

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD UPDATE – 5th January 2012

APPLICATION NO: 11/4346N

PROPOSAL: A hybrid application, comprising (i) full application for the demolition of existing buildings on the site and the construction of a surface grade car park (240 spaces plus 11 disabled), a Taxi rank, improved subway access (ii) An outline application with all matters reserved for new two-storey commercial building towards north west of the site with potential to incorporate A3 (restaurants and cafes) or A5 (hot food takeaways).

ADDRESS: Former Railway and Royal Mail Buildings Weston Road Crewe, CW1 6AA

APPLICANT: Andrew Ross, Cheshire East Borough Council

Officer Comments

Consultation Responses

Air Quality

The development is in close proximity to an Air Quality Management Area where levels of nitrogen dioxide are exceeding the National Air Quality Objective. The primary cause of this pollutant in this area is road traffic, and the Council's Environmental Protection office would be concerned that any increase in traffic or changes to traffic patterns in this area may worsen this situation.

The submitted Air Quality Assessment concludes during the operational phase, the relocation of the car park and the removal of trips generated by the current use of the site will cause small changes to the number of vehicles travelling along the local roads to the access to the site. The exhaust emissions from the reduced vehicles will decrease the total nitrogen dioxide concentrations. The overall effect of the proposed development is therefore beneficial in terms of local air quality.

In addition, there is the potential for dust generated during the demolition/construction phase of the development to cause a loss of amenity to surrounding areas. To address this, conditions requiring a Dust Management Plan to be submitted and prohibiting the burning of waste are recommended.

Issues Raised by Representation

2 representations have been received objecting to this application on the following grounds:

- The current proposal is inappropriate for the town and does not comply with the Crewe Rail Exchange Supplementary Planning Document
- The proposal should provide improved access for pedestrians, cyclists, cars, taxis buses, service vehicles, including a new bus interchange, multi-storey car parking, improved links to Crewe Town Centre, a new station concourse, ticket office, and new passenger facilities
- The proposal does not respond to the gateway location
- The Council should be encouraging a variety of building designs and tall landmark buildings with a variety of uses being promoted including:
 - Medium to high density residential (C3) and/or student apartment (C2) development, with small-scale ancillary retail (A1-5).
 - Both a vertical and horizontal mix with active ground floor use and high quality public realm/hard and soft landscaping.
 - Medium to high density hotel and conferencing facilities (C1)
 - and/or office (A2, B1) development, with small-scale ancillary retail (A1-5).
- Retail use should be incorporated into a mixed use scheme
- Retail use should be rail orientated
- The existing buildings are of architectural merit and should be refurbished / reused for office / retail use
- This is a prime business location
- The traditional brown brick building is part of Crewe's heritage

Local Ward Councillors Hogben, Grant, Thorley, Flude and Bebbington have requested that the application be deferred until an overall plan is produced in conjunction with Network Rail and Bus Companies to incorporate a Bus Station in the design and lay-out.

It is also stated that there is no Town Council for Crewe which is correct.

There are also concerns that disabled access has not been fully considered.

It is not considered that these reasons would justify a deferral of the application. The bus station is currently served by an area known as 'Horse Landings' which is situated on the opposite side of the station to the west. This serves as the bus drop off and pick up point and is already well located in terms of proximity to the station therefore a requirement to provide this would be unreasonable since.

At this stage, this scheme is not intended to provide a plan for the overall area via the submission of this limited scheme.

Observations

Whilst the 'Crewe Rail Gateway' supplementary planning document for the area states that a comprehensive approach to the development of the whole gateway would be advantageous, the brief recognises the need for flexibility in the delivery of the development and accepts that it will not be feasible to provide comprehensive redevelopment of the rail gateway. This is increasingly pertinent in the current economic climate.

Whilst the proposal does not provide for a multi-storey car park or bus interchange at this stage, this proposal represents the first step in delivering improvements to this strategically important site and the Crewe rail gateway.

The proposals do not preclude or prejudice the long term aims and spatial vision for the wider Crewe Rail Gateway. The submitted scheme would result in the clearance of the existing out of date and poor condition buildings which occupy the site and would provide development which would not represent a barrier to future redevelopment or the regeneration strategy advanced in the 'Crewe Rail Gateway' supplementary planning document and the wider Crewe spatial vision.

Whilst concerns have been expressed regarding the design of the proposed two-storey building, this element of the scheme is outline and is not for consideration at this stage.

With respect to disabled access, a ramp access through the existing subway and a lift access have been explored. However, because of the levels difference and the cost, these have been discounted. Furthermore, the existing access arrangements will remain as is and the disabled access spaces have been clustered towards the North West corner of the proposed car park where easy access to Nantwich Road and Station Top will be provided. This is better positioned than the current car park found on the opposite side on Pedley Street. Accordingly, the longer term vision, for the area, is to provide a lift linking in with the existing overhead footbridge.