

<b>Planning Reference No:</b>	09/3066C
<b>Application Address:</b>	Henry Alty, Knutsford Road, Cranage, Holmes Chapel
<b>Proposal:</b>	Proposed B1 Office Building
<b>Applicant:</b>	Cheshire Prop (Cranage) 1LTD & 2LTD
<b>Application Type:</b>	Full Planning Permission
<b>Grid Reference:</b>	374585 370066
<b>Ward:</b>	Congleton Rural
<b>Earliest Determination Date:</b>	12 November 2009
<b>Expiry Dated:</b>	12 November 2009
<b>Date of Officer's Site Visit:</b>	10 May 2009
<b>Date Report Prepared:</b>	28 October 2009
<b>Constraints:</b>	Control of Adverts Infill Boundary Line Jodrell Bank TPO 107

## **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

**APPROVE** subject to conditions.

### **MAIN ISSUES:**

- Principle of development
- Trees and wildlife
- Access and parking
- Layout, design and impact of the character of the area
- Sustainability
- Impact on neighbour amenity

## **1. REASON FOR REFERRAL**

This application would normally be referred to the Southern Planning Committee by virtue of its scale as a major planning application. However, due to the timing for the end of public consultation and the expiry date for the determination of the application, the scheme has been brought to the Strategic Planning Board to enable a decision to be issued to the applicants within the prescribed time period.

## **2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The site lies to the north of Holmes Chapel on the A50. It forms part of a chain of ribbon development leading out of the town and into the open countryside.

The main part of the site is given over to the existing Henry Alty commercial premises which have been used for the retail sale of gardening products and the associated car park to the front. The business has since closed.

In addition, the northern and western (rear) parts of the site are characterised by a large number of trees which define the nature of the area. A tree preservation order

(Cranage TPO 1988) covers the site but some of the trees are self set and of poor amenity value.

The site lies in the open countryside to the north of Holmes Chapel.

The existing building on the site had been developed over a series of stages comprising of the former two storey dwelling house which was more recently used for office accommodation and a newer single storey element at the front which was used for the sale of horticultural goods.

The property is characterised by three gable elements that project forward and are interlinked with short interlinking sections.

The property is brick built with rendered walls and a tiled roof and dates from the 1930's

Surrounding the site to the south and west particularly are a number of other properties including a number of residential dwellings some of which directly back onto the site.

The site already benefits for planning permission to redevelop to an industrial/ retail premises specifically for the sale and repair of AGA cookers. This was granted in 2007.

### **3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The proposal is for the development of a serviced B1 office block with associated parking and landscaping. The gross internal office floorspace to be provided amounts to 2,100m<sup>2</sup>.

The proposed building closely follows the footprint of the earlier approved scheme detailed below for the sale and servicing of cookers however, as there is no proposed industrial activity on the site, the environmental impacts in terms of noise and fumes will be reduced.

To provide sufficient off street parking, the applicants are proposing 45 ground level parking spaces and the provision of an underground parking facility for a further 51 spaces to accompany the surface level parking.

The proposal seeks to retain many of the trees that characterise the site although some poorer specimens and a moderate value tree as identified through the accompanying tree survey are to be removed. There will also be some pruning of the remaining trees.

### **4. RELEVANT HISTORY**

Although there are a number of applications appertaining the historic use of the site, there are two key applications for consideration as detailed below.

In January 2007, approval (ref. 06/1173/FUL) was granted for the change of use of the site to an industrial/ retail premises which was specifically designed for the sale and repair of AGA cookers. More recently a second application was submitted and subsequently withdrawn (ref. 09/0951C). This was broadly similar to the current scheme and also sought approval for the development of a similar amount of serviced office accommodation on the site. This was different from the current proposal in terms of the parking on site which is discussed further in the report.

## **5. POLICIES**

### **North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2011**

DP 4 Making the Best Use of Existing Resources and Infrastructure  
DP 5 Manage Travel Demand; Reduce the Need to Travel, and Increase Accessibility  
DP 7 Promote Environmental Quality  
DP 9 Reduce Emissions and Adapt to Climate Change  
RDF 1 Spatial Priorities  
RDF 2 Rural Areas  
W 1 Strengthening the Regional Economy  
W 3 Supply of Employment Land  
RT 2 Managing Travel Demand  
RT 3 Public Transport Framework  
RT 9 Walking and Cycling  
EM 1(D) Trees, Woodlands and Forests  
EM 5 Integrated Water Management  
EM 16 Energy Conservation & Efficiency  
EM 17 Renewable Energy  
MCR 3 Southern Part of the Manchester City Region

### **Cheshire Replacement Waste Local Plan**

Policy 11 (Development and Waste Recycling)

### **Other Plans and Policies**

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPG4 Industrial and Commercial Development and Small Firms  
PPS7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

### **Congleton Borough Council Local Plan First Review**

GR1 General Criteria for Development  
GR2 Design  
GR6 Amenity and Health  
GR8 Amenity and Health  
GR9 Accessibility, Servicing and Parking Provision; New Development  
GR17 Car Parking  
GR18 Traffic Generation  
PS6 Settlements in the Open Countryside and the Green Belt  
E5 Employment Development in the Open Countryside  
NR1 Trees and Woodlands  
PS10 Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope Consultation Zone

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

### Highways

At the time of the preparation of the report formal comments are awaited. However, following withdrawal of the earlier scheme, this proposal has been designed in consultation with the Highways Officer at the pre-application stage.

### Spatial Planning

Comments are awaited.

### Environmental Health

At the time of the preparation of the report, comments are awaited.

### Senior Landscape and Tree Officer

The Officer has acknowledged that the principle of redevelopment on this site has been accepted by virtue of the earlier 2007 approved scheme. Despite this, they would wish to see the submitted arboricultural method statement more closely reflect the layout. It is felt that this can be addressed through appropriate conditions in respect of a tree management plan arboricultural statement and identification of root protection zones.

## **7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL**

At the time of preparation of the report, no comments have been received.

## **8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

No comments had been received from neighbours at the time of the preparation of the report although it should be noted that objections were submitted to the earlier, withdrawn, scheme in respect of the following:

- impact on neighbouring properties in terms of scale and mass;
- harm on the character of the countryside and;
- highway safety on the A50.

## **9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Trees: Cheshire Woodland Arboricultural Consultancy**

This document has considered the existing tree coverage on site in the context of a survey undertaken in accordance with the guidance of BS 5837 (2005).

The report finds that subject to a suitable landscaping scheme, the impact of the development would be broadly neutral on the trees on the site when considered against the extant scheme approved in 2007.

### **Framework Travel Plan: WYG**

This report sets out a draft travel plan framework to consider the accessibility of the development to sustainable modes of travel and reduce demand on the car.

The document sets out targets to be monitored against which the development can be appraised a year after the development is being brought into use.

### **Transport Statement: WYG**

The transport statement has looked at the impact the development will have on the surrounding highways network, in particular the A50 Knutsford Road.

In summary, the report found that the northern access would provide a suitable access point with a visibility splay of 2.4m by 214m.

### **Design & Access Plan: Garry Usherwood Associates**

The Design and Access Statement addresses the suitability of the development in respect of its surroundings. The document also goes on to consider the proposal against current policies in the Local Plan.

### **Ecological Report: Julie Drage, Ecologist**

The protected species report has appraised the impact of the development of certain wildlife.

The report has found that the scheme will not have a detrimental impact on wildlife.

## **10. OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### Principle of Development

From an initial appraisal of the policies surrounding this site, notably Policy E5, the scale of development being proposed on this site would not normally be acceptable. In this instance however, weight has to be given to the extant approval for the redevelopment of the site for the cooker refurbishment/ sale and the differences between the two schemes.

The earlier 2007 approval was for a specific scheme comprising of some intensive engineering operations and also class A1 retail use. As a result the building generated some unneighbourly impacts and acted as an attractor to visitors as well as staff. The built form of the approved building is also broadly similar to that currently under consideration in terms of location, scale and mass although the design has been substantially altered.

In looking at Policy E5, part 1 of the policy seeks to only allow employment development in the countryside which is for the expansion or redevelopment of an existing business. In reviewing this, material weight is given to the approved scheme and its character and form in comparison to the proposal. It is felt that the two schemes are comparable and accordingly, the development under consideration is compliant with the policy.

### Highways

The earlier office scheme (ref. 09/0951C) was withdrawn after consideration of the comments of the Highways Officer. The concern raised related the capacity of the site

to accommodate the anticipated level of parking demand that may be generated to ensure that there would be no on street parking on the A50 Knutsford Road.

It has not been possible for the applicants to expand the parking area at surface level as this would not only have a far greater impact on the protected trees surrounding the site but also result in the front of the site becoming dominated by cars.

Rather than reduce the available rental floorspace inside the premises which would impact on the commercial viability of the scheme, the applicants have instead sought to provide some of the parking underneath the building. Whilst this may be an expensive solution compared to traditional surface level parking, it is a consideration for the applicants and could not be seen as a reason for refusal as it would have no long term impact on neighbours or ecology.

The development of the underground car park will however increase the amount of materials being moved around on the site and for this reason, it is recommended that a site management plan including details for the displacement of soil excavated from the site be sought as a condition.

A framework travel plan has been submitted with the application and this document sets out targets against which the sustainability of the development can be judged. The document also sets out a framework against which further measures can be taken to promote sustainable travel if the development does not meet prescribed targets after the first annual monitor and review period.

Due to the relatively isolated location of the site, it is recommended that a detailed staff travel plan be submitted to minimise usage of the car as much as possible and to promote car sharing and other sustainable means of travel. A draft strategy has already been submitted in respect of this point.

### Design

In terms of the approach to bringing forward the redevelopment of this site which is currently in an unsightly condition, the developers have looked at the constraints imposed by the location of neighbouring buildings, trees and the access arrangements off the main road. They have also given consideration to the approved extant scheme, in terms of the general scale and mass of development previously accepted.

The building itself is of a modern form with predominantly glazed elevations forming the main frontages to the property whilst the rear elevations facing back to the neighbouring dwellings having more cladding and limited window details. Some use has also been made of brick sections to break up the elevation details.

To minimise the impact on the neighbouring properties, the roof section has been chamfered back to reduce the overall height of the building by nearly 1.5m from 7.0m to 5.5m. This results in the rear of the building being of a scale comparable to a normal domestic dwelling thereby minimising any impact on residential amenity.

Some concern has been expressed on the earlier withdrawn scheme about the suitability of the design in this rural fringe location and the impact of lighting on the open countryside on the opposite side of the Knutsford Road to the east.

In terms of design, there are no clear design cues from the neighbouring properties and hence the site has to generate its own form and character rather than rely on integrating with neighbouring forms of architecture. In this respect, the design is felt to be successful and results in the site having its own identity which is suitable to the area especially as the building is set to the back of the site and not prominently exposed at the road frontage.

In terms of lighting, this could be a concern if levels are too high and for too protracted a period. During early evenings however, it is felt some lighting from the property will help define its character and appearance as an architectural feature but this should not continue through the night. To address this matter in detail, it is recommended that a condition be attached to the decision for the submission of a lighting scheme if the scheme is approved.

#### Amenity

The main concern is the impact that the development will have on the neighbours surrounding the site. It is acknowledged that the extant 2007 scheme would have had some impact on the neighbours already, the question is whether this scheme would have similar or greater levels of impact.

Having considered the matter, it is felt that this proposal will result in less harm to the neighbours not only in terms of the scale of the development being proposed but also in respect of the activity being generated at the site. The earlier proposal with its retail element would have resulted in activity on the site during the day and weekends. Some of this could have been noisy due to the commercial activity associated with the site although conditions were proposed to minimise this.

Having appraised the proposal, it is felt that this scheme is more acceptable than that already approved and cannot therefore be refused on this basis. To address any impact on neighbours during the construction period, conditions are recommended.

#### Trees

As noted earlier, the site is protected by a TPO. It is felt that whilst there may be some partial impact on the trees surrounding the site this will be limited and subject to appropriate protection measures it should be possible to retain the highest quality trees in the vicinity. Whilst the site does not offer extensive opportunities for landscaping, some new planting can be provided and this can be addressed through conditions.

The character of the site will alter but it is felt that this is acceptable and will be an improvement over the earlier approval.

#### Sustainable Development

Consideration is given to the requirements of the Regional Spatial Strategy in respect of sustainable development. The site itself is relatively small at 0.3Ha with limited opportunity for significant sustainable energy sources e.g. wind turbines to be provided. However, it is felt that a condition be attached to the permission seeking the implementation of more viable measures to be introduced to reduce the environmental impact of the building in line with RSS policy EM17.

### Drainage

Given the nature of the site and its rural location together with the area put over to car parking, it is felt that a sustainable drainage scheme should be incorporated into the development to address surface water drainage and minimise impact on the mains drainage system or the chance of run-off onto the main highway.

### Protected Species

The applicants have undertaken an ecological survey of the site and it is noted that there are no protected species that may be affected by the development. Therefore no further action required in this instance.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

It is felt that whilst this proposal represents a change over the existing character of the site, the extant approval granted in 2007 is a significant material consideration and is given weight over and above the current form.

When looking at the approved 2007 scheme and that proposed, it is felt that the new application provides a number of improvements in terms of less impact on neighbours, less impact on the character of the area, a well designed building and suitable highway safety.

## **12. RECOMMENDATION**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commence within 3 years**
- 2. Development in accordance with submitted plans**
- 3. Use of the development to be restrict to Use Class B1**
- 4. Details of materials to be submitted**
- 5. Landscaping scheme to be submitted**
- 6. Landscaping scheme to be implemented**
- 7. Site management plan to be submitted including details of construction of underground car park**
- 8. Wheel washing facilities to be provided.**
- 9. Lighting plan to be submitted and implemented**
- 10. Review of implemented lighting after 3 months**
- 11. Detailed Travel Plan to be submitted and implemented**
- 12. Details of the parapet wall surrounding the entrance to the underground car park to be submitted prior to development.**
- 13. Time limit on the hours of construction (M-F 9.00 to 18.00 & Saturday 9.00 to 13.00; No working Sunday or Bank Holiday)**
- 14. Limits on use of piling foundations (M-F 10.00 to 16.00; No working Saturday, Sunday or Bank Holiday)**
- 15. Submission of a revised tree protection plan and arboricultural method statement.**
- 16. Submission, approval and implementation of a revised schedule of all proposed tree works.**

- 17. Submission of details, approval and implementation of special construction for areas of hard surfacing within tree root protection zones.**
- 18. Drainage scheme including sustainable drainage and water attenuation (SUDS) to be provided and implemented.**

**LOCATION PLAN: Cheshire East Council Licence No. 100018515**

