

Application No: 15/3665N

Location: Bentley Motor Company, PYMS LANE, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW1 3PL

Proposal: Construction of a 4 storey office building on the site of an existing carpark

Applicant: Andrew Robertson, Bentley Motors Ltd

Expiry Date: 04-Nov-2015

SUMMARY:

This proposal would bring economic benefits through the delivery of new jobs and investment in an area with a longstanding association with the manufacture of motor vehicles. Bentley Motors are a major employer located within one of the principal growth areas of the Borough where national and local plan policy supports such development.

The proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and the design (subject to amendment), scale and form of the building would not appear incongruous within its context. The impact of the proposal on trees, hedges and the wider landscape setting would not be significant and environmental considerations relating to flooding, drainage, land contamination and ecology would be acceptable.

The impact on neighbouring residential amenity would be acceptable owing to the low impact nature of the use (offices) and the generous separation with the nearest neighbouring properties. Satisfactory access and parking provision can be provided and the development would not result in 'severe harm' on the local highway network. The ecological impacts of the development can be satisfactorily mitigated.

The Head of Strategic Infrastructure (HSI) is satisfied that any additional vehicular movements and parking generated by the proposals could be accommodated by the existing highway network and the existing parking provision at the site. It is also important to note that recent improvements to the pedestrian facilities around the site would support this proposal.

On this basis, the proposal is for sustainable development which would bring environmental, economic and social benefits and would be compliant with relevant policy. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the adopted Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan and advice contained within the NPPF and emerging local policy. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE with Conditions

PROPOSAL:

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a four storey office building for Bentley Motors on the northern side of Pym's Lane, Crewe. The building would have a floor space of 7,200 square metres comprising of B1a (offices) and B1b (research and development) uses. It should be noted that at the time of report writing, site clearance works had commenced.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

This application relates to the site of Bentley Motors, a large industrial site for the manufacturing of motor vehicles located within the settlement boundary for Crewe. This application relates specifically to a former car park situated on the north side of Pym's Lane directly opposite the main entrance to the plant.

The site is bound to the north by the 'Meadow Brook Cemetery', to the east by residential properties fronting Pym's Lane and to the south by the main production plant. Directly to the west of the site, is the Cheshire East Pym's Lane Waste Recycling Centre as well as other industrial and commercial units and associated parking further along. There are other areas which are within the applicant's ownership for car parking, a showroom and ancillary development.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

There is an extensive planning history for the Bentley Motors site. However, the only applications of relevance to this proposal are as follows:

12/4373N - New build showroom with associated car parking approved on 6th February 2013

12/3418N – Full planning permission approved to develop site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 478 parking spaces on 30th November 2012

12/4319N – Resolved to grant full planning permission (subject to S106 Obligation) for the erection of a two storey temporary office accommodation with links to an existing building to accommodate existing staff relocated on site on 1st May 2013

12/4426N - Proposed development of the site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 1817 car parking spaces plus lorry parking for up to 14 HGV's – Approved 03-Jun-2013

13/5114N - Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on application 12/4426N (proposed development of the site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 1817 car parking spaces plus lorry parking for up to 14 HGV's) – Approved 18-Feb-2014

14/2944N - Construction of a new Painted Body Store Warehouse and ancillary accommodation totalling approximately 5060sqm gross internal floor area. The relocation of fuel tanks and a fuel filling location. The proposed building comprises a large warehouse with one and a half portal frame structure, a single storey office annex to the North elevation with rest and WC facilities, an enclosed link to the existing adjacent warehouse to the east and an enclosed bridge link above the private road to the adjacent property to the North. A 10m overhanging canopy will be provided for the full width of the building to the west elevation and a 2m deep canopy to the north side of the east link – Approved 29-Aug-2014

14/5262N - Proposed pre-fabricated building, complete with services to be installed as office and restrooms for lorry park on site at Bentley Motors – Approved 09-Feb-2015

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 17, 28, 56 and 65.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the adopted Congleton Borough of Crewe & Nantwich Local Plan, which allocates the site within the Crewe Settlement Boundary.

The relevant Saved Policies are:-

Crewe & Nantwich Local Plan Policy

BE.13 (Buildings of Local Interest)
BE.1 (Amenity)
BE.2 (Design Standards)
BE.3 (Accessing and Parking)
E.4 (Development on Existing Employment Areas)
TRAN.3 Pedestrians
TRAN.8 Existing Car Parks
TRAN.9 Car Parking Standards

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Submission Version

PG1 – Overall Development Strategy
PG2 – Settlement Hierarchy
EG1 – Economic Prosperity
SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles
SE1 – Design
SE2 – Efficient Use of Land
CO2 (Car Parking Standards)

The relevant saved Local Plan policies are consistent with the NPPF and should be given full weight.

CONSULTATIONS:

Highways: The Strategic Highways Manager states that there are no highway objections raised to the application.

Environmental Protection: No objections, subject to conditions / informatives requiring submission of an Environmental Management Plan, a restriction on hours of construction and hours of use, submission of details of external lighting, accordance with submitted noise mitigation scheme, submission of a travel plan and a further contaminated land survey.

Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions for remediation of unsuspected contamination and surface water drainage.

Flood Risk Officer: No objection subject to submission of a surface water drainage scheme.

United Utilities: No objection subject to a surface water drainage condition.

CREWE TOWN COUNCIL:

Support the development in principle, but request that the building be sited as far away as possible from neighbouring dwellings to minimise the impact.

REPRESENTATIONS:

2 representations have been made by neighbouring properties expressing concern about the following:

- The proposed building and future plans along the north side of Pym's Lane are very large and close to neighbouring properties
- The proposed office building will overshadow neighbouring rear gardens

APPRAISAL:

Principle of Development

In terms of the local plan policy, the site is within the settlement boundary of Crewe where development is acceptable provided that it is compatible with surrounding uses and accords with other relevant local plan policies.

The site has a longstanding association with the manufacturing and the production of motor cars and as such, it is considered that the compatibility of the site and the area for such use is well established. However, the site directly abuts the edge of the residential development along Pym's Lane and consequently the impact on these neighbours will be explored further in this report.

With respect to the principle of the development more generally, it is important to recognise that Bentley Motors is a major employer in the area. Bentley are seeking to improve and reconfigure their facilities in order to work more effectively and efficiently within the main administration, office and production areas of the plant to allow the company to realise their expansion plans and produce additional products. This proposal is part of the long term vision to invest in the production and manufacture of additional lines of vehicle. Thus, there are clear benefits arising from the scheme that would support job creation and the economic growth in the locality and the Borough. It is considered that such benefits are in line with the local plan and the aims of the NPPF.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Planning applications that encourage sustainable economic development should be treated favourably and this view is further reinforced in Policy EG1 of the Council's emerging Local Plan Strategy Submission Version. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant planning considerations.

Design

The NPPF and local plan policies BE.2 and SE.1 emphasise the importance of securing high quality design appropriate to its context. NPPF paragraph 61 states that:

“Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”

The proposed building would have a floorspace of 7,200 square metres spread across four floors. The building would be of modular prefab construction and would measure 15.98 metres in height with a frontage to Pym's Lane of 53 metres. The building would be positioned to the west of the residential development on the north side of Pym's Lane.

The east facing elevation of the building would enjoy a separation of 45 metres with the boundary to the nearest neighbouring property, no. 23 Pym's Lane. This degree of separation would help to ease the transition between the height of the residential development and the height of the proposed office building. Additionally, the building would be set back 30 metres from the beginning of the footway to reduce the prominence of the building from view along Pym's Lane and would also allow for appropriate hard and soft landscaping to be accommodated to the front of the building.

With reference to the architectural detail, the building would be simple in terms of its form and shape. Owing to its size, the massing of the elevations would be broken up with sections of glazing and alternate coloured facing materials. This would improve the appearance of the building. However, it is considered that the use of alternate coloured materials could be taken further, particularly on the south-eastern corner of the building, which is the principal view that users of Pym's Lane will see as they approach the site and Bentley Motors. Given that this is a gateway to the start of the commercial development, officers are presently negotiating amendments to improve this view. The outcome of this will be reported to members by way of an update.

It is important to note that the area is characterised predominantly by commercial and industrial premises and as such, the proposed building would not appear incongruous within this context. The size, scale and general appearance of the building would not impact detrimentally on views of the locally listed buildings, which serve as the entrance to the main Bentley production plant on the opposite side of Pym's Lane. Subject to amendments regarding the materials, the proposal complies with policies BE.2 and SE1 (Design).

Trees and Landscaping

The application site is set back behind a wide highway verge with grass strips, a footway and a line of trees along this part of Pym's Lane (forming part of a boulevard approach). On the Pym's Lane frontage of the site, there is a narrow planting bed with trees and there is a hedge and trees to the west and to the north. The Council's Tree Officer has confirmed that provided that the trees and hedges are retained (as shown), it is not considered that any significant forestry impacts arising from the current proposal. With respect to landscape impact, the Council's Landscape Officer has confirmed that the proposal would have negligible impacts on the wider landscape setting.

Amenity

The impact of the development upon nearby residential properties is a material consideration in regard to noise, disturbance and the physical massing of buildings.

The nearest neighbouring dwelling would achieve a distance of 54 metres with the east facing elevation of the proposed building. Whilst concern has been expressed regarding the potential for overshadowing of neighbouring rear gardens, this separation would be sufficient to accommodate the proposed size and scale of the building without materially harming neighbouring amenity by reason of loss of light / overshadowing. Similarly, the proposal would not give rise to direct overlooking owing to the ample separation.

This proposal is for B1a (offices) and B1b (research and development) uses, which by their nature are less intensive and less noisy than general B2 industrial uses. The use will predominantly be for offices and will be enclosed within the proposed building envelope. The scheme is supported by a noise impact assessment which demonstrates that any noise impacts on neighbouring properties will be limited. This has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) who has offered no objection to the proposal subject to conditions.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would not materially harm neighbouring amenity by reason of loss of light, direct overlooking, visual intrusion or noise and therefore complies with local plan policy BE.1.

Parking, Highway Safety and Traffic Generation

Policy BE.3 deals with access and parking and states that development will only be permitted where proposals provide:

- safe pedestrian access
- the provision of any off street parking
- manoeuvring and operational space should be designed to minimise visual impact
- safe vehicular access and egress arrangements

Whilst no parking is included within the proposal, it is envisaged that all parking will take place within the Sunnybank Lane car park, which has been expanded to significantly increase parking provision at Bentley Motors. This would offset the loss of the existing car park that the proposed

office building would occupy whilst also accommodated the parking generated by the proposed office use.

The site offers good integration with local transport networks, including walk/cycle, bus/train. It is also important to note that recent improvements to the pedestrian facilities around the site would support this proposal. These comprise of a number of pedestrian crossings linking the southern side of Pym's Lane to the northern side. This will allow safe pedestrian access from the main production facility and the car parks serving Bentley Motors. The site offers good integration with local transport networks, including walk/cycle, bus/train.

With respect to highway network impact, the HSI has confirmed that the applicant has demonstrated that all nearby junctions will continue to operate satisfactorily with the proposed development. It is noted that the Middlewich Road/Pym's Lane signalised junction is the most marginal, where junction capacity just exceeds recommended thresholds during the AM peak, with Pym's Lane exceeding saturation thresholds during the PM Peak. However, this is based on a worst case scenario whereby all 400 trips generated by the proposed office building are undertaken by private car, and that all trips occur during the AM and PM Peaks, which is unlikely. In addition the signals are operated under a system (MOVA) which optimises junction performance. As such, it is considered that surrounding junctions will continue to operate within satisfactory thresholds and therefore the impact on the local highway network will be acceptable and policy compliant.

Taking the above into account, the scheme is found to be acceptable in terms of its impacts on the local highway network and the existing parking and pedestrian facilities would be sufficient to accommodate the proposed development. The proposal therefore accords with Policy BE.3.

Other Issues

Subject to conditions, there are no issues with respect to flooding, drainage, land contamination or ecology.

PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSIONS

This proposal would bring economic benefits through the delivery of new jobs and investment in an area with a longstanding association with the manufacture of motor vehicles. Bentley Motors are a major employer located within one of the principal growth areas of the Borough where national and local plan policy supports such development.

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The Head of Strategic Infrastructure (HSI) is satisfied that any additional vehicular movements and parking generated by the proposals could be accommodated by the existing highway network and the existing parking provision at the site. It is also important to note that recent improvements to the pedestrian facilities around the site would support this proposal.

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RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard time limit (3 years)**
- 2. Accordance with plans**
- 3. Materials to be submitted and approved**
- 4. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted noise impact assessment**
- 5. Submission of an Environmental Management Plan**
- 6. Access constructed in accordance with submitted details prior to first use**
- 7. Survey for nesting birds**
- 8. Details of foul water drainage to be submitted**
- 9. Surface water drainage strategy to be submitted**
- 10. Landscape to be submitted**
- 11. Landscape implementation**
- 12. Hours of operation restricted**
- 13. Contaminated land**
- 14. Piling method statement**
- 15. Travel plan to be submitted**
- 16. Details of external lighting to be submitted and approved**

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 (Regulation), in consultation with the Chair (or in his absence the Vice Chair) of the 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.

Should this application be the subject of an appeal, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation) in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board to enter into a planning agreement in accordance with the S106 Town and Country Planning Act to secure the Heads of Terms for a S106 Agreement.

