storage.

Issues relating to ecology, trees, drainage/flood risk, air quality, contaminated land and the provision of the active travel link through the site have been addressed through and are subject to conditions where necessary.

On the basis that the disbenefits of the proposed development are outweighed by substantive improvements to efficiency and effectiveness of local policing, the proposal is acceptable. However, it is considered important that the landscaping and SuDs along the service strip to the front of the site is provided enabling a more effective landscaping belt as well as water management. This can be secured through a condition (and s278 agreement).

The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in the context of the relevant policies of the adopted Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, Site Allocations and Development Plan Policies Document and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

12. RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject conditions:

1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Approved plans
3. details of facing materials
4. Revised landscaping – details soft landscaping and planting including the 'service strip' along Mill Farm Drive
5. Implementation of Landscaping
6. Details of boundary treatment
7. Details of ground levels and finished floor levels
8. Submission of Surface water drainage scheme including details of Suds
9. Provision of Ultra Low Emission Boilers
10. Details of the provision on external plant including an assessment of its noise levels
11. Details of external lighting
12. Provision of cycle parking
13. Active travel link shall be available for use from first occupation of the development but remain closed until a link is provided from it to David Whitby Way.

14. Details of how the active travel route will tie in with the approved route along Mill Farm Drive
15. 10% of energy to be secured from decentralised and renewable or low carbon sources.
16. Submission and approval of a contaminated land remediation strategy
17. Contaminated land verification report
18. Soil tests for contamination
19. Measures to deal with unexpected contamination
20. Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
21. Provision of Habitat Creation Method Statement & Habitat Management and Monitoring plan
22. Updated badger survey
23. Development to be undertaken in accordance with approved Construction Environmental Management Plan
24. Safeguarding of nesting birds
25. Details of lighting to safeguard bats
26. Ecological enhancement plan
27. Tree protection measures

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

