

Application No: 11/3508M

Location: CONNECT 656 SWINEYARD LANE HIGH LEGH

Proposal: CHANGE OF USE FROM B8 WAREHOUSING TO PART B8 PART B2 USE

Applicant: UNITRUNK HOLDINGS LTD

Expiry Date: 28-Dec-2011

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the Green Belt
- Highway Safety

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been referred to the Strategic Planning Board as the proposal is for a large scale major development (the floor area of the existing buildings which are the subject of this change of use application amounts to 15,327 sq. m approximately).

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site comprises a triangular shaped piece of land measuring 4.98ha sandwiched between Swineyard Lane and the M56 in the parish of High Legh. The site is fenced off and is used for B8 Warehouse Storage and Distribution by TDG / Norbert Dentressangle, primarily in connection with their ongoing pallet storage, sorting, repair and drying facility.

The site is washed over by the approved Green Belt. Whilst not identified as a 'major developed site', the site is substantially developed and commercial in character. It includes at least two former hangers, a very large high bay warehouse and other ancillary buildings together with very large areas of hardstanding. To its north, the site abuts the M56 motorway and is enclosed elsewhere by Swineyard / Barleycastle Lanes.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposals relate to the change of use from B8 Warehouse Storage and Distribution to Part B8 Warehouse Storage and Distribution and Part B2 (General Industry) Use with the ancillary B1(a) Offices being retained.

The applicant originally requested consent for B1(b), B1(c), B2 & B8 across the site as a whole to provide flexibility in relation to the precise mix of uses.

The applicant agreed to a change to the description to exclude B1(b) and B1(c) uses due to officer concerns relating to the impact upon highway safety and the associated implications in terms of impact upon the Green Belt and sustainability considerations.

The proposals relate to the change of part of the site to enable Vantrunk Ltd to occupy two thirds of the site and TDG / Norbert Dentressangle to continue to operate from the other third of the site.

Vantrunk Ltd manufacture cable management systems: this includes punching and power pressing, robotic welding and fabrication. This would constitute a B2 (General Industry) use.

Vantrunk Ltd is relocating from their current premises in Runcorn due to a compulsory purchase acquisition arising from the proposed Mersey Gateway Bridge Project.

The application forms indicate that the existing B1(a) offices on the site amount to 534 sqm with the existing B8 use amounting to 13,754 sqm.

It is proposed to retain 4403 sqm of this for B8 use with the remaining being utilised for B2 use. It is intended that the main warehouse building, together with its ancillary offices, would become the production area for Vantrunk while the former hangar buildings will continue to be used by TDG/Norbert Dentressangle.

There are no other changes proposed.

RELEVANT HISTORY

The planning history for the site dates back to 1961 however the following recent applications are relevant:

56142P

Erection of steel framed half steel sheet clad structure to provide weather protection of existing 'protim' timber treatment plant
-Approved with conditions: 14th December 1988.

64657P

Erection of a steel framed building for the storage of hardwood.
-Approved with conditions: 10th October 1990.

66998P

Proposed Warehouse
- Refused: 3rd June 1991

65441P

Proposed warehouse with offices and modification of external storage areas
-Approved with conditions: 7th October 1991.

96/0236P

Extension to existing warehouse / distribution building
-Approved with conditions: 19th April 1996.

98/0160P

Use of part of landscaped area as concrete parking area for trailers / lorries, plus associated mounding / landscaping
-Approved with conditions: 8th May 1998.

01/0905P

Replacement of two existing buildings by a new warehouse, linked to existing. Relocation of gate house, car parking and other works, including landscaping.
-Approved with Conditions: 19th February 2002.

06/1098P

Erection of storage shed for wooden pallets
-Approved with conditions: 12th July 2006.

06/2239P

Erection of storage shed for wooden pallets (amendments to approval 06/1098P)
-Approved with conditions: 20th October 2006.

POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

NE11, GC8, E1, T1, DC3, DC6, DC13, DC63, IMP2.

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Guidance in the form of:

PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development – Climate Change Supplement
PPG2: Green Belts
PPS4: Planning For Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPG13: Transport
PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control

CONSULTATIONS

The **Highways Agency** commented that they have no objections to the proposals.

Similarly **Environmental Health** also has no objections to the scheme.

No comments were received at the time of writing the report from **Warrington Metropolitan Borough Council** who were consulted on the application.

The Strategic Highways Manager has no objections to the proposals.

High Legh Parish Council has indicated that they are unable to give an opinion or comment other than to state that they would not like to see a substantial increase in traffic from the site and would like the planning condition restricting HGVs to exit the site via Barleycastle Lane to be maintained. The change of use does not require any additional buildings.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following documents have been submitted to accompany the reserved matters application:

A Supporting Letter: This provides information on the background surrounding the application and details of the existing and proposed uses on the site.

Additional information received in respect of existing and proposed traffic movements via email on 9th December 2011.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site lies within the designated North Cheshire Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate forms of development. That said, policy GC8 within the Local Plan and paragraphs 3.7-3.8 within PPG2 indicate that the re-use of existing buildings can be appropriate.

As the existing buildings are capable of accommodating the proposed B2 use without any alteration, it is considered that the re-use of the buildings would accord with the criteria within policy GC8.

Whilst not identified as a 'major developed site', the site is substantially developed and commercial in character. The application site would be maintained in employment use and the change of use would generate 32 additional full time jobs at the site.

The site also has good connectivity to major infrastructure (i.e. the M56 and M6) and there are two bus services which run from Warrington, Altrincham, Knutsford and Holmes Chapel to High Legh. Whilst the bus stops for High Legh are over 1.7 miles from the site (which is not a reasonable walking distance), this distance would take less than 15 minutes by bicycle. It is therefore accessible by cycle. This would accord with policy E1 within the Local Plan, para 44 of PPG13 and the focus of the Draft National Planning Policy framework which is supportive of sustainable economic development.

It is considered appropriate to condition that no additional external 'open air' activities or storage take place (other than that already permitted) as this would represent an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt and the Council would wish to give further consideration to the implications of this.

Amenity

As the application site is to be maintained in employment use and due to its location, the proposal is unlikely to have a negative impact on adjacent properties.

The site lies adjacent to the embankments of the M56 and the nearest residential property lies within the application site. This property is already affected by noise generated by the existing operations at the site. Since it will not be made materially worse by the scheme, it is not considered that a reason for refusal on noise grounds would be sustainable.

There are no other residential properties nearby which would be directly affected by noise / traffic movements associated with activities proposed at the site. It should also be noted that no objections have been raised by Environmental Health.

If the buildings were to be utilized for other B2 General Industry uses these may generate additional noise, odour or smoke. Given the proximity of the M56, it is considered appropriate to restrict 'open air' activities in the interests of amenity in addition to those reasons stated above.

Overall, the proposals would not have an adverse impact upon residential amenity and would accord with policy DC3 in the Local Plan.

Landscape

Whilst the submission indicates that the site would be split between B8 and B2 use, the plans submitted do not identify if any existing external areas would be used in connection with the B2 element of the scheme or if additional external storage areas are proposed.

The existing external storage areas are screened by the existing landscaping, which has been secured via condition on previous consents. If external storage areas are required or activities take place outside of the buildings, this may well require additional hardstanding and / or landscaping to mitigate its impact. It is therefore considered prudent to add a condition restricting further areas of external 'open air' storage in the interests of the visual amenity of the Green Belt, in addition to those reasons stated above.

Highways

The applicant has indicated that there would be no change to the existing car parking and access arrangements, although there would be additional employees at the site.

The applicant has provided additional supporting information in respect of historic and proposed vehicle movements at the site. This information indicates that there would be an anticipated reduction in the total number of HGV/ commercial movements from 32,600 to 18,900 per year. However, the increased employment level would increase the number of private car traffic movements as there are likely to be up to 75 of their employees on site together with 10 employees relating to the retained TGD/Norbert operation. Maximum employee numbers previously were circa 65 at any one time, including visiting drivers.

It is worth noting that TDG's operations, both historically and in the future, are 24/7 throughout the year whereas Vantrunk normally operate only Monday to Friday with a shift pattern which currently consists of a day shift working from 8:00am to 4:00pm followed by a nightshift from 4:00pm to 2:00am Monday to Thursday, involving a much reduced 'skeleton' workforce. There would be scope for car sharing and travelling to the site by public transport and/or walking and cycling.

The Strategic Highways Manager notes that given the location of the site, it is considered that the change in operation will not have any additional traffic impact on the road network especially in relation the Cheshire East road network as the vast majority of traffic movements would take place using Barleycastle Lane to access the motorway network at junction 20 of the M6.

Whilst there would be additional employees at the site, the applicant is not proposing to add additional car parking. Whilst PPG13 intimates that Local

Planning Authorities should not insist developers provide more car parking than is needed for their operational requirements, given the scale of the proposals and the location of the site within the Green Belt, it is considered necessary to require the provision of additional car parking via condition. This can be justified on highway safety grounds as not all employees would utilize public transport and/or walking and cycling to access the site and in the interests of the appearance of the Green Belt as large expanses of hardstanding without any mitigating landscape features would have an adverse impact upon the visual amenity of the Green Belt.

If the buildings were to be utilized for other B2 General Industry uses, these may generate additional noise, odour or smoke. Given the proximity of the M56, it is considered appropriate to restrict 'open air' activities in the interests of highway safety in addition to those reasons stated above.

As the proposals do not raise any concerns in respect of highway safety the scheme accords with policy DC6 and PPG13.

Ecology

There are no ecological issues in relation to this application.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The proposals have been assessed against the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 having due regard to advice within contained in DETR circular 2/99. It is not considered that an Environmental Impact Assessment is required for this application, as the development falls outside Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the 2011 Regulations and the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant environmental impact on the area by virtue of factors such as its size, nature, or location.

Contamination/ Hazardous Substances

The applicant has confirmed that there would be no change to the existing waste storage and collection arrangements and that whilst 1 tonne of liquid petroleum gas is stored on site, this relates to the existing overground LPG storage tanks which are not subject to change. They are sited approximately 90 metres at the nearest point from the M56.

Members will be updated prior to the Strategic Planning Board meeting of 18th January 2012 with the standing advice from the Health & Safety Executive in respect of this issue.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

It is considered that the principle of the change of use from B8 use to part B8 part B2 use is acceptable in principle, subject to conditions.

The proposals as conditioned would not raise concerns in respect of the impact upon the Green Belt, highway safety, amenity, contamination or in any other way. As such, the proposals accord with policies NE11, GC8, E1, T1, DC3, DC6, DC13, DC63, IMP2 within the Macclesfield Local Plan 2004 and guidance within PPG2, PPS4, PPG13 and the Draft National Planning Policy Framework.

A recommendation of approval is therefore made subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Three Year Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. No Additional External 'Open Air' Storage/ Activities at the Site
4. Details of Car Parking and Additional Landscaping

