

Application No: 13/2384M

Location: ASTRA ZENECA, CHARTER WAY, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE, SK10 2NA

Proposal: New facility for the manufacture of pharmaceuticals, totalling 6668 sq. m gross internal floor area

Applicant: Mr D Ayres, Astra Zeneca

Expiry Date: 06-Sep-2013

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principle of development
- Landscape and visual impact
- Scale, design and layout
- Impact on the Conservation Area
- Highways impacts
- Land contamination
- Impact on residential amenity

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is included on the agenda of the Northern Planning Committee as it constitutes major development due to the floorspace of the proposed building being 6,668 square metres.

2. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

This application site is designated as an existing employment area in the Local Plan. It forms part of the existing AstraZeneca manufacturing site off Charter Way, Macclesfield, part of the Hurdsfield Industrial Estate. The application site is approximately 0.67 hectares and located in the northern part of the wider site and adjacent to the boundary with the canal to the east. It is currently used as a storage yard for contractor's materials.

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission for the erection of a new manufacturing facility consisting of approximately 6,668 square metres gross internal floor area. The building would be mainly

taken up by the manufacturing floorspace although other ancillary facilities are proposed such as plantrooms, switch rooms, staff amenity facilities and warehouse/storage area. The building would also have an extensive plant deck. Externally the development involves an ice store and gas bottle store, chiller compound, loading/unloading area, pedestrian footbridge over existing steam mains and some hard/soft landscaping.

The proposed facility would replace an outdated facility whose continued use represents a commercial risk to AstraZeneca. There is anticipated to be a transition period of 1-2 years where both will be in operation.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

The wider AstraZeneca site has a long planning history consisting of permissions for minor development to permissions for large buildings. None are of direct relevance to the determination of this application.

5. POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

BE1 Design Guidance
BE2 Historic Fabric
BE3 Conservation Areas
BE6 Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area
RT5 Open space provision
E1 Retention of employment land
E4 General Industrial Development
IMP1 Infrastructure Consequences
DC1 Design (New Build)
DC3 Amenity
DC6 Circulation & Access
DC8 Landscaping
DC9 Tree Protection
DC13 Noise
DC63 Contaminated Land

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework
SPG Planning Obligations (Macclesfield Borough Council)

6. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

Highways

The Strategic Highways Manager has assessed the application, and has no objection to this proposal. The comments are summarised below:

- The existing site access strategy is suitable to accommodate the new facility, including during the transition period.

- The existing internal road design will comfortably deal with increase of interim traffic related to the development.
- Bus services to and from the site are limited for shift workers but office/administration staff are well served. Cycling is an option towards/from the town centre on largely traffic free routes. The train station is approximately 1.5 miles away with no direct bus service. AstraZeneca already have an employee Travel Plan in place.
- In the long term the traffic impacts are expected to be neutral. It is also expected that traffic impacts during construction will be low.
- The TA indicates that between -23 and +750 car parking spaces will be available on the site. In the transitional period only small increase in parking are expected and additional overspill areas are available if required.

Environment Agency

No objections.

Environmental Health

Air Quality:

- Due to the scale and potential for increase in vehicle movements an Air Quality Impact Assessment would ordinarily be required.
- The development is an addition to existing operations at the site.
- AstraZeneca already benefit from a site travel plan and the Transport Assessment predicts only a small increase in vehicle movements.
- The proposal would not have an adverse affect on air quality.

Contaminated Land

- No objections.

Canal and River Trust

No objections.

Health and Safety Executive

Does not advise, on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission.

7. VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL:

The site is in the unparished area of Macclesfield. However, comments have been received from the adjacent Bollington Town Council. They are supportive of the application and consider it is important for Macclesfield's AstraZeneca site remaining a prime manufacturing base for the company.

8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS:

The consultation period ended on 7th August 2013. The following representations have been received:

The Civic Society

- Note and accept economic benefits of the proposal.
- Near views from the canal will be screened although consideration should be given to long term maintenance of this screen.
- Views from Kerridge Ridge highlight the cumulative impact of decades of industrial development though this is largely accepted in view of economic benefits.
- Careful attention to materials and finishes will be critical in softening the impact.

9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

The following documents have been submitted in support of the application, full copies of which are available to view on the application file:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Transport Statement
- Ground Investigation Report

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site is designated as an existing employment area in the Local Plan. Policy E1 seeks to retain such areas for employment uses and advises that new development will normally be allowed on a scale appropriate to the site. Policy E4 generally permits, *inter alia*, general industry on the Hurdsfield Industrial Estate.

The National Planning Policy Framework advises that '*planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth*'. It goes on to state '*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system*' (paragraph 19).

There is clear support for the principle of this type of development on this site. It would provide a replacement manufacturing facility demonstrating a long term commitment to the site, enhance an existing employment use, and in turn securing jobs.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The visual impact of the proposal has been assessed from three viewpoints, as advised during pre-application discussions. These three viewpoints are: from the public footpath running along Kerridge Ridge; the footpath running along the canal to the east of the development; and the pedestrian footbridge crossing the Silk Road (A523) to the north of the site.

The assessment consists of 3D block models overlaid on photographs. The photomontages show that the proposal would be visible from the Kerridge Ridge. However the building would be of a similar height to those immediately surrounding it on the site and lower than some other buildings towards the southern end. It would be seen against the backdrop of the existing industrial site and would be seen as part of that existing complex. The visual impact of the proposal from this viewpoint is considered acceptable.

The photomontages demonstrate that from both the footpath along the canal, which is also a Conservation Area, and from the footbridge over the Silk Road, existing mature trees and mounding would screen the development, therefore minimising any visual impact.

In addition, other views are likely to be very limited, particularly views from the Silk Road where the building will be behind existing buildings on the site.

It is not considered the proposal would have any significant landscape or visual impacts.

Scale, Design and Layout

The proposed building is a large single storey structure, with the majority of the floorspace taken up with manufacturing areas although also changing facilities, amenity area, storage and warehouse amongst other ancillary facilities. The roof above the manufacturing area is of walk-on type to allow access to plant, filters and controls. The building also contains extensive air handling infrastructure and plant equipment on the service decks in the roof void.

In addition to the main building the proposal includes a chiller store, ice store and gas bottle store, a nitrogen tank bay, loading/unloading bay, pipebridge linking the building to the existing steam main and footbridge over the existing steam mains.

The building would be 18.05 metres high at its highest point (the parapet of the stair tower) with the main bulk of the building being 15.5 metres high at the parapet. Due to the site levels being lower at the north western corner of the building around the pure services plantroom, the building would be approximately 16.6 metres above ground level, although the same overall height as the main bulk of the building. There would be a lower section where the loading bay and some of the staff amenity facilities are located. The building would be of a similar scale and massing to other buildings on the site with the height of the building dictated by the air handling equipment required for the processes that will take place within the building. Due to site levels it would be higher than the adjacent buildings 3 and 4, approximately 3.67 metres above building 4 and 3.9 metres above building 3. In the context of the wider site and the scale of surrounding buildings these differences are negligible. The scale and massing of the building is considered entirely appropriate for its location and purpose.

The design and appearance of the building is dictated by its purposes and the functionality required. On an industrial site buildings of this nature are expected and appropriate. The external walls are proposed to be clad in Kingspan microrib cladding panels, mainly Kingspan Grey White with a darker Kingspan Merlin Grey band. The cladding panels would be laid horizontally to minimise the perceived height of the building. The materials and colours proposed would reflect the more modern and recent buildings on the site providing some visual continuity.

The layout of the building has been carefully designed to reflect regulatory requirements and the processes that will take place. It has also been dictated by the functional requirements of the building and the immediate constraints, such as access road, the existing substation and the steam main to the west. The layout of the site has been carefully considered and is acceptable in planning terms.

Impact on the Adjacent Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area

The Macclesfield canal abuts the site to the east. The canal is designated as a Conservation Area. The existing mounding and mature tree planting along the boundary would screen the development from immediate views along the tow path. It is not considered the proposed facility would any more harmful than the existing buildings on the site and the industrial complex as a whole which adjoins this stretch of the Conservation Area.

Highways Impacts

As noted above the proposed manufacturing facility would replace an outdated existing facility on the site over a phased two year period, with existing staff and output transferred between the facilities. The Transport Statement notes that during the transition and thereafter current levels of manufacturing output will not be exceeded. The Strategic Highways Manager has identified five key issues to be addressed: safe and convenient access site access strategy; internal road design; sustainable travel; traffic impact; and parking.

The Transport Statement advises that only an additional 36 staff (28 shift workers and 8 day staff) would be anticipated with the remainder coming from existing employees on the site. If an assumption is made that all employees would drive to the site then 28 additional vehicle movements would be expected in the shift change inter-peak periods with 8 additional vehicle movements in the peak period. The Transport Statement advises that it is anticipated only a small number of additional delivery/service vehicles associated with the new facility, expected to be less than 10 a day.

AstraZeneca have an employee Travel Plan in place which it operates as part of its wider social responsibilities which includes subsidies for bus services, a car share scheme (with approximately 18% actively sharing) and shuttle bus services. Bus use is approximately 7% of all staff.

The Strategic Highways Manager has advised that the existing site access points and site access strategy is suitable to accommodate the facility and the anticipated increases in traffic. Likewise the internal road layout would comfortably deal with any increases anticipated. The long-term traffic impact is expected to be neutral and the majority of additional traffic will be outside peak hours. The existing car parking is considered acceptable and could accommodate any increases anticipated.

Land Contamination

A Ground Investigation Report has been submitted with the application. The Land Contamination Officer has viewed the report and application and has raised no objections. They have advised that an informative be attached to any approval advising the applicant/developer of their duty to adhere to the regulations of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework and current Building Regulations.

Residential Amenity

The proposed development would be within the existing industrial complex and a considerable distance from the nearest residential property. As such no significant harmful impacts on residential amenity are anticipated.

Other Matters

The proposed development is for a commercial building in excess of 1,000 square metres and therefore in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning guidance on Section 106 (Planning) Obligations the development could generate a requirement for open space, provision, recreation and outdoor sports facilities and/or a commuted sum in lieu of on site provision. Nonetheless, the proposed building would be part of an existing established manufacturing site and would be a replacement facility for an existing outdated facility. It would not generate significant numbers of additional staff with only an additional 36 expected. For these reasons it is not considered on site provision or a commuted sum could be justified as the need would not arise from the development itself.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development would provide a replacement facility for the manufacturing of prescription medicines. The site is allocated as an existing employment area in the Local Plan and therefore such development is acceptable in principle. The visual impact of the proposal is considered acceptable given it would be within the existing industrial complex and seen against a backdrop of existing buildings from distant views. Additionally existing mature trees and mounding would screen the development from any close viewpoints. The scale and appearance of the building reflects its function and is dictated by the processes and regulatory requirements associated with such processes. Consideration has been given to limiting its perceived massing with the materials proposed. The highways impacts are considered to be low and could easily be accommodated with existing infrastructure. The proposal is considered acceptable in all other respects.

Taking the above into account the application is considered acceptable and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant policies in the development plan. Paragraph 14 of the NPPF advises that where proposals accord with the development plan they should be approved without delay. Members are therefore recommended to approve the application.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. A06EX - Materials as application
4. A11LS - Implementation of landscaping scheme submitted with application
5. A04LS - Landscaping (implementation details)

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