

Application No: 21/5047N

Location: Units A & B, 1, WESTON ROAD, CREWE, CW1 6BU

Proposal: Planning application for the demolition of an existing building and the development of a building for B8 use at Units A and B, 1 Weston Road, Crewe, CW1 6BU.

Applicant: AEW UK Core Property Fund

Expiry Date: 04-Feb-2022

SUMMARY

The application site is situated within an existing employment area within the Crewe Settlement Boundary, off Weston Road; where retention of employment uses are considered to be acceptable in principle.

The proposal would visually improve the appearance of the site within a prominent location in Crewe and represents positive investment in an employment use on the site. The design is considered to be acceptable for the proposed use in this location.

The loss of some semi-mature trees and landscaping within the site are negatives of the scheme but can be mitigated in part by a suitable landscape scheme. None of the protected mature trees off site are to be affected by the development and will help to maintain a softened appearance of the site when seen in views from Weston Road.

Furthermore, the impact on light pollution on the adjacent woodland and its wildlife has been addressed and the Ecologist is satisfied that the proposed lighting will have no greater impact on wildlife than the existing situation, and potentially could have a lesser impact than the existing situation.

There are no issues in relation to amenity, highways safety or flood risk of the site.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions on planning applications are made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal is considered to be in general accordance with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and there are notable economic benefits arising from investment in the employment site in favour of the development. It is therefore considered that proposal is acceptable and recommended for approval subject to conditions, as set below.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE with conditions

PROPOSAL

This application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of a building for 30,152 sq.m B8 floorspace at Units A and B, 1 Weston Road, Crewe. The building would have a maximum height of 19m.

The proposal includes the replacement of the existing gate house with a new one.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is an existing warehouse building which is partly constructed in brick, with a number of more modern extensions and alterations, of differing external materials. The building is largely a flat roof building of around two storeys with a 30m high brick tower in the middle.

The site is situated on an established commercial area off Weston Road, Crewe. The area is predominantly commercial and situated within the Crewe Settlement Boundary. The site is located off Weston Road (A532) which is the primary route into Crewe from J16 of the M6 motorway.

RELEVANT HISTORY

21/1724S - EIA screening request for demolition and redevelopment of units A and B – EIA not required 18th June 2021

20/2877N - Partial Demolition and Redevelopment and Partial Refurbishment of an Existing Building resulting in a total of 25,706sq.m of B8 floorspace at Units A and B, 1 Weston Road, Crewe - approved with conditions 8th October 2020

20/2876N - Partial Demolition and Redevelopment and Partial Refurbishment of an Existing Building resulting in a total of 25,673sq.m of B8 floorspace at Units A and B, 1 Weston Road, Crewe – approved with conditions 8th October 2020

20/1796S – Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion for the partial demolition and redevelopment of Units A and B, 1 Weston Road, Crewe – EIA not required 3rd June 2020

19/3796N – Change of use from existing storage and distribution (Class B8) to a flexible employment use comprising light industrial use or storage and distribution (Classes B1c or B8) – Approved with conditions 2nd October 2019

17/4587N – Retrospective application to erect a single storey portable modular building within the current site ownership – Approved with condition 31st October 2017

17/4600N – To install outdoor wall fascia signage on warehouse, office and gatehouse elevations – Approve with conditions 23rd January 2018

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy

Local Plan Policies

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

MP1 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development,
PG2 Settlement Hierarchy,
SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East,
SD2 Sustainable Development Principles,
EG1 Economic Prosperity,
EG3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites,
SE1 Design,
SE2 Efficient Use of Land,
SE3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity,
SE4 Landscape,
SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland,
SE 6 Green Infrastructure,
SE12 Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability,
CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport,
CO4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments,
Appendix C

Saved policies of the ***Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan***

BE.1 Amenity,
BE.3 Access and Parking,
BE.4 Drainage, Utilities and Resources,
NE.9 Protected Species,
E1 Existing Employment Allocations,
E4 Development on existing employment areas,

Other relevant documents

Cheshire East Design Code

CONSULTATIONS

Strategic Highways Officer – No objection, subject to a condition for cycle parking details

Environmental Protection - No objections, subject to conditions for Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure, low emission boilers, contaminated land conditions and informatives for construction hours, piling foundations, dust control, floor floating and contaminated land

Flood Risk Manager – No objections, subject to condition for a drainage management/maintenance plan

United Utilities – No objections. Subject to conditions surface water drainage, foul water to be drained separately, and Sustainable drainage management plan

Cadent/National Grid - No objections, advise HSE should be consulted. Suggest informative.

HSE – Do not advise against

Crewe Town Council – No objection, but seek that the following is amended:

- i. That provision of additional tree planting to more than replace those removed
- ii. That the development demonstrates net biodiversity gain
- iii. That sustainable energy provision is accommodated (e.g. solar panel/photo voltaic)

REPRESENTATIONS – none received at time of writing this report.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

The site is situated within the Crewe settlement boundary; within an existing employment area which is protected by Policy EG3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. The site is also designated within EMP 1 Strategic Employment Areas within the emerging Site Allocations and Development Policies Document (SADPD).

Policy EG3 aims to retain existing employment uses on sites in order to maintain an adequate and flexible supply of employment land to attract new and innovative businesses, to enable existing businesses to grow and to create new and retain existing jobs. Furthermore, the emerging policy EMP 1 states that...(3) '*Proposals for further investment for employment uses in these areas will be supported*'. Whilst the policies in the emerging plan have limited weight in the decision making process currently, there is a clear indication that the re-use and redevelopment of the site for employment is considered acceptable in principle.

Therefore, the main issues of the proposal are the impact on trees; ecological impact; design, character and appearance within the street scene and parking provision. These issues are considered further below.

Design

Local Plan policies SD1, SD2 and in particular SE1 set out the importance of good design in the Borough, as well as the clear guidance set out in the Cheshire East Borough Design Guide.

The proposal seeks to demolish the existing buildings on the site and replace with a 30,152 sq.m warehouse of B8 floorspace, with associated offices on the 1st and 2nd floor of the building. The existing buildings on the site have a maximum ridge height of 16m, with the majority of the building not exceeding 12.5m, other than the brick tower which projects to 30m in height. The new building will be constructed in profiled metal cladding system, predominantly anthracite in colour with highlight details in white and glass ribbon glazing to the office areas on the front and side elevation. The east side elevations include Euro dock style entrance doors and there is separate gate house

proposed to the front of the site. The design concept is similar to the previous two applications on the site, although the size of the building is wider the overall height is similar to the previous schemes.

The proposed building will be at least 3m taller than this existing building and will be sited closer to the road frontage than the current units. The proposed building will be taller than the adjacent warehouse which is visible from Weston Road and therefore will be more prominent on the street frontage. However, the site is screened by mature trees on Weston Road and the protected woodland to the south. The general design concept is similar to that approved previously, with the difference being the demolition of the whole of the existing building, where previously parts of the buildings were to be retained. As considered previously the redevelopment of the site would help to improve the overall visual appearance of the site within the streetscene.

It is considered that the relocation of the office accommodation to the front of the site where the building will be most visible within the streetscene is an improvement on the previous two schemes and will improve the visual appearance of this elevation within the prominent location.

The wider streetscene on Weston Road, is made up of large warehouse/industrial buildings and further down car show rooms, most of which have been modernised in the recent past. Therefore, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and of a design which is suitable for its use and location.

Landscape and Forestry

There are existing trees within the vicinity of the proposed development. There is a belt of trees of mixed coniferous and deciduous species to the south east which is subject to the Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council (Quakers Coppice and Land adjacent to University Way, Crewe) Tree Preservation Order 2006 and forms part of the green infrastructure in the wider area. There are also trees within landscaped areas on the site.

Policy SE 5 (Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland) aims retain healthy trees, hedgerows, and woodlands that provide a significant contribution to the amenity, biodiversity, landscape character or historical character of the surrounding area. Although a small number of trees are to be removed they are mainly category C and some category B trees within a landscape area within the site. The wider TPO trees and trees outside the site on the road verge are to be retained and the development will have no impact upon.

Policy SE4 (the landscape) states that all development should conserve the landscape character and quality and should wherever possible, enhance and effectively manage the historic, natural and manmade landscape features that contribute to local distinctiveness of both rural and urban landscapes.

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) report dated 19th August 2021 which incorporates a tree survey. The survey includes records of 20 individual trees, 4 tree groups and a woodland.

The AIA indicates that the development would require the removal of 11 category C trees, and 4 Category B trees and 1 category U trees; and the removal of 2 category B groups and 1 category

C group of trees. The report indicates that all proposed tree removals are within the site and will have very minimal impact on the wider amenity or landscape value outside the site.

The Forestry Officer states while the revised plans show additional planting, the applicant has failed to address the lack of species diversity allowing for future proof protection of canopy cover within the species selection. They have not indicated on the plan whether the road frontage planting is to remain the same or if they are changing/adding to the species selection. The proposal would require the loss of 24 individual trees, with the revised plans showing these to be replaced with 26 new trees, however 10 of those are to be located within the hardstanding of the car park and with little diversification.

Landscape and Forestry Officers have raised concerns with the mix of proposed trees and the isolated 10 trees within the car park. The applicant has confirmed that they will amend the scheme to create a more suitable solution and a revised scheme can be conditioned prior to commencement to enable more suitable solution to mitigate the loss of the trees. The most recent revised scheme shows some of this detail so an acceptable solution in accordance with policy will be achievable.

Furthermore, the Forestry Officer considered that an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) should be secured by condition prior to commencement to ensure the tree planting and maintenance is secured appropriately.

It is therefore considered reasonable to condition a revised landscape scheme with an improved tree mitigation plan included, in terms of the mix of species and location. The applicant has agreed to this method and therefore conditions will be attached accordingly.

Access and Parking

The site consists of an existing B2/B8 warehouse with off-road parking and access off Weston Road. The proposal is to demolish the building and replace it with another, more modern, B8 use in order to better market the unit to future occupiers. The new unit will have a very slightly smaller floor area, with a reduction of around 90sqm. The site has had previous permissions for partial demolitions and rebuild of B8 units.

There will be 304 parking spaces for cars and vans and given the small reduction in floor area is a similar ratio of spaces to floor area. There will also be 32 HGV spaces and 76 cycle spaces proposed. The parking provision is considered acceptable. It is unknown if the cycle parking spaces are to be covered and this should be conditioned.

The Highways Officer notes that the access is in the same location with the gatehouse relocated slightly with improved segregation between HGV traffic and other forms of traffic.

As the use is the same and the floor area similar, there will be no highways impact upon the public highway. The applicant has submitted a Travel Plan in which they have stated that a Travel Plan Coordinator will be appointed by the tenant to promote and encourage sustainable modes of travel to and from the site.

It is therefore considered that Given the proposed use and size, access, and parking ratios are similar to the existing use, there will be no highways impact and no objection is raised subject to a condition for cycle storage to be secured.

Ecology

The Council's ecologist has considered the proposal and the submitted ecology report and have made the following comments.

Woodland Habitats and Lighting

The woodland located on the sites eastern boundary appears on the national inventory of priority habitat. Habitats of this type are a material consideration for planning. The proposed development will not result in a direct loss of this habitat, but lighting associated with the scheme may have an adverse impact upon the woodland and species associated with it. Based upon the submitted lighting reports however it appears feasible for a lighting scheme to be produced for the proposed development that would reduce the extent of light spill onto the adjacent woodland in relation to that which currently occurs on site.

The Councils Ecologist therefore recommends that if planning consent is granted a condition be attached for a detailed lighting scheme be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to commencement and that the lighting scheme be designed to minimise light spill onto the adjacent woodland. A condition is proposed accordingly.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is over 1ha in size and therefore a Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted. The Flood Risk Officers have considered the report and raised no objections subject to conditions in relation to the submission of a detailed drainage management scheme.

United Utilities have also been consulted on the application and raised no objections to the proposal subject to conditions for surface water drainage scheme, foul and surface water to be drained separately, and Management and Maintenance of Sustainable Drainage Systems.

As such, it is not considered that the proposed development would create any significant flooding or drainage concerns, subject to suitable conditions as set out below.

Residential Amenity

The application site is situated within an existing employment park where there are no residential properties. The development therefore is unlikely to cause any impact on residential amenity.

Planning Balance and conclusion

The application site is situated within an existing employment area within the Crewe Settlement Boundary, off Weston Road; where retention of employment uses are considered to be acceptable in principle.

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RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Subject to conditions

1. Standard Time

1. Approved Plans

2. External Material details to be submitted

3. Revised landscape scheme to be submitted

4. Landscape Implementation Scheme

5. Submission of a Tree Protection Scheme

6. Submission of Arb Method Statement

7. Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging infrastructure

8. Provision of Ultra Low Emission Boilers

9. Submission of Phase II contaminated land report

10. Submission of a verification report in accordance with the remediation scheme

11. Prior approval of a soil contamination verification report

- 12. Development should stop if contamination is encountered**
- 13. Development to be in accordance with FRA**
- 14. Submission of a detailed strategy / design, associated management / maintenance plan for sustainable drainage**
- 15. Foul and surface water to be drainage separately**
- 16. Lighting scheme to be submitted prior to commencement of development**
- 17. Cycle storage to be secure storage facility**

In order to give proper effect to the Committee's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair (or in his absence the Vice Chair) of Strategic Planning Board, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice



