

Application No: 19/3420M

Location: Land East Of Royal London House, Alderley Road, Wilmslow

Proposal: Outline planning application for up to 17,000sqm of new office development (Use Class B1) and up to 1,100 associated car parking spaces; access improvements for vehicles and creation of new pedestrian and cycle routes; and the enhancement of existing and provision of new landscaping (Renewal of 16/2314M)

Applicant: The Royal London, Mutual Insurance Society Limited

Expiry Date: 12-Nov-2019

### **SUMMARY**

The site forms part of the strategic allocation LPS 54 contained within the Cheshire East Local Plan. The application proposes to provide 17000sq.m of employment space to contribute to the allocation at the site. The site will provide B1 office use and associated infrastructure which includes access.

The proposal is in outline form, therefore at this stage an illustrative masterplan showing car parking and positioning of buildings and parameters is included. The proposed parameters are considered to be acceptable as a vital landscape buffer will be maintained around the site. The building heights do not exceed those in the parameters of the previously approved scheme albeit, more buildings are proposed. The proposal is considered to be acceptable and policy compliant, subject to a number of conditions required to ensure at the reserved matters stage all technical requirements are met.

The proposed development is required to ensure a sustainable economic development locally and within Cheshire East.

No objections have been raised by consultees in relation to technical matters, for the reasons mentioned the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

### **SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION**

**Approve subject to conditions**

### **PROPOSAL**

The application is for outline planning permission for a new office development (Use Class B1) and associated car parking, access improvements for vehicles and creation of new pedestrian and cycle routes to the site and enhancement of existing and provision of new landscaping. The application is in outline with only the means of access for approval at this

stage. Detailed matters relating to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping are reserved for future approval.

The site will be accessed through the existing Royal London campus with the existing connections on to Alderley Road being improved. A key part of the proposals involve the widening of a stretch of Alderley Road providing additional capacity travelling south towards the existing roundabout. The existing access point into the Royal London site from Alderley Road is proposed to be widened as is the access road that runs through the existing site.

The application is effectively a resubmission of a previous permission which is extant. The site has planning permission for 17000sq.m of B1 office space with associated infrastructure.

The previous application was for the expansion of Royal London at the site. However the company are now due to leave the site and relocate elsewhere although still within Cheshire East. Therefore the application is now speculative. The previous application was a departure to Green Belt policy and was referred to the Secretary of State. However the site now forms part of a strategic allocation, LPS54 – Royal London including land to the west of Alderley Road, Wilmslow.

The illustrative masterplan now shows 4 individual buildings for speculative occupation. The previous application showed a single building on the masterplan albeit with the same floorspace of 17000sq.m.

The application has been submitted as an EIA development due to its location within a wider strategic site and the cumulative impacts the site could have. As such an Environmental Statement has been submitted with the application, which, consisting of several chapters contains technical information upon which the application has been assessed.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The planning application site consists of four distinct elements. The first element is the site of the proposed office building and car park. This area is located to the east of the main Royal London site sitting between the existing site and the west coast mainline. This area of the site consists of fields the southern one of which sits at a higher ground level than the surrounding land and the existing parking areas at the southern end of the Royal London site. The ground levels are as a result of spoil being tipped on the site through the development of the existing Royal London site and the A34. Some mature trees are located along the red line boundary of the site as well as a row of trees dissecting the site. To the north of the site are fields that separate the site from Wilmslow High School and residential properties.

The second element of the site consists of a strip of land that runs from the north western corner of the main application site to join a footpath onto Harefield Drive. Part of this route is already in use as a footpath with the remainder being part of the wider fields directly to the north of the application site.

The third element of the application site is made up of the existing access road that runs from Alderley Road and through the existing Royal London site through to the proposed location of the office building. The boundary of the application runs at either side of the road allowing for this to be widened before widening out to included existing parking areas that are proposed to

be re-configured to accommodate access.

The remaining element is separate from the main application site. This consists of a strip of land that adjoins Alderley Road and runs from the existing secondary access point into the site and runs in a southerly direction to the Whitehall Bridge Roundabout. This area of land currently contains a number of mature trees.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

The Royal London site has been subject to numerous planning applications in the past. The previous applications upon the site of the proposed office building are as follows;

19/1735S – EIA Scoping Opinion for an office development, Not determined

17/4342M - Proposed landscape buffer, Approved, 22.03.2018

17/3747M - This application seeks permission for the matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale. reserved in the outline application 16/2314M, Approved, 22.03.2018

17/4469M - Proposed development of an access road off Alderley Road (part permanent, part temporary) together with the provision of a temporary car park for a maximum period of 3 years, a temporary construction compound and associated landscaping works, Application Withdrawn (no decision), 16.11.2017

17/3725M – Non material amendment relating to 16/2314M, Approved, 09.08.2017

16/2314M - Outline planning permission is sought for a new office development (Use Class B1) and associated car parking, access improvements for vehicles and creation of new pedestrian and cycle routes to the site and enhancement of existing and provision of new landscaping. Approved 09.08.2016

15/3488M - Formation and laying out of permanent car park. Approved 29.10.2015

76234P – Land-raising with inert materials sourced from materials as unsuitable in the construction of the A34 Wilmslow to Handforth by-pass. Approved 25.02.1994

41761P - Tipping of material from adjoining site and land to be returned to pasture. Approved 11.06.1985

41807P – Tipping of material from adjoining site and land to be returned to pasture. Approved 25.07.1985

## **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030 July 2017**

Site LPS 54 – Royal London including land to the west of Alderley Road, Wilmslow

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

PG1 Overall Development Strategy

PG2 Settlement hierarchy  
PG6 Spatial Distribution of Development  
SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East  
SD2 Sustainable Development Principles  
IN1 Infrastructure  
IN2 Developer contributions  
EG1 Economic Prosperity  
SE1 Design  
SE3 Biodiversity and geodiversity  
SE4 The Landscape  
SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland  
SE6 Green Infrastructure  
SE9 Energy Efficient Development  
SE12 Pollution, Land contamination and land instability  
SE13 Flood risk and water management  
CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport  
CO4 Travel plans and transport assessments

### **Requirements for LPS 54**

The development of the Royal London site over the Local Plan Strategy period will be achieved through:

1. The retention of the existing Royal London Campus unless buildings become surplus to the requirements of existing occupiers, in which case the council will consider their suitability for reuse or redevelopment for a range of alternative uses;
2. The delivery of around 175 dwellings (around 80 on land to the east of the existing campus, around 20 to the north of the existing campus (92) and around 75 on land west of Alderley Road);
3. The provision of 5 ha of employment land for up to around 24,000 square metres of B1 employment space and a hotel;
4. Incorporation of green infrastructure and the provision of public open space at the southern end of the land west of Alderley Road;
5. Retention and extension of the existing Wilmslow High School playing fields for educational use in the area marked as protected open space on the map. This may include additional buildings for education use provided they do not harm the integrity of the open space overall;
6. Provision of at least 1 ha of land set aside for use as school playing fields within the land to the east of the existing campus, in addition to the areas marked as protected open space on the map, and an appropriate level of amenity open space and children's play space; and
7. Pedestrian and cycle links and associated infrastructure.

### **Site Specific Principles of Development**

- a. Phased delivery on land to the east of the existing campus so that a serviced site for B1 employment uses is delivered in conjunction with the residential development.
- b. High quality design and appropriate landscaping/green infrastructure should be provided within the site in order to preserve the character of the area and ensure an acceptable relationship between residential and employment uses. The design must respect the site's location as a key entrance into Wilmslow.
- c. Provision of areas of open space within the scheme, including:

- i. A new public realm between existing and proposed employment uses, which will assist with the integration and provide an attractive setting for new development;
- ii. Land for additional playing fields accessible from Wilmslow High School; and
- iii. A new public open space at the southern end of land west of Alderley Road.
- d. Retention and enhancement of features within the site that are of amenity value, where feasible, specifically the mature wooded area to the west of the site, the brook, the ponds that are present, and the tree and hedge lined frontages to Alderley Road.
- e. Improved connectivity and access into the site to the wider local area (including Wilmslow Railway Station), through the provision of appropriate linkages.
- f. Provision of contributions to education and health infrastructure.
- g. Provision of affordable housing in line with the policy requirements set out in Policy SC 5 'Affordable Homes'.
- h. Respect for the setting of listed buildings on site including Fulshaw Hall.
- i. A detailed site-specific flood risk assessment should be prepared.
- j. A minimum of a Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment for contaminated land should be carried out to demonstrate that the site is, or could be made, suitable for use should it be found to be contaminated. Further work, including a site investigation, may be required at a pre-planning stage, depending on the nature of the site.
- k. Retention of the existing Royal London Campus landscape setting.

By virtue of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan for Cheshire East currently comprises the saved policies from the Congleton Borough (January 2005), Crewe and Nantwich (February 2005) and Macclesfield Local Plan (January 2004).

The **Macclesfield Borough Local Plan** is the relevant plan in relation to this site.

Therefore the relevant Local Plan policies are considered to be:

Policy DC3: Amenity

Policy DC6: Circulation and Access

Policy DC7: Car Parking

Policy DC8: Landscaping

Policy DC9: Tree Protection

Policy DC13: Noise

Policy DC14: Noise

Policy DC15: Provision of Facilities

Policy DC17: Water Resources

Policy DC63: Contaminated Land

Policy DC64: Floodlighting

Policy NE14: Natural habitats

Policy NE11: Protection and enhancement of nature conservation interests

Policy NE17: Nature Conservation in Major Developments

## **Wilmslow Neighbourhood Plan – Referendum held 10<sup>th</sup> October post regulation 18.**

LSP 1 Sustainable Construction

LSP 2 Sustainable Spaces

LSP 3 Sustainable Transport  
NE1 Countryside around the town  
TH3 Heritage Assets  
TA2 Congestion and Traffic Flow  
TA5 Cycling in Wilmslow

### **National Policy:**

The National Planning Policy Framework

### **CONSULTATIONS** (External to planning)

**Highways** – No objection. The comments are considered in detail in the main body of the report.

**Environmental Protection** – No objections subject to conditions

**Environment Agency** - We have no objection in principle to the proposed development, subject to conditions.

**PROW** – Following consultation of the Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way The development does not appear to affect a public right of way.

**Natural England** – No objection - Based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have likely significant effects on statutorily protected sites and has no objection to the proposed development.

**United Utilities** – No objections subject to conditions.

**Cheshire Police** – No specific comments to make.

**Cheshire Archaeology** - A comprehensive desk based assessment, prepared by Orion Heritage was submitted in support of the preceding application 16/2314M. It is concluded that based on the available evidence, the site has low potential for remains of all archaeological periods and no further archaeological work was required is still appropriate.

**Cadent Gas** – No objection subject to informative.

### **VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

**Wilmslow Town Council** – Wilmslow Town Council recommend refusal of this application.

Wilmslow Town Council is concerned on a number of levels which should be addressed by any application of this scale on this site. The numbers of vehicles on the site as demonstrated by the application for 1100 additional parking bays would have a significant impact of Alderley Road and the Town Centre in terms of congestion, air pollution levels and road safety and the access to and from the site by car should be directly off the adjacent A34 to mitigate these issues.

Wilmslow Town Council is concerned that the proposals for the entire strategic site are coming forward piecemeal and is concerned that the plans to link in to existing foul drainage provision may be satisfactory when developments are looked at in isolation but may well not be when considered as a whole.

The recent history of flooding along Alderley Road would suggest that the Environment Agency Assessment of the flood risk requires revisiting and that the earlier point regarding sewerage capacity could be impacted by more frequent flooding events.

With regards to the proposed cycle provision the Town Council is concerned that Harefield Drive doesn't have the capacity to accommodate the proposed two-way cycle track.

The Town Council also noted that the permission granted over 3 years ago was granted by the Cheshire East Council's Northern Planning Committee on the basis of 'very special circumstances put forward by the applicant' and that it was 'the expectation of the Planning Committee at that time that the completed development would be occupied by Royal London'. Clearly the renewal is being requested at a time when these very special circumstances are no longer to be met.

**Alderley Edge Parish Council** - The Parish council has no objection to this application subject to conditions of:

Softening of visual approach to the scheme, improvement of approach to Whitehall bridge roundabout, toucan crossing on Pendleton Way.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

**The Edge Association** - The Edge Association of Alderley Edge recommends that there shall be no automatic renewal of the previous Applications concerning this site.

The application should be rejected until a complete strategic plan covering the infrastructure, service facilities, impact of the increased traffic and effects on the local environment of the application for this site development if it is accepted and also those of further applications which may follow if this is accepted.

The comments already raised by United Utilities illustrate the need of further information required before this application can be considered for acceptance. Far more consideration of the traffic plan is required in terms of vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians for the whole area round this traffic island and the surrounding roads.

This area already has a major traffic problem caused by issues not addressed when the bypass was conceived.

Clarity of how and who will be financing all of the road schemes, the infrastructure and services should be clear and available prior to consideration.

The road into the car park extends to the boundary. This would suggest there are plans for further planning applications into the green belt land are being considered. Therefore there should be a condition making a specific exclusion of this possibility to prevent the loss of further green belt land along the whole of Pendleton Way.

No plan has been submitted on how the impact on the area will be managed during the construction period.

### **Wilmslow Civic Trust -**

This application is for the renewal of Application no. 16/2314 made in May 2016 and Approved on 09.08.2016. [No application form shown in documents submitted]

Section 1 of the approval notice states that all reserved matters be submitted within 18 months of the approval date and the development to start within 2 years from the approval date of the last reserved matter.

Also that any material change from this approval would require a new application.

Therefore the Wilmslow Civic Trust consider this approval to be out of date and with the changes to the layout to be materially different, requiring a new application, not a renewal of the existing.

Any new application made on the basis of or similar to 19/3420m must take into account the following.

- a. Latest Government Policies.
- b. Policies contained within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- c. That the original permission was granted under 'Very special circumstances to enable 'Royal London' to accommodate their business expansion plans' this requirement no longer exists.
- d. The effect this development will have upon traffic volume in a worsening traffic situation which is rapidly reaching breaking point.
- e. The effect upon air pollution along Alderley Road and adjoining properties at a time when Government Policy Directives and commitment by Cheshire East Council is to control and reduce such development impact.
- f. The fact that Harefield Drive and area is unable to accommodate a two way cycle track.
- g. This development will exceed the need for or requirements of new office space since the approval in 2016.
- h. It is considered that the flood plain predictions are not realistic when local knowledge and experience indicates a much more severe situation.
- i. Whether the combined sewer in Alderley Road is capable of the extra outfall from the site.
- j. that the masterplan should cover all intended development to enable comprehensive consideration to be applied to the whole site, as one should expect from a proposal with such an impact upon Wilmslow.

14 letters of representation received

- The application is not a renewal, site area is significantly bigger.
- The proposal would compete with the Wilmslow town centre as it is speculative.
- The allocation of this site was to keep Royal London at the site.
- 1 year after approval of previous application, Royal London announced their move to Alderley Park
- The previous application was on the basis that the site would be occupied by Royal London.
- Proposed parking levels are higher than would be expected from equivalent office space in the Wilmslow Town Centre.



- The local policy environment is not materially different to that upon which the previous permission was granted.
- Lack of transparency of the documents prepared to remove Green Belt status.
- Compared to previous application, there will be lack of control over the companies.
- Wilmslow has almost zero unemployment, this will encourage commuting into Wilmslow, which will have an impact on traffic flows and air quality.
- Proposal does not reveal long term plan for the site
- No consent should be given until whole scheme is put forward
- Concerns over traffic, by foot and bicycle in the immediate area
- The use of Harefield Drive as a cycleway is impractical and dangerous
- No urgency in developing the site
- Impact on the town centre
- Already empty offices in Handforth Dean, do we need more?
- Proposal will not meet zero carbon objectives
- Need a masterplan to show all sites
- Lack of transparency in the application

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- Environmental Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Supporting Planning Statement

## **APPRAISAL**

### **Key Issues**

- Principle of development
- Highways/Accessibility
- Heritage Assets
- Landscape Impact
- Trees
- Ecology
- Amenity
- Air Quality
- Contaminated Land
- Flood Risk
- Representations
- Conclusions
- Recommendation

### **Principle of development**

The site is located within Wilmslow on the south east side. The site forms part of the wider LPS 54 strategic site, the allocation forms part of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, formally adopted in July 2017. The site was originally within the Green Belt, however the allocation of the site removes the site from the Green Belt and the site is no longer afforded the protection provided by its former status.

The application proposes 17000sq.m of employment land, through B1 office space. The site forms part of the existing Royal London campus. However, Royal London has announced that

they are due to move from the site in 2020. Therefore the application is now a speculative one.

LPS 54 at point 1 states:

*1. The retention of the existing Royal London Campus unless buildings become surplus to the requirements of existing occupiers, in which case the council will consider their suitability for reuse or redevelopment for a range of alternative uses.*

Due to the move proposed by Royal London, the campus will no longer be theirs, however the existing buildings on the site are not affected by this proposal. Therefore the proposal meets this requirement.

Point 3 of LPS 54 states:

*3. The provision of 5 ha of employment land for up to around 24,000 square metres of B1 employment space and a hotel;*

This application will provide 17000 of the 24000sqm required by the allocation. Therefore makes a significant contribution to this aim, and ensures that the allocation is being proposed to be developed in an efficient way. This application is not the only parcel of land within the allocation as a whole. Therefore must make a significant contribution. The proposal does not provide for a hotel, therefore this must be delivered elsewhere on the site.

The proposals therefore make a significant contribution to the delivery of site LPS 54, and do not preclude other elements of the allocation from coming forward. Therefore the principle of development is acceptable.

The policy includes site specific requirements for development. A number of these relate to the residential element of the allocation, which is not proposed as part of this application. However requirements to retain the landscape setting of the Royal London campus and design requirements will not be adversely affected by the proposals. A number of the site specific details relate to matters that will form part of reserved matters applications. As this application is only for outline approval and details of access, it will be at reserved matters stage that the proposals are assessed against the site specific LPS 54 requirements.

The principle of development has been established at the site through the previous outline application that was approved. However this was approved prior to the adoption of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, therefore the site was within the Green Belt and therefore was assessed in a different policy context. Notwithstanding the fact that the site is no longer within the Green Belt, the landscape context and setting as an edge of town site is important and the transition from rural to urban fringe must be a carefully designed one. This will be considered further at reserved matters stage but parameters will be set out as part of this application.

Therefore the proposal is acceptable in principle.

## **Economic Development**

The proposal makes an important contribution to the Council's requirements to provide employment land - and in particular B1 development - in order to maintain a sustainable economy within Cheshire East. East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce has commented on the

application and is supportive of the application. As the application in accordance with the Council's vision for the site and would help realise a significant part of the employment aspect of the allocation. The provision of additional employment floorspace (allowing for the creation of new jobs) would equally be in line with the Cheshire East Council Economy Strategy.

The Chamber are of the view that additional supply of modern office accommodation, the demand for which is set out in the supporting statement by Colliers, is vital to enabling growth and prosperity in the Wilmslow area. It would help existing businesses in the area relocate to larger, more flexible accommodation and could also attract new businesses into the Borough.

Without new office space of this nature and scale the Chamber consider that businesses could find their ambitions restricted. Wilmslow is an engine for growth in East Cheshire and is identified by the Council as a key service centre. Cheshire East is one of the UK's most successful places with our economic performance consistently and significantly exceeding both the regional and national average.

The economic base in the Borough is diverse; principal contributions to GVA are production activities such as advanced manufacturing including automotive (4,000 jobs) and pharmaceuticals (3,000 jobs) and software development (1,250 jobs). The business density is high compared to the UK, North West and neighbouring authorities with 20,230 businesses within the Borough. More businesses are being created than closing and the number of jobs created continues to rise.

The office market is buoyant across the borough with the highest number of deals taking place in the north of the Borough dominated by Alderley Park. Rents are strong reflecting the demand for inward investment and business growth in Cheshire East and the low supply of land and premises, particularly of higher quality based on these levels of take up.

There are a number of key priorities related to this proposed development that are set out within the draft Cheshire East Council Economy Strategy (2019-2024):

- Grow the Cheshire East Economy to at least £15 billion
- Create an additional 7,000 jobs
- Build up to 11,000 new homes
- Be more productive than the UK average

A crucial area in relation to the above strategy is continuing to deliver a programme of promotional activity for key investment opportunities and employment sites to encourage and secure new investment from businesses looking to relocate.

The proposed development of 17,000sqm of new office development (Use Class B1) and up to 1,100 associated car parking spaces would provide a key new employment site that the borough would be able to promote to secure potential new inward investors and existing businesses that are looking to relocate.

### **Highways/Accessibility**

A previous outline permission has been approved in application 16/2314M for a office development of 17,000sq.m. A requirement of this permission was that off-site highway improvements on Alderley Road be implemented prior to occupation of the office.

This is a similar application in that 17,000 Sq.m of office is proposed with up to 1,100 parking spaces with a revised masterplan submitted. The same access proposals to the site are submitted with this application with the main access from Alderley Road.

Since the approval of the previous application there have been no material changes in circumstances regarding the impact of the proposals on the local highway network. Committed development was previously included and although there is a site allocation adjacent to this development, this is not currently approved.

Therefore, the previously agreed mitigation measures on Alderley Road are still sufficient to address the traffic impact of this current application and should be secured by condition to be implemented via a S278 Agreement.

The development does not appear to affect a Public Right of Way recorded on the Definitive Map and Statement, the legal record of Public Rights of Way.

The accessibility of the site to pedestrians is important in regards to sustainability, the site is connected via the access road to the existing pedestrian network on Alderley Road that provides connectivity with Wilmslow. There are existing bus stops located on Alderley Road and are within a 400m walking distance of the site. In regard to providing convenient access to the Railway Station, a pedestrian/cycle route is being provided that links to Harefield Drive this then connects to other residential streets that have good footways and provides access to the station. It is considered that this route is a more convenient route and it is much less trafficked than the main Alderley Road. The Alderley Road widening scheme does include a shared footway and cycle facility that does link the southern site access with the cycle facilities on Pendleton Way.

Providing strategic connectivity is an important consideration and there is no pedestrian connectivity to the pedestrian route under the railway line. As this site abuts this facility, a footway/cycle connection from this facility to Alderley Road should be provided as it allows for linkages to other sites and routes

This a resubmission of a previous application and in regards to highways there are no material changes to the scheme, as such there are no objections to the application. A condition is required to secure the highway improvements and also as this is outline a condition is required for the submission of pedestrian/cycle routes to be agreed.

Detailed pedestrian and cycle links through the site will be provided at the reserved matters stage.

### **Heritage Assets**

The site edged red sits within the setting of Fulshaw Hall and its former coach house and stables, both Grade II Listed Buildings, therefore, in assessing the application the council, in line with Sections 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Fulshaw Hall, a Former manor house Jacobean in style, now offices, constructed in 1684 for Samuel Finney. The building is imposing, with highly decorative architectural features, including Flemish bond plum brick with painted sandstone dressings, Kerridge stone-slate

roof and brick chimneys. The Fulshaw estate was sold to Samuel Finney in the 17th century who built the present house on the site of Shern Manor House, an earlier timber framed building. The land immediately around the hall, retains much the same character and space as is shown on historic OS plans, it largely open and landscape as would be expected with a Hall of status in this area, with extensive gardens to the north. The OS map shows a number of lodges and outbuildings, these are also listed by virtue of curtilage to the Hall; there are 4 buildings in total, two lodges and two outbuildings.

Since the previous outline consent determined in August 2016 Royal London House was assessed for statutory listing by Historic England, the building was considered not to possess sufficient architectural and historic interest in the national context to merit listing, however, it was identified as having local interest and is considered a non designated heritage asset. The Royal London House designed by BDP architects in 1985, is a significant part of the site and a good local example of a post-war Greenfield Headquarters complex, a concept which integrates a status building with carefully designed landscape.

The site allocation LPS 54 does make reference to the retention of the Royal London campus landscape setting.

The Hall does not sit within the Wilmslow 3 Parks SPG, but the land shown with the site edged blue to the west of Alderley Road, is with the boundary of Fulshaw Park SPG as identified in the LPS 54 commentary, therefore the policy guidance within this document should be applied. There are 3 locally listed buildings sit to the boundary of the site.

The allocation within the LPS 54, sits at varying degrees within the historic curtilage of the listed buildings, the red line of this application is an established piece of open land, which historically development of the land has the potential to impact on the setting of the Hall at the reserved matters stages when the detail of the development is available. The principle of development and the impact this will have was considered through the allocation of LPS 54, therefore, until the reserved matters stages when further consideration can be given to the detailed scheme, the application for outline consent is therefore considered to be acceptable in the context of the statutory duty. When the detailed submission is received this can then be appropriately applied to the historic context in which the site sits.

Cheshire Archaeology has raised no objections to the proposals.

## **Landscape Impact**

The application includes a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment carried out by Tyler Grange landscape consultants in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd edition 2013 (GLVIA3). This is Chapter 9 of the EIA. The study area covers approximately a 4Km radius around the site.

In accordance with the guidelines the landscape and visual effects are considered separately:

### **Landscape Assessment**

The landscape assessment is based on National Character Area 61 (NCA 61) Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain, and the Cheshire Landscape Character Assessment 2008 (CLA 2008). The assessment also refers to the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment 2018 (CELCA 2018) which is currently a supporting document for Part II of the Local Plan. In the LCA 2008 the site lies within the Lower Farms and Woods Landscape

Character Type and the Chonar Landscape Character Area whereas in the CELCA 2018 the site is within the Wilmslow urban area because it's now part of Local Plan Strategy site - LPS 54.

## Visual Assessment

In order to determine the extent of potential views of the site a computer generated Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZVT) was created – refer to fig 9.3 This does not take in to account the screening effect of built form, trees and other vegetation.

Twelve visual receptor groups were considered to have the potential of experiencing significant effects as a result of the development.

Moderate and major adverse effects are considered to be significant.

The application proposals include the following 'embedded' mitigation:

- The maximum height of future development will be restricted to 95m AOD
- Existing trees will be retained where possible
- A landscape buffer will wrap around the northern, eastern and part of the southern site boundaries.

During the operational phase of the development effects were assessed as negligible for Chonar LCA and TCA 2. And minor adverse for key the landscape features.

The assessment found that there would be no significant visual effects arising from the completed operational development.

Minor adverse effects are predicted for residents off Harefield Drive, Whitehall Close and Harefield Farm and people travelling along the railway line.

Negligible effects were predicted for all other receptors.

The assessment found that no landscape or visual effects would be considered significant. Furthermore, as the proposed landscape buffer matures the visual effects on the residents off Harefield Drive, Whitehall Close and Harefield Farm and people travelling along the railway line would reduce from minor adverse to negligible in the long-term.

The landscape officer has commented that at the maximum height parameter the top of the building would be around 16 metres higher than the railway embankment. It is therefore recommended that the reserved matters application should include a further visual appraisal and visualisations to illustrate visual effects of the location, height, mass and scale of the proposed buildings in the landscape. The height of the proposed buildings should ideally be as low as possible to minimise visual impacts. A number of conditions have been recommended.

## Trees

As part of the revised proposals the Arboricultural Impact Assessment identifies further tree removals in addition to those identified under the previous outline approval (para 2.5)

These losses include:-

A mature Oak (T9) to accommodate the revised parking area. The tree is identified as a Category C tree in para 2.5 but shown as a Category B1 tree in the Survey Schedule

A 25 metre section of a Moderate (B) category group of early mature Scots Pine, Sycamore, Ash, Hawthorn, Silver Birch, Horse Chestnut and Oak (G7) to accommodate the repositioning of the proposed roundabout and main access road.

The removal of 7 trees to accommodate the proposed pedestrian/cycle route comprise of 2 low (C) category trees within G47 (Sycamore/Ash); 1 moderate (B) category Silver Birch with G50; 2 low (C) category Japanese Cedar within G51 and 1 moderate (B) category tree within G53

The Arboricultural Assessment confirms the retention of 4 High (A) category trees within Group G9 which were proposed for removal under the previous application. Only one low (C) category tree is now proposed for removal within this group and a short section of low value hedgerow to accommodate the revised parking area and access

The Assessment also identifies some proposed pruning works to trees to allow access for the pedestrian walkway/cycle path and internal access road. The proposed works essentially comprise of crown lifting to achieve adequate clearances and are within the requirements of best practice.

The majority of the works include the removal of existing hard standing within Root Protections Areas and some minor encroachment and the proposed footway/cycleway. It is agreed that the works can be carried out in accordance with a detailed Method Statement and use of 'no dig' engineering construction.

The arboricultural officer has raised no objections subject to conditions for details of a tree protection scheme, construction specification/method statement and arboricultural method statement.

## **Ecology**

### Woodland

The proposed development will result in the loss of an area of plantation woodland of local value. The revised ecological assessment anticipates a loss of 0.3ha of plantation woodland as a result of the development. Macclesfield Local Plan policy NE7 seeks to protect woodlands.

It is advised that in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy loss of woodland associated with the development should firstly be avoided. If the loss of these areas of woodland is considered unavoidable it must then be ensured that suitable replacement woodland planting and/or enhancement of the existing woodland is provided to compensate for this loss. Due to the length of time it takes for woodland to mature a significantly greater area of woodland planting will be required to compensate for the temporal loss of habitat that will occur as the planting matures. It is recommended that the applicant utilises the Defra offsetting metric

methodology as a means of calculating a suitable area of replacement habitat (this is discussed further below).

As with the earlier application at this site an area of habitat creation is proposed adjacent to the railway line. The areas of proposed habitat creation are however located outside of the red line of the application. Consideration must therefore be given to how the implementation of this off-site habitat creation can be secured in the event that outline planning permission is granted.

#### Pond

No ponds are to be lost as a result of the proposed development. New ponds are however shown on the illustrative master plan and the enhancement of two off-site ponds is proposed as part of the proposed ecological mitigation. As the two ponds are located outside of the red line of the application, consideration must be given to how the implementation of this off-site habitat management can be secured in the event that outline planning permission is granted.

#### Hedgerows

Hedgerows are a priority habitat and hence a material consideration. The proposed development is likely to result in the loss of a 20m section of hedgerow to facilitate the site access. It must be ensured at the reserved matters detailed design stage that suitable compensatory replacement planting is provided to address this loss. This can be dealt with by means of a condition for an ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy.

#### Water courses

The proposed development will result in the culverting of a section of Whitehall Brook and the culverting or bridging of a ditch on site. It must be ensured at the reserved matters stage that any culverts or bridges are designed so as to minimise the impacts of these works on wildlife. If planning consent is granted it is recommended that a condition be attached requiring detailed designs for all bridges and culverts to be submitted with the relevant reserved matters application.

#### Bats

The level of bat activity recorded on site during the previous surveys on site appeared to be relatively low.

The ES refers to two trees on site with potential to support roosting bats (tree T9 and G9a) and recommends that further surveys of these trees are undertaken. Confirmation has been received from the applicant's ecologist that surveys of these trees has been undertaken and no evidence of roosting bats recorded. Roosting bats are therefore not likely to be affected by the proposed development.

Area of habitat supporting bat activity are however likely to be affected by the proposed development. The potential impacts of this will be localised, but the level of impact will to large extent depend on whether any lighting of the car parks is required and the hours of operation of any lighting.

It is recommended that a condition be attached requiring any lighting strategy for the car parks to be agreed with the LPA as part of any future reserved matters application.



### Hedgehog

This priority species was previously recorded on the application site. The landscaped buffers around the site will assist in facilitating the movement of this species through the site. To ensure any losses of habitat for this species are compensated for it must be ensured that any hedgerows, woodland etc lost are adequately replaced as part of the ecological mitigation strategy for the scheme.

### Polecat and Brown Hare

These two priority species, which are a material consideration, have been recorded in the broad locality of the application site. It is advised that the proposed development may have a minor adverse impact on these species due to the loss of habitat. This impact can be compensated for through the creation of compensatory habitats as part of the scheme.

### Common Toad

This species was recorded on site during reptile surveys. As with hedgehogs, to ensure any impacts on this species are adequately addressed it must be ensured that sufficient replacement habitat is provided as part of the detailed design of the scheme. The provision of an additional pond on site as shown on the illustrative layout would be beneficial for this species.

### Badgers

Badgers are known to be present in this locality, but no evidence of a sett being present was recorded. If planning consent is granted it is recommended that a condition be attached requiring an updated badger survey to be submitted with reserved matters application.

### Birds

A number of widespread species have been recorded as breeding on site. Whilst the site does not appear to be particularly important for birds, it should be ensured that any suitable habitat (trees, woodland, hedgerows etc.) lost is suitable replaced at the detailed design stage.

### Ecological Mitigation and enhancement

An outline ecological mitigation strategy, including the provision of additional ponds and offsite habitat creation, is provided as part of the submitted Environmental Statement.

This planning application also provides an opportunity to incorporate features, such as bat and bird boxes, and features for hedgehogs etc. to increase the biodiversity value of the final development in accordance with Local Plan Policy SE 3.

If planning consent is granted a condition should be attached which requires the submission of an ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy with each reserved matters application. Along with a condition to ensure the submission of a 25 year habitat management plan with each reserved matters application. The condition should also secure the implementation of the submitted management plan.

### Biodiversity Net gain

Local Plan Policy SE 3(5) requires all developments to aim to positively contribute to the conservation of biodiversity. It is recommended the applicant undertakes and submits an

assessment of the residual ecological impacts of the proposed development using the Defra biodiversity offsetting 'metric' methodology.

An assessment of this type would both quantify the residual impacts of the development (after identified potential impacts have been avoided, mitigated and compensated for in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy) and calculate in 'units' whether the proposed development would deliver a net gain or loss for biodiversity.

## **Amenity**

In order for the proposals to be acceptable, it is important that they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of existing residents and that the development is not located within an area which would harm the amenities of future residents, or the proposals would not cause undue harm by overlooking, loss of light or loss of privacy to neighbouring residents. The proposal does not affect any neighbouring properties, however it is important that the proposal does not affect the community or the future users of the site.

## **Air Quality**

Policy SE12 of the Local Plan states that the Council will seek to ensure all development is located and designed so as not to result in a harmful or cumulative impact upon air quality. This is in accordance with paragraph 181 of the NPPF and the Government's Air Quality Strategy.

When assessing the impact of a development on Local Air Quality, this office has regard to (amongst other things) the Council's Air Quality Strategy, the Air Quality Action Plan, Local Monitoring Data and the EPUK Guidance "Land Use Planning & Development Control: Planning for Air Quality January 2017)

This is a proposal for an office development of up to 17,000 sq. m including up to 1,100 parking spaces. Air quality impacts have been considered within the air quality assessment submitted in support of the application by Royal London Mutual Insurance Society Ltd. 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 NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> 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:

- Scenario 1: 2018 Model Verification;
- Scenario 2: 2019 Base Year;
- Scenario 3: 2023 Completion Year 'without development'; and
- Scenario 4: 2023 Completion Year 'with development'.

The assessment concludes that the impact of the future development on the chosen receptors will be not significant with regards to NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations. None of the receptors are predicted to experience greater than a 1% increase relative to the AQAL. A sensitivity analysis has also been undertaken which makes the assumption that real world driving emissions will not reduce as much as predicted over the coming years. This can be

taken as a “worst case scenario” assessment and the results of this also show that the impacts on the receptors are predicted to be not significant.

That being said there is a need for the Local Planning Authority to consider the cumulative impact of a large number of developments in a particular area. In particular, the impact of transport related emissions on Local Air Quality. Taking into account the uncertainties with modelling, the impacts of the development could be significantly worse than predicted.

Poor air quality is detrimental to the health and wellbeing of the public and also has a negative impact on the quality of life for sensitive individuals. It is therefore considered appropriate that mitigation should be sought in the form of direct measures to reduce the adverse air quality impact. The report also states that the developer should implement an adequate construction dust control plan to protect sensitive receptors from impacts during this stage of the proposal. Therefore measures to protect ensure air quality impact is mitigated will be secured by condition.

### **Contaminated Land**

A further desk study report, RoC Consulting Phase 1 Desk Top Study (May 2019) has been submitted to that of 16/2314M. The report recommends that (further) site investigation works be carried out.

There are two historic landfills on site. The report is not able to confirm whether the Permit for Alderley Road Landfill has been surrendered. It is understood that the Whitehall Landfill site was a licensed landfill site. Environment Agency records show that two historic landfills are present extending onto the southern, eastern and central portions of the subject site. Off-site sources of potential contamination include a railway embankment and the formerly licenced Brick Hill Farm Landfill to the east.

The report states that intrusive site investigation has been carried out on the northern half of the site but due to access constraints the southern half of the site has not been investigated. The site investigation data such as borehole logs and laboratory testing certificates for chemical testing have not been presented with the report. A Site investigation of the southern half of the site will be required.

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

- ☐ within 50 metres of Whitehall Brook.
- ☐ located upon a principal aquifer

The application’s Phase 1 desk top study demonstrates that it will be possible to manage the risks posed to controlled waters by this development. However, further detailed information will however be required before built development is undertaken for both the northern and southern sections of the site. The EA consider that it would place an unreasonable burden on the developer to ask for more detailed information prior to the granting of planning permission. Therefore conditions have been recommended.

There are no objections to the proposal on the ground of noise /vibration and dust subject to conditions being applied to any approval. Environmental Health has considered the noise and vibration assessment submitted with the application and has accepted the findings of the report. Any noise sensitive receptors are a sufficient distance from the proposed B1 development.

Therefore the proposals accord with policies in the development plan and the NPPF.

### **Flood Risk**

The site is a greenfield site and to ensure that flooding is not caused by the development, run-off rates must not exceed the current greenfield levels. A Flood Risk Assessment was submitted with the application, which concludes the following:

The vast majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1, indicating that the site is not at risk from fluvial or tidal sources. A small area of the site along its southern boundary around Mobberley Brook is within flood zones 2 and 3 which means that part of the site are at medium or high risk of flooding. This area does not impact upon the site of the office building itself. Data obtained from the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) also places the site at low risk of flooding from other sources. In accordance with NPPF and local policy, this FRA has considered the impact on the surface water regime in the area should development occur.

The Environment Agency has commented and that they have no objections in principle to the proposals, that the site is a sensitive area with respect to controlled waters. The western arms of the site are overlain by alluvium (Secondary A aquifer) and the remainder of the site appears to be overlain by Till (Secondary Undifferentiated). The site is underlain by Wilmslow Sandstone, a Principal Aquifer. The Environment Agency has recommended conditions with regard to this.

United Utilities has commented on the application and raised no objections to the proposals. No objections have been raised in relation to flooding and drainage subject to suitably worded conditions.

It is concluded therefore that the proposals accord with policy SE13 of the CELPS and the NPPF.

### **Representations**

A number of representations have been received in relation to the application. Many of the objections have raised issues with highways matters, such as congestion, air quality as a result of vehicle pollution and the cycle way. These matters have been taken into account by the highways officer and environmental health officers, and based on the information provided with the application they have no objections to the proposals.

Further objections have been raised with regard to the nature of the application and the procedure with which it has been submitted. A number of local residents have commented on the fact that this has been submitted as an outline only, so the detail is not available. However the mechanism of submission of an outline application is well established within the planning system in order to give consideration to the principle of development and in this case, details

of access. This is especially common in applications such as this where no end user is identified, as it is not known at this stage what the end users' requirements will be.

Representations have been made stating that this application is not a renewal, despite being described as this. The application is not identical to the previously approved application. The area of ownership is slightly larger; however the red line remains the same. The illustrative masterplan is also different. However, it is not considered that the title is misleading, as the reserved matter of access has the same detail and the quantum of development proposed remains as previously approved. In any event, the application has been assessed against current local plan policies, and has been supported with up-to-date information.

Representations have also been received in the lack of requirement for office development in Wilmslow, and the impact this development will have on Wilmslow Town Centre. As part of the local plan process, the site has been allocated for employment development. The evidence provided by Cheshire East has demonstrated a need for B1 employment land to be provided, and forms an important part of delivering the objectives of the CELPS. With regard to the site affecting the town centre, the site is of a large scale which will attract businesses with large workforces, in order to be able to make use of the offices. This scale of office development is significant, and generally sites such as this meet differing needs to those businesses requiring smaller town centre locations. Therefore it is not considered that this development would be in direct competition with office space in the town. This matter will have been considered as part of the local plan process when the site was allocated.

Comments relating to this scheme and its merits have been addressed in the main body of the report. Having taken into account all of the representations received including internal and external consultation responses, the material considerations raised have been addressed within the main body of the report.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that development that accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The site forms part of the strategic allocation LPS 54 contained within the Cheshire East Local Plan. The application proposes to provide 17000sq.m of employment space to contribute to the allocation at the site. The site will provide B1 office use and associated infrastructure which includes access.

The proposal is in outline form, therefore at this stage an illustrative masterplan showing car parking and positioning of buildings and parameters are included. The proposed parameters are considered to be acceptable as a vital landscape buffer will be maintained. The building heights do not exceed those in the parameters of the previously approved scheme albeit, more buildings are proposed. The proposal is considered to be acceptable and policy compliant, however this is subject to a large number of conditions required to ensure at the reserved matters stage all technical requirements are met.

The proposed development is required to ensure a sustainable economic position locally, to provide employment, and would be in line with the Cheshire East Economy Strategy.

No objections have been raised by consultees in relation to technical matters, for the reasons mentioned the application is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Approve subject to the following conditions:**

1. Time Limit
2. Development in accord with approved plan
3. Submission of reserved matters
4. Tree protection scheme
5. Construction Specification/Method Statement for trees
6. Arboricultural Method Statement
7. As part of reserved matters application Existing and proposed levels, contours and cross sections
8. Visual appraisal and/or visualisations from agreed viewpoints.
9. As part of reserved matters landscape masterplan plus full hard and soft landscape details and boundary treatments for the employment area, the landscape buffer zone and the Alderley Road frontage.
10. Landscape implementation and 5 year replacement
11. A phasing plan for the implementation of landscape works, ideally with advance planting of screen buffers where feasible.
12. A long-term (25 year) Landscape and Habitat Management Plan to ensure existing and proposed trees and woodland provide long-term screening and enhancement, and other habitats are properly managed.
13. Access available for use before occupation
14. Details of pedestrian/cycle routes
15. Limitation on use (B1) removal of permitted development class I Part 3 (change to B8)
16. Site investigation/remediation strategy
17. Verification Plan – completion of remediation
18. Low emission boilers to be installed
19. Electric Vehicle Charging Points 5% new parking rapid charging.
20. Details of new sound sources, details to be submitted.
21. Noise impact assessment to be carried out
22. Importation of soil

23. Unexpected contamination
24. Refuse storage facilities to be approved
25. Details of cycle storage/parking
25. 12 months to submit reserved matters
26. Submission of materials
27. Travel Plan
28. Ecological mitigation and enhancement strategy
29. Details of lighting
30. Submission of detailed design of any bridges and culverts with reserved matters application.
31. Submission of Ecological Mitigation and enhancement strategy with each reserved matters application.
32. Updated badger survey and mitigation measures to be submitted with each reserved matters application.
33. Submission and implementation of 25 year habitat management plan with reserved matters application.
34. Drainage Scheme
35. Foul and surface water to be drained on separate systems
36. Restriction of floorspace to 17,000 square metres

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Board'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 Acting Head of Planning has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Board's decision.

