

Application No: 15/3588M

Location: ASTRAZENECA, CHARTER WAY, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE, SK10 2NA

Proposal: Replacement of existing high-bay warehouse and alterations to northern elevation of low-bay warehouse, including refitting of low bay warehouse to allow both packaging and warehousing.

Applicant: AstraZeneca plc

Expiry Date: 14-Dec-2015

SUMMARY

The proposal will demolish an existing but redundant and obsolete high-bay warehouse, replacing it with a new building on a marginally smaller footprint, with an increased height, which will improve operational efficiencies on the site

The principle of the replacement high bay warehouse on this allocated employment site is compliant with relevant local plan employment policies, and its utilitarian design appropriately reflects its position within the industrial estate. The proposed scheme will also not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity, ecology and highway safety. Matters of drainage and flooding are also considered to be acceptable, subject to conditions.

The building is relatively high, and it will be visible from surrounding land, and the adjacent Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area. The longer views of the site particularly from higher land levels, will see the proposal in the context of the existing industrial estate and other tall buildings and structures. As such the overall landscape impact is not considered to be so significantly adverse to justify a refusal of planning permission. The closest views which will be from the towpath are screened and filtered by existing vegetation, and as such it is concluded that there is less than substantial harm to the conservation area. In accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

AstraZeneca is a major local employer within the Macclesfield area. Whilst the proposal does not create any additional jobs within the proposed warehouse, it does represent a significant investment in, and commitment to, the Macclesfield site. The proposal will demolish an existing but redundant and obsolete high-bay warehouse, replacing it with a new building on a marginally smaller footprint, with an increased height, which will improve operational efficiencies on the site, without there being any significant impact upon matters of public interest.

The proposal is therefore considered to represent a sustainable form of development that complies with the development plan, and as such, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Framework, should be approved without delay.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the replacement of the existing high-bay warehouse and alterations to northern elevation of low-bay warehouse, including the refitting of the low bay warehouse to allow both packaging and warehousing.

The existing high bay warehouse is not used at all currently. The proposal is to move storage from an existing low bay warehouse into the new high bay then use the current low bay warehouse as a production facility. Raw materials, finished packed product, and intermediate materials will be stored in the new building.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises an existing high bay warehouse, packaging warehouse and other ancillary buildings. The application site is located close to the eastern boundary of the wider Astra Zeneca industrial science park where it borders the Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area and the Green Belt beyond. The site is located within an Existing Employment Area as identified in the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan.

RELEVANT HISTORY

There have been a number of planning applications across the site, but none are specifically relevant to the current proposal.

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Framework sets out that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policy

NE11 (Nature conservation interests)

BE1 (Design principles for new developments)

BE3 (Conservation Areas)

E1 (Employment land)

E4 (Employment land – industry)

DC1 (High quality design for new build)

DC3 (Protection of the amenities of nearby residential properties)

DC6 (Safe and convenient access for vehicles, special needs groups and pedestrians)

DC8 (Requirements to provide and maintain landscape schemes for new development)

DC17 (Flooding)

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Practice Guidance

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

EG1 Economic Prosperity

EG3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites

SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable Development Principles

EG3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites

CONSULTATIONS

Manchester Airport – No objection

Canal & River Trust - Comments not received at time of report preparation.

Health & Safety Executive - Comments not received at time of report preparation.

Environment Agency – No objection subject to conditions relating to contaminated land.

United Utilities – Comments not received at time of report preparation.

Environmental Health – Comments not received at time of report preparation.

Head of Strategic Infrastructure – No objections

Flood Risk Manager – No objections subject to conditions

Macclesfield Town Council – Comments not received at time of report preparation.

REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received from Macclesfield Civic Society noting that as an upgrading and rationalisation within an established industrial complex it is appropriate in terms of land use. The landscape and visual impact analysis is noted and we would conclude that the impact is likely to be modest but acceptable given the context of existing built development. Whilst perceptible from undeveloped land to the east and from higher viewpoints the development would be seen as part of an established complex.

APPLICANTS SUBMISSION

The following documents accompany the planning application, and can be viewed in full on the application file:

- Planning Statement
- Design & Access Statement
- Visual Impact Assessment
- Transport Statement

- Flood Risk Assessment
- Contaminated land report
- Ecological Assessment

APPRAISAL

The key issues in the determination of this application are:

- The visual impact of the development
- Impact upon Conservation Area
- Highway safety and traffic generation

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Visual Impact

The utilitarian design of the proposed building is in keeping with the established character of the industrial estate. The footprint of the replacement building does have a marginally narrower footprint than the existing; however there is a 12 metre difference in height between the 18 metre height of the existing high bay warehouse and the 30 metre height of the proposal. Therefore there will inevitably be a visual impact associated with the proposed development.

It has been queried with the applicant whether the building could be set at a lower ground level to reduce the overall height. However, they have stated that setting the floor slab any lower would cause a number of issues including undermining the immediately adjacent buildings, having a floor level lower than the water table, and operational issues in that the slab would not be at the same level as the adjacent buildings which they are intending to use in conjunction with the new warehouse.

The submitted sections show the building in the context of other high rise structures in the landscape, some of which are within the AstraZeneca industrial site including the 28 metre high Etherow building and the 50 metre high chimneys.

9 viewpoints have been provided as part of the submitted landscape and visual impact assessment to consider the visual impact of the development. Images of these viewpoints are included in the key plans for this application, and the text below considers the impact from these points.

1. View south from footbridge over The Silk Road

When viewed from public right of way FP87 as it crosses a pedestrian bridge over the Silk Road to the north of the site, the upper section of the new warehouse is likely to be visible above and through the existing tree cover. Of course as the existing vegetation matures and grows taller, the warehouse will become less visible. The building will also be seen in the context of the dual carriageway, the electricity power line and pylon, and the existing buildings on the site.

2. View east from Rugby Drive playing fields (Tytherington)

This is the view from the public open space at Rugby Drive Playing Fields and housing on the eastern edge of Tytherington. The building will be visible from this point, but vegetation will

screen the lower section and the remainder will be seen in the context of the existing industrial structures.

In terms of the wider areas of Tytherington, due to the position of the building on the eastern side of the site, it is not considered that the building will be unduly prominent, again given the presence of other substantial industrial buildings and established vegetation alongside the Silk Road.

3. View north east from footbridge over Hibel Road (A537)

The industrial estate can be clearly seen to the north east when viewed from the footbridge over Hibel Road (A537) close to Jordangate car park. This view is at some distance from the application site, but it can be clearly seen in the context of the other wider industrial site and the other high rise structures in the landscape.

4. View west from canal towpath

This is the closest view of the proposed building from surrounding public vantage points. From the canal towpath the new building will be clearly visible, however the vegetation alongside the canal and within the site serve to provide some screening and filtering of views. Industrial buildings adjacent to canals are not unusual.

5. View looking west from public right of way Higher Hurdsfield FP5

At certain points along this footpath, a large tree restricts views of the building. The tree will provide a less effective screen from different points along the footpath (as in viewpoint 9 below). However, there are other existing tall structures nearby including the telecoms tower and the chimneys within the site, against which the new building will be seen.

6. View looking west from Kerridge Road

This is an elevated position along Kerridge Road / Windmill Road to the east of the site. Once again, although it will be viewed as one of the taller structures on the site, it will blend into the backdrop of the existing industrial site.

7. View looking south from Redway, Bollington

Very distant views can be achieved from the southern edge of Bollington where the completed warehouse is likely to be partially visible above the intervening vegetation.

8. View looking south west from Kerridge Ridge (east of Windmill Lane)

From Kerridge Ridge (east of Windmill Lane), Bridge Quarry can be seen in the foreground, but distant views are very wide ranging from this point and the building will again be seen in the context of the wider industrial site and will not be a prominent landscape feature.

9. View looking west from footpath FP5, close to canal towpath

From the public right of way (Higher Hurdsfield FP5), close to the canal towpath, looking west towards the site, this is perhaps where the most significant visual impact will occur. The vegetation along the canal screens most of the existing buildings on the AstraZeneca site, but some taller structures are still visible above the canopy line. Taller vegetation does however provide some filtering of views to these taller structures, including the proposed building.

For the reasons set out above, the overall landscape impact is considered to be acceptable.

Conservation Area

The site is located adjacent to the Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset as identified by the Framework. Policy BE3 of the Local Plan is therefore relevant which states that development will only be permitted in or adjoining a conservation area which preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the conservation area - special attention will be paid to matters of bulk, height, materials, colour and design.

Having regard to the physical form of the Canal Conservation Area, as a long narrow corridor following the route of the canal and towpath, with substantial vegetation along its boundaries, views to either side are limited. However, the existing high bay warehouse, and other industrial development, can be viewed from the towpath. The proposed building will therefore undoubtedly be visible, however, industrial development adjacent to a canal is not an unusual characteristic.

The conservation officer has commented on the proposal and noted that the main view of this redevelopment will be from the towpath, which is currently obscured by vegetation along the boundary of the site. Although the new structure will be taller than the existing warehouse the vegetation will to some degree soften the impact. The conservation officer concludes that this remodelling will have some impact on views out of the Conservation Area, however this is tempered with existing structures within the site and will over time be further obscured by the existing vegetation cover becoming more mature.

Given that the building will be more visible than the existing, it is considered that the proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. Consequently, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use. This is explored further below in the planning balance section of the report.

Amenity

There are no residential properties within close proximity of the application site. As such, no significant amenity issues are raised.

Highways

The Head of Strategic Infrastructure has commented on the proposal and has noted that there is no change of use between the existing and proposed building and no increase in floorspace. No increase in the numbers of HGV's serving the building is proposed and the existing servicing arrangements remain unchanged.

Therefore, the proposals do not have any highway impact and no objections are raised.

Ecology

The nature conservation officer has commented on the proposal and noted that the application is supported by an acceptable ecological appraisal. There are unlikely to be any significant ecological issues associated with the proposed development.

Flood Risk

The Flood Risk manager had reviewed the proposals and confirms that there are no objections on flood risk grounds subject to the proposal being carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures within the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). These measures limit the rate of surface water runoff generated by the site to discharge at a rate of not more than the existing rate.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

AstraZeneca is a key local employer within the Macclesfield area, employing 1,800 people at their Macclesfield site; the manufacturing, packing and distribution of medicines is undertaken at the site to 130 markets globally.

Whilst the proposal does not create any additional jobs within the proposed warehouse, the applicant's submission notes that it does represent a very significant capital investment in the Macclesfield site in the region of £100 million. The proposals will significantly improve operational efficiencies and help to future-proof AstraZeneca's continued investment in the Macclesfield site for many years to come.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

With regard to the social role of sustainable development, as noted above, as a substantial financial commitment to the Macclesfield site, it will continue to provide employment opportunities for local people.

PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal will demolish an existing but redundant and obsolete high-bay warehouse, replacing it with a new building on a marginally smaller footprint, with an increased height, which will improve operational efficiencies on the site

The principle of the replacement high bay warehouse on this allocated employment site is compliant with relevant local plan employment policies, and its utilitarian design appropriately reflects its position within the industrial estate. The proposed scheme will also not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity, ecology and highway safety. Matters of drainage and flooding are also considered to be acceptable, subject to conditions.

The building is relatively high, and it will be visible from surrounding land, and the adjacent Macclesfield Canal Conservation Area, as the images above demonstrate. The longer views of the site particularly from higher land levels will see the proposal in the context of the existing industrial estate and other tall buildings and structures. As such the overall landscape impact is not considered to be so significantly adverse to justify a refusal of planning permission. The closest views, which will be from the towpath, are screened and filtered by existing vegetation, and as such it is concluded that there is less than substantial harm to the conservation area. In accordance with paragraph 134 of the Framework this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

As noted above, AstraZeneca is a major local employer within the Macclesfield area. Whilst the proposal does not create any additional jobs within the proposed warehouse, it does represent a significant investment in and commitment to the Macclesfield site. The proposal will demolish an existing but redundant and obsolete high-bay warehouse, replacing it with a new building on a marginally smaller footprint, with an increased height, which will improve operational efficiencies on the site, without there being any significant impact upon matters of public interest.

The proposal is therefore considered to represent a sustainable form of development that complies with the development plan, and as such, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the Framework, should be approved without delay.

RECOMMENDATION

The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions, and subject to the receipt of outstanding consultee responses.

Application for Full Planning

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Development in accord with approved plans
3. Materials as application
4. Scheme to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site to be submitted to and approved,
5. Development to be carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures in Flood Risk Assessment.

