

Application No: 11/0644M

Location: LAND AT STAMFORD LODGE, ALTRINCHAM ROAD, WILMSLOW,  
SK9 4LY

Proposal: DEMOLITION OF STAMFORD LODGE

THE ERECTION OF NEW MASS SPECTROMETRY HQ BUILDING.  
OFFICES AND ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION PLUS. ROOF TOP  
PLANT ROOM , CAR PARKING AND NEW LANDSCAPING. NEW ROAD  
ACCESS TO ALTRINCHAM ROAD

Applicant: WATERS REALTY HOLDINGS LTD

Expiry Date: 17-May-2011

**Date Report Prepared: 11 May 2011**

#### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

Approve

#### **MAIN ISSUES**

- Ecological Impact.
- Compliance with Green Belt policy and Development Brief.
- Impact on protected trees and Area of Special County Value.
- Highway safety.
- Sustainability.
- The scale of the proposal – impact of height, mass, bulk, character and appearance of the area.
- Heads of Terms.

#### **REASON FOR REPORT**

The proposal requires determination by the Strategic Planning Board under the terms of the Council's constitution.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The site is a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt (MDSGB) having previously been occupied by Ciba-Geigy Life Sciences as a pharmaceuticals testing facility / laboratory and offices.

The site is 15 hectares in area and is located on Altrincham Road, approx 3km north-west of Wilmslow. The majority of buildings within the complex, located within the central portion of

the site, have been demolished in the last few years. The exception is Stamford Lodge itself, which is in a poor and declining state of repair, but is an important bat roost.

The site is not open to the public being secured by a mix of security fencing and site hoardings.

To the south lie the Council owned Jim Evison Playing fields and pavilion. The site is generally well screened to the southern part of the site, by mature trees many of which have TPO's . This is the main road frontage.

The site is wholly within the Bollin Valley Area of Special County Value (ASCV) and lies adjacent to Styal Conservation Area. The Bollin Valley woodlands to the east are a grade A Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and part of the site falls within the SBI designation. To the north and east lie the historic parklands of Quarry Bank and Norcliffe Hall. Styal Country Park, which lies on the opposite side of the Bollin River, forms the eastern boundary of the site.

A Development Brief for the site was adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) in 2002 prior to the designation of the site as a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt within the Local Plan 2004. The SPG defines the 'Development Envelope' within the site. The Brief requires the retention of Stamford Lodge. This is considered further below.

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The application seeks to provide a single Class B1 office use, specifically for the sole use of the Waters Corporation as a headquarters for their mass spectrometry research and development facility set within landscaped grounds.

The main elements of the scheme are:

- One building comprising 20313sqm floorspace split mainly over 2 floors of accommodation positioned centrally within the site. The building will house offices, laboratories, warehouse, storage and distribution areas, a staff restaurant and gymnasium. A roof mounted plant room is located to the rear of the building.
- The creation of a 3-arm roundabout on Altrincham Road for site access.
- Surface level car parking containing 496 spaces (including 26 spaces for drivers with disabilities).
- Extensive landscaping and the creation of footpaths within the site including the creation of a landscaped mound to the north of the development area.
- The demolition of Stamford Lodge.

The main differences between the 2003 (extant) scheme and current application are as follows:

- The demolition of Stamford Lodge.
- A reduction in floorspace of around 3000 sqm. The original scheme comprised of four, 3-storey buildings located around a 2-storey decked car park (with circa 675 parking spaces) located within the Development Envelope identified within the Development Brief.

- The originally approved scheme was designed with large multi-national companies in mind who would occupy the whole building as part of a Business Park development. However, the current proposal puts forward a design and build scheme for a single occupier of one 2-storey building within the development envelope with an additional roof top plant room located to the rear of the roof.
- The creation of a surface level car park located to the south of the site which wraps around the sunken gardens

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

11<sup>th</sup> August 2006 (03/2138P)

Permission granted for the redevelopment of the site including the erection of four Class B1 office buildings, retention of Stamford Lodge as offices and supporting access, car parking and landscaping. The scheme comprised of circa 23460 sqm of Class B1 office floor space.

5 February 2006 (07/ 1226P)

Permission granted for the demolition of former laboratory buildings and redevelopment of the site for Class B1 (a) and (b) purposes plus ancillary uses. The refurbishment of Stamford Lodge for primarily office use, access and related highway infrastructure, including a roundabout on Altrincham Road, bus stops, car parking and servicing. Creation of a landscaped park, tree planting, habitat creation, landscaping and pedestrian access to the Bollin Valley. This permission has lapsed

## **SITE HISTORY**

The site has been vacant since 1998. The Development Brief identifying the site as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt was formally adopted in December 2002. Legal and General acquired the site in 2000 and obtained planning permission for the redevelopment for office (business park type) purposes in August 2006. Almost immediately afterwards the site was marketed and bought by Rok Developments. The current owner, the Applicant, has recently bought the site. The 2006 permission granted to Legal and General is still a valid consent and could be implemented until 10 August 2011.

## **POLICIES**

### **Regional Spatial Strategy**

DP1 (Spatial Principles)

DP2 (Promote Sustainable Communities)

DP4 (Make the Best Use of Existing Resources & Infrastructure)

DP5 (Manage Travel Demand, Reduce the Need to Travel & Increase Accessibility)

DP7 (Promote Environmental Quality)

DP9 (Reduce Emissions and Adapt to Climate Change)

RT2 (Managing Travel Demand)

W3 (Supply of Employment Land)

EM1 (Integrated Enhancement and Protection of the Region's Environmental Assets)

EM2 (Remediating Contaminated Land)  
EM5 (Integrated Water Management)  
EM18 (Decentralised Energy Supply)  
MCR3 (Southern Part of the Manchester City Region)

### **Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan (Adopted 2007)**

Policy 10 (Minimising Waste during Construction and Development)  
Policy 11 (Development and waste recycling)

### **Local Plan Policy**

NE1 (Areas of Special County Value landscape Enhancement)  
NE9 (River Corridors)  
NE11 (Nature Conservation)  
BE1 (Design Guidance)  
BE3 (Conservation Areas)  
GC4 (Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt)  
T2 (Transport)  
DC1 (Design New Build)  
DC3 (Amenity)  
DC6 (Circulation and Access)  
DC8 (Landscaping)  
DC9 (Tree Protection)  
DC63 (Contaminated Land including Landfill Gas)  
IMP1- Development Sites

Of the remaining saved Structure Plan policies, only policy T7: Parking is of relevance.

### **Other Material Considerations**

The Stamford Lodge Wilmslow Development Brief Dec 2002

National planning guidance in the form of PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development, PPG2 Green Belts; PPS4 Sustainable Economic Growth; PPS5 Historic Environment ; PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, PPG13 Transport

Circulars of most relevance include: ODPM 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation; ODPM 05/2005 Planning Obligations; and 11/95 The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions.

Relevant legislation also includes the EC Habitats Directive, the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

### **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Manchester Airport:** No objection from the perspective of aerodrome safeguarding.

**Strategic Highways Manager:** No highway objections, subject to conditions and S106 regarding provision of footpath links, travel plan implementation.

**Environmental Health:** No objections, subject to conditions

**Natural England:** Advise of the obligations under the Habitat Regulations and consider that the mitigation put forward is fully considered by the LPA in the light of those Regulations.

**Environment Agency:** No objection, subject to conditions.

### **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

One objection submitted on highway impact and congestion grounds by Singleton Clamp Highways Consultant on behalf of Morris Homes (whose office is located on Altrincham Road nearby). In summary, this objection considers that the area suffers from traffic congestion and that the applicants reliance upon the larger development (approved under 03/3214P in August 2006) as a fall back position is unrealistic given the number of pre-commencement conditions that require discharge.

The Wilmslow Trust welcomes the development but would like to see greater use of the site by people not employed by the applicant.

The National Trust raise no objection in principle, subject to the improved facilities for cyclists, use of non-reflective materials, the use of appropriate conditions and full consideration of the activities of the Trust at Styah being taken into account by the applicant during construction.

Three representations from cyclist groups and individuals consider that the scheme should provide for improvements to the cycling provision in the vicinity of the site . One request for use of car parking by users of Jim Evison Playing Fields adjoining at the weekend to ease parking congestion.

### **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The following documents have been submitted in support of the application:

- Supporting Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Statement of Community Involvement

An Environmental Statement comprising:

- Ecological Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Phase 1 Contamination Assessment
- Air Quality Assessment
- Waste Audit
- Heritage Assessment
- Hydrological Assessment

- Landscape and Visual Assessment
- Geology and Soil Assessment
- Assessment of Cumulative Effects

All of these documents are available in full on the planning file, and on the Council's website.

A summary of the main points is as follows:

The principle of re-use and development of the site has already been established through the Development Brief for the site, the Local Plan and the planning history.

The 2007 ROK permission established the principle of development outside of the Development Envelope as defined by the brief and also established greater building heights

The development will secure the reuse of a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt where redevelopment is not inappropriate.

The current proposals have been developed in full consultation with interested parties including a consultation event in January 2011.

Comprehensive ecological, landscape and visual assessments have determined the scale, nature and design of the development which will bring significant benefits to the wider area, including socio-economic and regeneration benefits.

The Travel Plan will ensure that accessibility to the site is significantly improved and will enable linkages to the wider area to be developed.

The scheme will create a high quality workplace for the Applicant who intends to relocate his workforce and UK headquarters/ research and development facility into the area from elsewhere. The Applicant is committed to sustainable building practices and will achieve a BREEAM rating of 'very good' for this development.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

Section 38 of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 requires a plan led approach to decision making in that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In this case the development plan consists of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West, the Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan and the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

The Development Brief adopted December 2002, having gone through public consultation is a material consideration.

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The site is a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt (MDSGB). Policy GC4 of the Macclesfield Local Plan 2004 states that permission will be granted for redevelopment

proposals providing proposals have no greater impact on the openness of the green belt than the existing buildings, land in the green belt has a lesser impact, contributes to the objectives for the use of land in green belt and would not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings unless this would achieve a reduction in height which would benefit visual amenity.

The development brief for this site, although pre-dating the designation of the area as a Major Developed Site (MDSGB), remains a material consideration. The brief was based upon a detailed landscape visual impact assessment and identified a development envelope within which all new development should be located (including car parking and new buildings) and within which the maximum height for new buildings would be specified. The overall requirement of the Development Brief is that new development should have less impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the character of the surrounding area, than the previous development. This is very much in keeping with the intent of policy GC4 of the Plan.

Other material considerations include Annex C of PPG2, which advises that the redevelopment of Major Developed Sites within the Green Belt (MDSGB):

- offers the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to the impact of the site upon the openness of the Green Belt or the purposes of including land within it;
- contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land within the green belt;
- not exceed the height of the existing buildings
- not occupy a larger site area with buildings than were previously occupied by buildings.

PPG2 goes on to advise that the character and dispersal of the proposal will need to be considered as well as its footprint.

PPG2 further advises that the location of new buildings should have regard to the main features of the landscape and the need to integrate new development with its surroundings.

## **DEVELOPMENT ENVELOPE**

The Development Brief identified a development envelope within which all new development should be located, including car parking and new buildings, and within which the maximum height for new buildings would be specified. Proposals for the site must demonstrate that they would:

- not detract from the openness of the Green Belt,
- enhance the openness of the Green Belt,
- respect the character of the Green Belt
- respect the site's location within the Area of Special County Value for Landscape.

The overall aim is to reduce the visual impact on the landscape and thereby enhance the perception of openness of the Green Belt.

## **SITE LAYOUT AND BUILDING DESIGN**

The ground level of the building platform will be lowered by approximately two metres from existing site levels to minimise the visual impact of the building. The excavated material will be placed on the northern field and will be contoured to form a large earth mound that will partially screen the building in views from the northwest. This was a requirement of the Brief to screen the site from views to the north.

The siting and orientation of the building creates an area for soft landscaping and trees at the front of the building to soften and screen the development from Altrincham Road and from the wider area to the west.

The design of the area around the building and the car park is formal with ornamental species, paved areas and close-mown grass. The site perimeter and the northern field are more informal with native woodlands, parkland trees, hedgerows, wildflower meadows and gravel footpaths which will enhance and screen the site.

The building is two storey's high, with plant located at roof level. The plant has been located to the rear to reduce the overall impact this additional height will have on the surrounding landscape. The layout of the proposed building has taken into consideration the need for a focal point and sense of arrival via the introduction of a projecting first floor elevation entrance, facing the new site entrance.

A simple palette of materials is proposed, all with varying textures in only two selected colours: grey and white. The use of these textured materials creates interest at varying intervals on the buildings elevations, limiting the need for complicated colour palettes. The materials selected for the roof plant will reflect the changing colour's of the sky, which will assist in reducing the visual impact this may have from the surrounding area, looking into the site. High gloss finishes, will reflect the landscape, a key feature of the site.

The areas of glazing are protected from solar gain with colour matched louvers, which again add texture and interest to the elevations. Cladding and glazing with Brise Soleil highlight the horizontality of the building, whilst recesses at entrances give it verticality. The varied use of horizontal and vertical elements, married with the simple palette of materials reduces the overall visual impact whilst at the same time maintaining a clean, crisp contemporary appearance and sense of arrival and identity. Overall, this is considered to comply with design policy.

## **ECOLOGY**

It should be noted that since a European Protected Species has been recorded on site and is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development, the planning authority must consider the three tests in respect of the Habitats Directive. They are that:

- (i) there is no satisfactory alternative
- (ii) the development is of overriding public interest.
- (iii) the favourable conservation status of the species will be maintained.

Evidence of how the LPA has considered these issues will be required by Natural England prior to them issuing a protected species license.

The EC Habitats Directive 1992 requires the UK to maintain a system of strict protection for protected species and their habitats. The Directive only allows disturbance, or deterioration or destruction of breeding sites or resting places, if there is:

- no satisfactory alternative
- no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in their natural range
- a specified reason such as imperative, overriding public interest.

The UK implemented the EC Directive in The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994 which contain two layers of protection:

- a licensing system administered by Natural England which repeats the above tests
- a requirement on Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the Directive’s requirements.

Circular 6/2005 (dated 16 August 2005) advises LPAs to give due weight to the presence of a European protected species on a development site to reflect:

*“[EC] ...requirements ... and this may potentially justify a refusal of planning permission.”*

In PPS9 (2005), the Government explains that LPAs:

*“should adhere to the following key principles to ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity are fully considered..... In taking decisions, [LPAs] should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to .... protected species... ... Where granting planning permission would result in significant harm .... [LPAs] will need to be satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on any alternative site that would result in less or no harm..... If that significant harm cannot be prevented, adequately mitigated against, or compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.”*

With particular regard to protected species, PPS9 encourages the use of planning conditions or obligations where appropriate and advises:

*“[LPAs] should refuse permission where harm to the species or their habitats would result unless the need for, and benefits of, the development clearly outweigh that harm.”*

The converse of this advice is that if issues of species detriment, development alternatives and public interest seem likely to be satisfied, no impediment to planning permission arises under the Directive and Regulations.

There have been a number of bat surveys undertaken at the site over an extended period at this site. The surveys have confirmed that two species of bats roost at Stamford Lodge, with anecdotal evidence of a third bat species. There is a confirmed minor roost of relatively common bat species and, more importantly, a major long established roost of an uncommon bat species.

In the absence of mitigation / compensation, the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact upon bats through both the loss of roosting sites and the risk posed to any animals present when demolition works are completed.

Regulation 9(5) the 2010 Habitats Regulations places an obligation upon planning authorities to give consideration to European protected species in the exercise of their functions. The recent 'Whooley' and 'Morge' judicial reviews have clarified the position of planning authorities in respect of this legislation.

The Habitat Regulations 2010 require Local Authorities to have regard to three tests when considering applications that affect a European Protected Species. In broad terms the tests are that:

- the proposed development is in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment
- there is no satisfactory alternative
- there is no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in its natural range.

Current case law instructs that if it is considered clear or very likely that the requirements of the Directive cannot be met because there is a satisfactory alternative, or because there are no conceivable "other imperative reasons of overriding public interest", then planning permission should be refused. Conversely, if it seems that the requirements are likely to be met, then there would be no impediment to planning permission be granted. If it is unclear whether the requirements would be met or not, a balanced view taking into account the particular circumstances of the application should be taken.

### **Overriding public Interest**

As the proposal is helping to regenerate a disused site that has lain vacant for over 10 years and will bring employment opportunities for a minimum of 450 people to the area that do not presently exist, it would also be reasonable to conclude that the proposal is helping to address an important need: to generate employment.

This is an important roost and it is acknowledged as such. It is concluded that the benefits to the public in the form of socio-economic development, on balance, outweigh the negative impact of the loss of the roost.

### **Alternatives**

There are 4 alternative scenarios that need to be assessed, these are :

- 1 Demolish Stamford Lodge
- 2 Retain Stamford Lodge in situ with the site being developed around it
- 3 Retain and Refurbish/Improve Stamford Lodge (bringing it back into use)
- 4 No development at all on site

### **Demolish**

This would result in the loss of a significant bat roost within the building which would result in a significant adverse impact upon the bat species which use the building.

### **Retention in situ with site being developed around**

The building will deteriorate further and as it deteriorates it will become less and less suitable to support bats. Ultimately, this will result in the abandonment of the roost entirely.

The redevelopment will result in a sizeable building in close proximity to Stamford and a extensive hardstanding for car parking, which will also incorporate surface level lighting columns and bollards. Additional lighting and the loss of existing vegetation is likely to have an adverse impact upon the bats. The level of impact is difficult to assess.

### **Refurbish Stamford Lodge**

The building is in a poor state of repair and the structural survey report submitted with this application recommends a number of works to the walls, windows and roof void including new roof structural elements, removal of slates and installation of felt and battens, refixing roof slates and repair / repointing of chimneys. Removal of rendering and rebuilding of external walls, replacement of windows, fascias and doors is also recommended

The works necessary to bring this building back into use are significant enough in their own right to require a Natural England License due to the likely disturbance to and modification of the roost. The development around the building on the site generally including the additional lighting and loss of vegetation is likely to have an adverse impact upon the bats flight path. However, the level of impact is difficult to assess.

### **No development at all on site**

This site is a Major Site within the Green Belt which is the subject of a Development Brief and still retains an extant planning permission for a sizeable office park development. The whole or partial redevelopment of major developed sites in Green Belts are accepted as being opportunities for environmental improvements provided the openness of the Green Belt is maintained. Whilst the extant permission remains so until 10 August 2011, the applicants have provided sufficient information that they can and would implement this permission to retain a fall back position. The 'do nothing' option is therefore not a realistic or acceptable alternative.

With the exception of the no development at all option, all the alternatives above will have an adverse impact upon the bats roosting at Stamford Lodge. In this regard, it is recognised that the two options that retain Stamford Lodge do not guarantee the bats will continue to use the roost. The bats may vacate by virtue of the loss of vegetation and increased lighting and activity in the area. Accordingly, there is no reasonable and realistic option that avoids adverse impact

### **Favourable conservation status**

In line with guidance in PPS9, appropriate mitigation and enhancement should be secured if planning permission is granted. A comprehensive mitigation scheme has been proposed, in the form of a replacement Bat Barn within the site. This is the subject of a report elsewhere on this agenda. The Council's nature conservation officer is satisfied with this replacement bat barn, subject to appropriate conditions.

On balance, the replacement bat house is considered to provide better connectivity to the River Bollin and offers a more secluded location, away from disturbance whilst providing roost conditions which closely mimic those at Stamford Lodge.

On the basis on this mitigation, which is controllable within the S106, it is considered likely that the favourable conservation of the bat species concerned will be maintained.

On the basis of the above, it is considered likely that the requirements of the Habitats Regulations would be met and that Natural England would be likely to be able to grant a License.

### **COMPLIANCE WITH GREEN BELT POLICY AND THE BRIEF**

In the main, this proposal is located within the Development Envelope as envisaged in the Brief with 3 main exceptions:

- the demolition of Stamford Lodge itself.
- the height of the building and roof top plant room (62m x 22m) being 4.4m higher than the Brief's indicative heights.
- the location of the surface level car park to the south of the site, outside the Development Envelope envisaged by the Brief.

Taking these elements in turn:

#### **The demolition of Stamford Lodge**

This buildings condition has declined significantly since the Brief was adopted and is now derelict. It is accepted that the refurbishment of this building to comply with the current Building Regulations is uneconomic and, as considered above, the refurbishment could potentially harm the bat roost.

The building is unlisted and not within a conservation area. However, the Brief envisaged the refurbishment of the building given its prominent position in the landscape.

There are significant benefits to the openness of the Green Belt by virtue of the loss of this building to the southern part of the site in Green Belt term which are considered to justify the demolition.

#### **Building Heights**

The proposed building has a smaller footprint and is set further away from Altrincham Road than the buildings approved under the previous schemes, which both envisaged 4 individual office buildings arranged around a central decked car park. The 2003 scheme is located within the Development Envelope of the Brief. However, the 2007 approved scheme extended beyond the Development Envelope and comprised of higher built development than the Brief advocated, with one of the buildings being 2.86m higher.

The current scheme proposes a roof top plant room located towards the rear of the building. This would not be visible from any of the important viewpoints in the locality. The footprint of the proposed building is less dispersed than the previous schemes and, in this respect, the additional 1.5m height in the plant room to the rear of the roof of the building, over what has

previously been deemed appropriate at this site is not considered to have any greater impact upon the openness of the Green Belt or the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

### **Car parking**

The surface level car park is proposed to the southern end of the site and is configured to wrap around the sunken garden. It has been sited to utilise areas of car parking and hardsurfacing currently in situ.

The hardstanding associated with the car park will not have an impact upon the openness of the Green Belt. However, the associated cars being parked in the area and the lighting fixtures will have a degree of impact upon the openness of the green belt.

Visually the car park is divided into sectors by hedges and trees and there are additional trees and shrub beds within each sector. This will enhance the area and break up the monotony of the hard surfacing. When mature, these trees and hedges will reduce the visual impact of the car park.

The Bollin Valley woodland will screen views of the car park from the east. Substantial additional woodland planting is proposed around the new bat house in the south east of the site. When mature, this will strengthen the screening effect.

The existing mature trees along the southern and western boundaries will screen and filter views of the car park and the lighting from those directions. Additional tree and hedge planting along these boundaries and within the site will, when mature, increase the screening effect.

The car park and lighting will be visible in the short to medium term following occupation, particularly in the late afternoons and evenings during the winter months when the screening effect of the largely deciduous boundary vegetation is reduced. In the longer-term, the proposed new tree and shrub planting will mitigate the impact of the car park and lighting to an acceptable degree in landscape and green belt terms.

It is also relevant that the previously approved ROK scheme, approved after designation of this site as a MDSGB, included areas of car parking and lighting outside the development envelope along the western site boundary and in the south western area of the site associated with a small building which was intended to be a community resource building.

In addition, the more compact nature of this proposal compared to the previous is considered to have an overall beneficial effect upon the openness of the green belt.

Overall, given the more compact nature of this development, it is considered that the impacts upon the openness of the green belt and the purposes of including land in the green belt will be no greater than what has previously been approved and in some respects there will be a material benefit to the openness and the landscape character, as a consequence of this single occupier, design and build scheme.

### **Landscaping and tree protection**

Policies DC8 and DC9 of the local plan require schemes to have appropriate landscaping and ensure the retention of trees of amenity value. Policy EM1 of the RSS seeks to avoid damage

to landscape assets, enhance biodiversity assets and mitigate any unavoidable loss in resources. The site is wholly located within an Area of Special County Value for Landscape.

A number of trees within this site are protected by Tree Preservation Orders. The application is accompanied by an arboricultural assessment which identifies trees to be affected by the development. The layout and general context are similar to the approved scheme in terms of their impact and the forestry officer therefore raises no objections, subject to conditions

The landscape masterplan accompanying the application would create a very high quality development in a parkland setting which would enhance the area. A field to the north of the site would be mounded using material excavated from the development envelope which would then help to screen the development from the north. This will also assist in reducing the waste removed from the site. The proposed development complies with the landscape requirement of the Development Brief. The landscape officer concludes that the development would have an acceptable impact on the landscape resources, character and visual amenity of the area in the long term. The landscape master plan is generally well designed and would create a high quality development in a parkland setting.

### **Highways**

The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan.

It is proposed that a new 3-arm roundabout is created north of the existing access on Altrincham Road. Use of the existing access will be restricted to pedestrians, cyclists. Associated with the roundabout, it is proposed to realign the existing A538 which does not meet current highway design standards and has a poor accident record. This will form part of a S278 Agreement.

The Strategic Manager (Highways) considers that the proposal will have an acceptable impact upon the highways network.

In the light of the comments that have been received, it is recognised that there are junctions within Wilmslow that suffer with congestion as there is at the motorway junction at the M56. These issues need to be assessed in terms of their development impact. However, there have been previous planning applications approved for larger multi-user office developments on the site that would have generated larger amounts of traffic than the current application, one of which remains extant. It is therefore considered to be a material 'fall back' position to which significant weight can be attached. As the previous schemes did not require any off-site highway improvements to existing junctions with a higher level of traffic generation likely than the current single occupier, it would be unreasonable to require further work with lower levels of traffic being placed onto the road network here.

In road safety terms, there have been 5 serious accidents in the locality in the last 5 years. The introduction of a new roundabout will have the effect of slowing traffic flows in the vicinity of the site and is seen as a beneficial effect in reducing speed related accidents.

### ***Accessibility and public transport***

The site is not well served by public transport and there is only one bus service on the A538 Altrincham Road, running on an hourly basis. The accessibility of the site by bus services has been considered in the previous applications and a number of options were put forward to

improve the usage by bus. This involved re-routing the existing bus service to run along the frontage of the site on the A538 and also provide a new bus service running in the peak hours only, travelling from Wilmslow Station to Manchester Airport, picking up at the site.

The views of the Integrated Transport Unit have been sought, particularly having regard to the fact that the previous business park scheme contained significant provision for bus provision, which is not proposed in this single occupier scheme. The advice of the Integrated Transport Unit is that it is not viable to re-route the existing bus services along Altrincham Road and, although a new bus service would be welcomed, there is no agreement for how long it would be privately funded.

To provide an effective alternative choice for travel to the site by bus, there needs to be a convenient and frequent bus service provided. It also has to be self financing in the future since there is little point in providing a service for a limited time only that would only cater for small numbers of staff using a particular route. Given the location of the site a semi-rural location, it would be extremely difficult to provide the level of bus services that would make this site accessible and to achieve this goal it would require large amounts of investment from both the developer and the local authority. Even then, it is doubtful in the view of the Integrated Transport Unit that the services would be viable in the long term.

Accordingly, the accessibility of the site to walkers and cyclists has a critical role to play in ensuring sustainable development. A number of options have been considered including the provision of a marked on-road cycle facility on the A538 but has been discounted as the carriageway is narrow and minimum vehicle lane widths would not be achievable. As this is a high trafficked route, the Strategic Highways Manager considers a segregated cycle route is a safer option.

There are no footways currently connecting the site to the existing footway or cycle network either to the north or south of the site. To address this there are improvements to the footpath/cycle facilities proposed as part of this application that also includes for a new Toucan crossing facility on Altrincham Road. These measures will provide a connection to existing bus, footway / cycle facilities to both the north and south of the site and will improve the accessibility of the site to a wider means of transport.

## **OTHER MATTERS**

Since this application was initially registered, there has been a significant shift in the interpretation of the Courts as to whether demolition of buildings which are not listed, in a conservation area or residential, is development. Recent case law has resolved that demolition is development and should form part of the description of development. This application, when submitted, did not explicitly state that Stamford Lodge was to be demolished as part of the proposals and, on this basis, this application has been re-advertised. The consultation period runs to 1<sup>st</sup> June 2011. Given the extensive consultation undertaken and the comments received, it is considered that it is widely understood that the proposal involves the demolition of Stamford Lodge, notwithstanding the fact that the demolition was not explicitly stated.

On the basis of the above information, it is recommended that the application be delegated to the Head of Planning and Housing for approval, having regard to any further comments received :

## **SUBJECT TO**

Delegate to the Head of Planning and Housing in consultation with the Chairman to approve subject to Conditions and the satisfactory completion of a S106 Legal Agreement and to address any further issues raised in the re consultation :

## **HEADS OF TERMS**

**Public Open Space – Amenity Contribution** - the sum of £42, 190.00 to be paid to the Council for enhancements, additions and improvements to offsite amenity open space, at Jim Evison playing fields and Burnt Hey Wood for improvements and additions to the footpath and access network, and it's amenity and the creation of a fitness/trim/exercise trail and equipment.

**2. Public Open Space – Recreation Contribution** – the sum of £139, 380.00 to be paid to the Council for use at Jim Evison playing fields and pavilion, access and parking.

**3. Multi User Route Contribution – The Carrs** – the sum of £37, 500 to provide enabling funding for the creation of a multi user route (pedestrian and cycling) and connecting spurs through the Carrs park, including spend on consultation, professional fees and project management costs.

**4. Footpath linking the site to Wilmslow** – the sum of £107,000.00 to be paid to the Council to provide a link for use by pedestrians and allow the site to be reached by alternative modes to the car , this £107,000.00 includes £30,000.00 to cover the costs of acquiring the private drive on the playing field side of Altrincham road and part of the field on the opposite side of the road where the footway crosses over. In addition, £45,000.00 to be paid to the Council to provide a safe crossing point for users of the footpath on Altrincham Road in the form of a toucan crossing. This makes a total highways commuted sum of £152,000.00.

**5. Completion of Bat Roost** – to complete the new Bat Roost prior to any demolition works to Stamford Lodge.

**6. Travel Plan** - To produce and operate a travel plan for the development, which has been produced in accordance with local and national standards, guidance and best practice and has regard to the nature of the development, the accessibility of the site and local transport provision, and the requirement to pay the Highway Authority's costs associated with the monitoring and review of the travel plan.

**7. Ecological and Landscape Management Plan** - a plan for the management of landscapes and habitat within the site for 15 years from occupation in accordance with a set of management principles to ensure the long term management of the areas including the species mix within the site

## **8. Monitoring costs** - To pay the Councils monitoring costs

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations**

In order to comply with the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulations 2010 it is now necessary for planning applications with legal agreements to consider the issue of whether the requirements within the S106 satisfy the following:

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- (b) directly related to the development; and
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

The provision of a commuted sum payment in lieu of recreation and amenity provisions is necessary, fair and reasonable to address the additional demands that will be placed on the existing recreational and amenity infrastructure in the area as a direct result of this development, and to comply with National Planning Policy. The contribution is in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance and could not reasonably be placed on the site itself..

The contribution to infrastructure links is necessary, fair and reasonable given the relatively isolated location of the site and the need to ensure that development is sustainable and has a choice of means of access other than the car. The contribution will assist in linking the site to Wilmslow for cyclists and walkers.

Likewise the requirement to enter into a Travel Plan and to fund the monitoring of that Travel Plan is necessary, fair and reasonable in relation to the sustainability of the site.

The Ecology and Landscape Management elements are necessary given the need to ensure adequate mitigation and enhancement for a prolonged time period given the scale of this development.

All elements are necessary, directly relate to the development and are fair and reasonable in relation to the scale and kind of development.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

The site comprises a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt. The proposal complies with relevant Development Plan policy and will assist in the regeneration of a site that has been vacant and disused for some considerable time.

The proposal will bring a specialist Mass Spectrometry research/manufacturer to the Borough from elsewhere. Such knowledge based enterprises are welcomed in principle and will deliver employment opportunities to offset against those which were lost as a result of the former laboratory use of this site ceasing.

The design of the scheme is acceptable, mainly contained within the Development Envelope as envisaged by the Development Brief.

Whilst there is some conflict with the Brief, overall, the numerous benefits and this schemes contribution to the growth agenda are considered to justify the minor divergence from the Brief.

The impact of the development on adjoining land uses and the living conditions of the wider community is acceptable.

Subject to the suggested planning conditions and S106 clauses the proposal will have no adverse impact in terms of highway safety, trees, landscape or ecology.

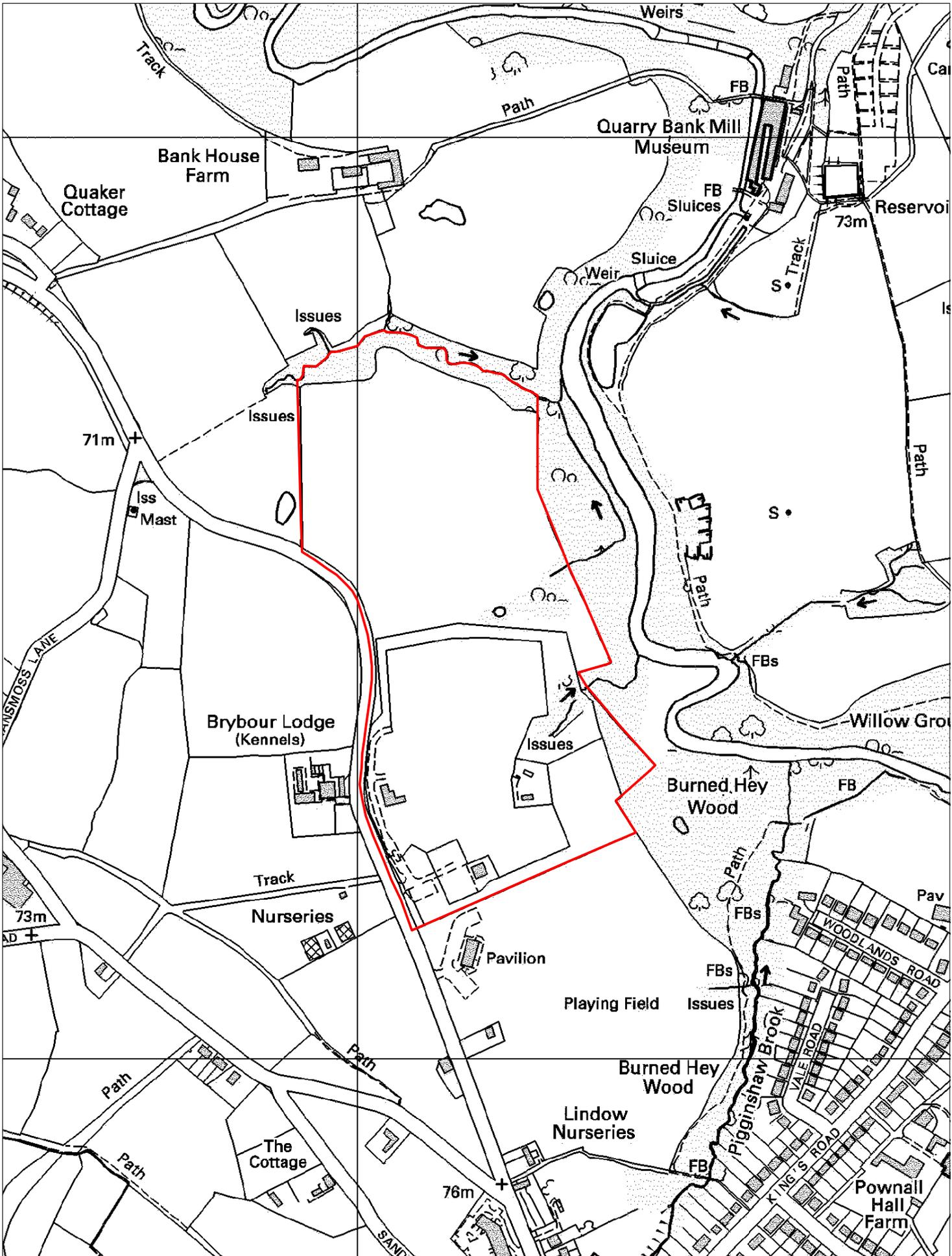
Improvements to cycling provision have been sought and agreed and whilst this is in a semi rural location, the improvements to walking/cycling to Wilmslow, as well as the on-going commitment to the delivery of a meaningful travel plan are considered to sit well with the Governments sustainability agenda.

Application for Full Planning

#### RECOMMENDATION:

1. Provision of car parking
2. Construction of access
3. Commencement of development (3 years)
4. Vehicular visibility at access
5. Provision of cycle parking
6. Landscaping (implementation)
7. Provision of shower, changing, locker and drying facilities
8. Materials as application
9. Protection for breeding birds
10. Landscaping to include details of boundary treatment /Sunken Garden
11. Submission of additional landscape details routes of footpaths and cycleway to the frontage
12. Submission of landscape/woodland management plan
13. Protection from noise during construction (hours of construction)
14. Details of ground levels to be submitted
15. Protection of highway from mud and debris
16. Submission of construction method statement
17. no devt within 30m of an identified sett
18. compliance with waste audit tbs

19. drainage to be submitted
20. drainage to be submitted
21. remediation of site
22. plans as per the application
23. remediation statement
24. 10% decentralised energy supply
25. BREEAM very good certification within 6 mnth 1st occupation
26. Lighting of site as per the application
27. Pre Construction Badger survey to be submitted as per submitted Badger report



11/0644M - LAND AT STAMFORD LODGE, ALTRINCHAM ROAD, WILMSLOW, SK9 4LY

N.G.R. - 383,110 - 382,500

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