

Application No: 15/3847C

Location: SANOFI AVENTIS, LONDON ROAD, HOLMES CHAPEL, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW4 8BE

Proposal: Part A: Outline permission with all matters reserved except for means of access for: • Extensions to Area 12 Manufacturing building, Area 11 Warehousing building, Area 77 Laboratory building and Area 37 Stability building; • Relocation of service buildings and the erection of storage tanks, substation and associated plant; and • Provision of additional staff car parking Part B: Full planning permission for: • Extension to Area 13 Building to create new reception area, canteen and office floor space (2,775m²) • Demolition of Building 15; and • Alterations to internal roads and servicing area, provision of new internal HGV lay by, installation of new access gates and associated boundary treatments.

Applicant: Fisons Ltd, Trading as Sanofi

Expiry Date: 26-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 pharmaceuticals. Sanofi Aventis are a major employer located within one of the local service centres in the Borough where national and local plan policy supports the expansion of existing development.

The proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and the design (subject to reserved matters), scale and form of the development 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 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. Any contributions to provide a new public right of way would not be reasonable or necessary to offset an identified harm.

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 Congleton Borough Local Plan, the Draft Brereton Neighbourhood Plan and advice contained within the NPPF and emerging local policy. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE with Conditions

REASON FOR REPORT:

This application is to be determined by Southern Planning Committee as the proposal exceeds 5000 square metres in floor-space.

PROPOSAL:

This is a “hybrid” application (i.e. part outline and part full planning permission). Full planning permission (described as Part B) is sought for:

- Extension to Area 13 to provide new reception area, canteen and office floor space (2,775m²)
- Demolition of Building 15
- Alterations to internal roads and servicing area, provision of new internal HGV lay by, installation of new access gates and associated boundary treatments

Outline planning permission (described as Part A) with all matters reserved except for means of access is sought for:

- Extensions to Area 12 Manufacturing building, Area 11 Warehousing building, Area 77 Laboratory building, Area 37 Stability building
- Relocation of service buildings and the erection of storage tanks, substation and associated plant
- Provision of additional staff car parking

SITE DESCRIPTION:

This application relates to the site of Sanofi Aventis in Holmes Chapel, a large industrial firm specialising in the manufacture and the distribution of pharmaceutical products. The site falls within the settlement zone line of Holmes Chapel and is allocated for employment in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005).

RELEVANT HISTORY:

There are a number of planning applications for the site associated with the plant's incremental growth. However, the most recent and relevant are:

15/2168C - Extension and re-instatement of car park to provide 150 spaces – Approved 06-Jul-2015

14/4732C - Variation of condition 6 on existing permission 11/2720C; Outline application for extension to manufacturing, warehouse and office facility – Approved 08-Jan-2015

14/4705C - Application for all Reserved Matters in relation to permissions 11/2720C & 14/4732C; the extension to manufacturing facility (area 12) – Approved 08-Jan-2015

11/2720C - OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR EXTENSION TO MANUFACTURING, WAREHOUSE AND OFFICE FACILITY – Approved 15-May-2014

08/0405/FUL - New energy centre and assoc. ancillary equipment, new sprinkler water storage tank and pump house – Approved 12-Oct-2012

05/1026/FUL - Erection of security fences, gates, barriers, security cabin, flag poles, landscaping, vehicle lay-by and footpaths within the existing site boundary – Approved 17-Nov-2005

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

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

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 7, 8, 17 and 206.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is also of relevance.

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005), which allocates the site within the settlement zone line of Holmes Chapel Village under Policy PS5.

The relevant Saved Policies are: -

PS5 – Villages

GR1 – General Criteria for New Development

GR2 – Design

GR6 – Amenity and Health

GR9 – Accessibility

E4 – Employment Development in Villages

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

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

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

SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles

SE1 – Design

EG1 – Economic Prosperity

Other Material Consideration:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Brereton Neighbourhood Plan

CONSULTATIONS:

Environment Agency:

No objection subject to conditions relating to land contamination, surface water and piling.

Environmental Protection:

No objection subject to conditions relating to contaminated land, piling, noise attenuation, dust control, external lighting and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Highways:

No objection - This is an existing site and established. The extensions proposed will create additional traffic movements to the site but many of these will fall outside the busiest peak hours. The principal junctions in Holmes Chapel have peak hour congestion problems and resultant queues. The development will cause a slight increase in the queuing experienced at the junctions but it is not considered that this amounts to a severe impact and as such no objections are raised.

Public Rights of Way (PROW):

No objection - The application site falls between London Road and Station Road/Marsh Lane. The local community has registered, under the Council's statutory Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ref. W106), an aspiration to create a walking route between these two roads in order to enhance and encourage pedestrian movements around the village. The Planning Authority would be requested to consider this aspiration together with the provision of links for non-motorised users between this and other adjacent proposed developments.

United Utilities:

No objection subject to a condition requiring the site to be drained on a separate system with only foul drainage connected to the main sewer. The surface water flows generated from the site should discharge directly in to the adjacent watercourse as stated within the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).

BRERETON PARISH COUNCIL:

Support the application.

REPRESENTATIONS:

One letter has been received objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

- Sanofi sold off their out site to make way for housing
- Roads already suffer from bad congestion and are dangerous
- None of the jobs created will be for local people
- Proposal would put pressure on local services and amenities which are already over stretched

- Already been lots of development in the area which would further be despoiled by this proposal
- Failure of Cheshire East to adopt a Local Plan is enabling developer to ignore local communities and environments
- Proposal is not sustainable

APPRAISAL:

Principle of Development

The proposed development is required to assist the existing operations at the site and to help accommodate the businesses' expansion. The site is within the settlement zone line of Holmes Chapel where there is a presumption in favour of development provided that it accords with other relevant local plan policies.

Local Plan Policy E4 allows for such expansion, provided that it relates to an existing business and accords with other relevant policies. It is proposed that Policy E4 will be replaced by Policy EG1 of the Local Plan Strategy Submission Version. This states that proposals for employment development will be supported in Principal Towns, Key Service Centres and Local Service Centres such as Holmes Chapel.

Also of relevance is the Draft Brereton Neighbourhood Plan. Policy BUS01 deals with the rural economy and states that 'development which seeks to encourage investment in the rural economy' and this will be realised by 'supporting existing local businesses within the area'.

The development is required in connection with the primary use of the site and therefore relates to an existing business operation. There are clear benefits arising from the scheme that would support job creation and the economic growth of the locality and the Borough. The proposals will therefore assist in the economic growth of the existing business and the area as a whole. It is considered that such benefits are in line with the local plan, neighbourhood plan and the aims of the NPPF and as such, the principle of the development is deemed to be acceptable.

Design - Character and Appearance

Full Planning Proposals - 'Area 13' Extension

The detailed part of this application would include the provision of a new reception area, canteen and office floor-space. This would be accommodated in 'Area 13', which is directly in front of the existing reception and entrance to the plant and the first part of the site that is visible when you enter the site from London Road.

The size of the building would be commensurate with the existing building and would be similar in terms of external appearance. It would be smaller in terms of size and overall height and as such the scale of the proposals would appear subordinate to the main plant. The proposed extension would introduce large glazed areas to an otherwise blank elevation and as such would provide significant visual improvements and better articulation of part of the main London Road elevation. The facing materials would match those of the existing plant whilst also appearing contemporary and as such, the general design, appearance, layout and

scale is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Local Plan Policies GR1 and GR2.

Demolition of 'Building 15'

Building 15 relates to an existing structure attached to the rear of the warehouse facility, which is located towards the rear of the site at the north-eastern side of the plant. The removal of Building 15 would make way for an extension to the warehouse facility at 'Area 11', which is subject of the outline part of this application.

Ancillary Development

To accommodate the above extensions, the proposal also seeks full planning permission for alterations to internal roads and servicing area, provision of a new internal HGV layby, installation of new access gates and associated boundary treatments. The provision of new HGV lay-by's at the site entrance and adjacent to 'Area 11', would improve internal circulation within the site. A new internal road is also proposed to serve the additional car parking at the front and hardstanding is proposed to the rear of the warehousing ('Area 11') to allow turning for the delivery vehicles. These proposed works would be well contained within the site and therefore the visual impact would be minima and not evident from public vantage points.

Outline Planning Proposals - Extensions to Area 12, Area 11, Area 77 and Area 37

For these elements of the proposals, only outline planning approval is sought. The submitted masterplan details how these parts of the scheme would be realised with details of scale parameters and siting. The precise design and appearance of the various elements would be for future consideration as part of a reserved matters application.

The proposed extensions to 'Area 12', which is the main manufacturing building would be sited alongside the existing packing area of the plant which is the elevation facing London Road. The scale parameters of the proposals would be commensurate with the existing building and would be capable of being designed so as to fit in with the existing appearance of the building as well as improving this elevation. Owing to the dense screen planting along the London Road frontage, any views from outside of the site would be limited.

The proposal to extend the warehouse building (Area 11) would involve increasing the projection of the warehouse at the same height and width but taking it closer to the eastern boundary of the site. This would be modest in size and scale compared to the existing plan and would not raise any issues in terms of visual impact.

It is also proposed to extend the Laboratory building (Area 77) and the building referred to as the 'Stability building' (Area 37). These buildings are located towards the far north western corner of the site. The addition to the laboratories would square off the existing building and would extend the building further into the site rather than towards the boundary with the properties recently constructed on the adjoining site. The extension to the stability building would also remain central within the site and would be modest in terms of its size and scale.

Service Buildings, Storage Tanks, Substation and Associated Plant

These would comprise of a number of small buildings positioned around the plant to assist with the expansion plans considered as part of this application. Owing to their small scale, size and ancillary nature, they would be acceptable in principle and would be acceptable in design terms subject to submission of an appropriate reserved matters application.

Additional Staff Car Parking

The additional car parking would be located to the south west of the site, near to the entrance, and also to the north adjacent to the laboratory buildings in order to accommodate additional workers. The parking to the southwest has been amended following concerns raised by the Council's Landscape and Tree Officer so that the existing screen planting at the front of the site is not undermined and retains its screening attributes. The parking adjacent to the laboratories would be within the centre of the site and would be surrounded by existing buildings. As such, these elements of the proposal would not raise concerns regarding character and appearance.

Parking, Highway Safety and Traffic Generation

Sanofi Aventis has a high level of employees accessing the site. It is the traffic impact of the proposed extensions that need to be assessed on the local road network. The nearby signal junction at the A54/A50 and the site access has been assessed as these would be likely to be directly affected by the proposals.

The site has a shift working pattern with vehicles arriving and departing at different times. There are some trips that occur outside the traditional peak hours. The applicant has undertaken a survey of existing vehicle movements and has determined the likely additional trips resulting from the proposals travelling in the peak hours.

The site access junction to the site is of a good standard and there is an existing ghost right turn lane into the site on London Road. There have been no congestion issues at the junction and the proposed extensions would not create a capacity issue at the site access. There are existing congestion problems at the A50/A54 signal junction with lengthy queues being formed. The applicant has provided figures on the traffic impact in the peak hours and has predicted this to be 0.4% at the signal junction. Whilst the Head of Strategic Infrastructure (HSI) has advised that the actual impact may be slightly higher due to using a pro rata mythology in it is clear that the resultant flows using the junction will not be sufficient to be considered as a material impact.

As amended, there is an increase of 226 car parking spaces proposed on the site. Discussions have taken place with the applicant to ensure that the level of car parking can be justified. There is an overlap in demand due to the shift system and also further employees and visitors will be on site which would result in an increase in car parking demand. In regard to car parking, although the site is accessible the most dominant mode will be by car and the Highway Authority. On this basis, the level of parking is accepted.

As such, the proposal development is acceptable in terms of highway safety, traffic generation and parking provision.

Trees and Landscaping

From London Road to the west, the site is well screened by an extensive belt of screen planting and mounding established as part of the landscape proposals when the land south of the River Croco was developed. This western screen is only broken by the access to the site although its depth is narrowed at a point north of the access. There are areas of soft landscape works and tree planting within the site. The proposals would result in the loss of some existing trees and some soft landscaped areas.

Following concern expressed by the Council's Landscape Officer, the proposals have been amended by reducing the encroachment of the proposed car park extension into the screen mounding and planted belt north of the main access. Coupled with a further landscaping scheme (which could be secured by condition), this would ensure that the existing screening of the wider site is not compromised.

With respect to trees, the submission is supported by an Arboricultural Method Statement dated 21 August 2015. The report identifies a number of forestry impacts involving tree losses and management works. The anticipated losses of trees within the site, whilst regrettable, would not be widely apparent to external view. At this stage, it appears the main losses on the site periphery would be a mature Grade Oak tree on the southern boundary. Subject to condition, the impact of the amended scheme on trees would be acceptable.

Impact on the Amenity of Adjacent Properties

The proposed development is within an existing industrial site and would not extend the development any closer to existing residential properties. The nearest residents are on the western side of London Road 180 metres to the northwest of the site and those which have recently been constructed by Bellway and Bloor Homes to 30 metres to the north. The proposals towards the north of the site would be low intensity and low impact (i.e. laboratories and car parking), which already existing at this end of the plant. As such, it is not considered that the proposal would exacerbate any impacts on neighbours and this is supported by the lack of objection from the Council's Environmental Protection Unit. Subject to conditions and appropriate detail at the reserved matters stage, the scheme is found to be acceptable in this regard.

Ecology

A pond is located within the site's southern corner, in close proximity to the proposed parking area. The submitted ecology report concludes that the pond offers potential for great crested newts (GCN), but that the likelihood of such is reduced due to the pond's isolation. Following comment from the Council's Nature Conservation Officer, these conclusions have been further supported by an additional survey, which showed that GCN were absent from the pond. As such, it is unlikely that GCN would be affected by the proposed development. Conditions are recommended in relation to breeding birds, external lighting, submission of a pre-construction badger survey and submission of a method statement to deal with the removal of some on-site Himalayan Balsam. Subject to this, the proposed development would not harm species protected by law.

Contamination

Owing to the sites previous and ongoing industrial use, the Council's Environmental Protection Unit has recommended conditions relating to land contamination, specifically which an updated conceptual model is carried out as part of the Phase 1 investigations. This would be dealt with by condition. However, the condition will need to be worded to allow the phasing of the development owing to the hybrid nature of this application. This has been agreed by the Council's Environmental Protection Unit.

Public Rights of Way (PROW)

There are no formal public rights of way that cross or adjoin the site. However, the Council's Public Rights of Way Unit has expressed an aspiration to provide a link between London Road and Station Road / Marsh Lane as part of their 'Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan'. Although this is an aspiration, it needs to be considered whether it would be reasonable to expect this development to deliver this aspiration or contribute to it.

There are no further details given about the proposed route, whether it would begin or end and likely cost of providing this infrastructure. Thus, in the absence of any detail as to how this will be delivered, it is not possible to determine whether it would be reasonable or necessary for this development to contribute towards this provision. Further it is possible to determine what impact this proposal would have on such infrastructure as the precise position is unknown.

It is important to note that this site is already well established and any additional employment growth (i.e. number of additional workers) would be relatively modest compared to the existing employees at the site,. Consequently, without further details it would be unreasonable to expect this development to deliver this footpath aspiration and would not comply with the tests outlined within the Community Infrastructure Levey Regulations.

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 pharmaceuticals. Sanofi Aventis are a major employer located within one of the local service centres in the Borough where national and local plan policy supports the expansion of existing development.

The proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and the design (subject to reserved matters), scale and form of the development 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 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. Any contributions to provide a new public right of way would not be reasonable or necessary to offset an identified harm.

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RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard 3 year time limit (Part B)**
- 2. Standard outline time limit (Part A)**
- 3. Submission of reserved matters (Part A)**
- 4. Approved Plans including amended parking**
- 5. Submission of Materials (Part B)**
- 6. Accordance with Landscaping submission (Part B)**
- 7. Landscaping implementation (Part B)**
- 8. Accordance with submitted Tree Protection Scheme and Arboricultural Method Statement (Part B)**
- 9. Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement to be submitted with future reserved matters application for Part A**
- 10. Breeding bird survey to be carried out prior to commencement of any works during nesting season**
- 11. Accordance with Flood Risk Assessment including surface water flows**
- 12. Accordance with Acoustic Report**
- 13. Details of drainage with only foul drainage to be connected to sewer**
- 14. Details of pile driving operations**
- 15. Submission of dust control measures for Part B**
- 16. Submission of details of external lighting**
- 17. Contaminated land Phase 1 with conceptual model to be submitted for Part A**
- 18. Contaminated land Phase 1 with conceptual model to be submitted for Part B**
- 19. Electric vehicle charging points to be provided in approved car parking**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Principal Planning Manager (Regulation) has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

Should this application be the subject of an appeal, authority be delegated to the Principal Planning Manager (Regulation) in consultation with the Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee 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.

