

Application No: 15/4472M

Location: Block 15 Former CTL, ALDERLEY HOUSE, ALDERLEY PARK,  
CONGLETON ROAD, NETHER ALDERLEY, MACCLESFIELD,  
CHESHIRE, SK10 4TF

Proposal: The refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 with laboratory,  
office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and  
development and associated uses (Use Class B1)

Applicant: Joe Broadley, Alderley Park Ltd.

Expiry Date: 15-Jan-2016

## **SUMMARY**

Following AstraZeneca's announced departure from Alderley Park, a series of important interventions have taken place to ensure that the impact of disinvestment is managed and mitigated. The proposals for Block 15 demonstrate a continued commitment to the parks development as a world class hub for the Life Sciences. The proposed refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 is a critical first step in this process. It will provide high-quality and flexible purpose-built facilities in the short-term for both new and existing companies at the BioHub, thus ensuring that that talent and skills associated with AstraZeneca can be re-deployed on site before becoming dissipated.

The proposed development constitutes an appropriate use of the site that seeks to enhance the availability of high-quality research and development floorspace at Alderley Park. The proposed development reduces the impact of the existing built form on the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposed development constitutes the regeneration of buildings within previously developed land. It constitutes a high-quality design that respects and enhances the character of the existing site. It will improve the landscape setting of the facilities whilst introducing new green infrastructure and future connections to the wider site.

The proposed development respects and enhances the local landscape character and visual amenity.

Overall the scheme is considered to constitute sustainable development with a firm emphasis on the economic benefits of the proposal.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Approval subject to conditions**

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

### **Allocations:**

The site is located in the North Cheshire Green Belt and is identified as a Major Development Site in the Green Belt in the Macclesfield Local Plan.

### **Background:**

As detailed within the Alderley Park Development Framework, which was endorsed by the Council on 30<sup>th</sup> June, Alderley Park is a research and development site renowned for the discovery and development of innovative new medicines. It is a key part of the North West Life Science Ecosystem. Opening more than 40 years ago, the site has a rich heritage of important advancements in medical treatments. As the lead centre for cancer research, Alderley Park currently houses the global Advanced Lead Discovery Centre, and its world class laboratories offer unique facilities for drug discovery and development.

When AstraZeneca announced its intention to transition the majority of its research and development function from Alderley Park to a new purpose-built centre in Cambridge, it was immediately recognised that the potential negative economic impacts of this decision were considerable. Following rapid intervention at Ministerial level, senior stakeholders came together, as the Alderley Park Taskforce, to devise a strategy for the site which would sustain high-value employment and investment beyond AstraZeneca's planned withdrawal.

AstraZeneca had already begun to establish a cluster of research and development life science companies on site at the BioHub. The Taskforce therefore set out a vision for the site which would build on that BioHub model, devising a strategy to re-purpose the site to offer facilities which complement existing life science resources across the region.

In March 2014, Manchester Science Partnerships (MSP) successfully bid to acquire the site, confirming its ambition to build on the BioHub concept, adapting the site's state-of-the-art research facilities to enable the development of a community of life science businesses specialising in different aspects of the drug discovery chain.

AstraZeneca's phased decant of the site is progressing and the applicant is now keen to begin the task of re-purposing the site. It is critical that work is undertaken to remodel the site for multioccupier use quickly such that talent and skills associated with AstraZeneca can be re-deployed on site before becoming dissipated and to ensure the world class facilities on site are properly maintained and do not become obsolete.

The proposed refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 is therefore a critical first step in this process. It will provide high-quality and purpose-built facilities in the short-term for both new and existing companies at the BioHub looking to expand. Whilst AstraZeneca's gradual departure is making existing facilities available, these tend to be the poorer quality stock (the redevelopment of which will shortly be the subject of a separate planning application).

The proposals will therefore create high-quality accommodation capable of attracting continued investment in the Life Sciences at Alderley Park.

## Site / Topography:

The red edge boundary of the application site measures approximately 3.7 hectares and is located within the eastern corner of the existing Mereside complex at Alderley Park. The site falls within the Ward of Chelford and the Parish of Nether Alderley.

Block 15 and its associated curtilage are located within the application boundary. This existing complex comprises a number of linked buildings (labelled A to L) which have been constructed in an *ad hoc* fashion over the latter half of the last century. The total floor area of the existing Block 15 complex is 33,783 m<sup>2</sup> (GEA) or 32,554 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA).

Initial planning permissions on the site were for a number of laboratory and office buildings with associated animal keeping facilities and workshops. Over time, further planning permissions were granted for a number of modifications and extensions to existing facilities; as well as for the erection of further laboratories and office accommodation for research and development purposes. The complex was operated by AstraZeneca until it was mothballed in 2007. It has remained vacant but in good physical condition since. The principal permitted use of the site has been for uses falling within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended).

In physical terms, the application site rises from the lowest point in the south (+103.60m AOD) to the highest point in the north-east (+111.60m AOD). The existing blocks are between 2 and 5 storeys in height (in general keeping with the scale of the wider Mereside complex) but differ in age and architectural styles, albeit each is principally built from brick masonry and concrete. As an existing facility, the complex benefits from operational access and servicing arrangements with car parking to be found adjacent. Woodlands surround the site to the north and east, with existing built development associated with the wider Mereside complex to the south and west. The application site therefore remains well screened from external views into Alderley Park. However, two key internal views to its existing entrances can be observed from the south and west.

The topography within the red line boundary is not dissimilar to the wider site, with a gently undulating landscape. From the south of the site, at the access roadway, the site levels are at their lowest and from here there is an increase in datum to the main entrance elevation. From this low point the levels steadily rise to the south heading eastwards along the access roadway, with occasional notable changes in level to provide access into and from the existing buildings. The occasional changes amount to 1.5m at loading bays and lower plan level access points, whilst the level of the roadway increases from 103.60m to 111.60m at the easternmost corner.

To the north, again the levels rise from west to east by 4.25m, a storey height, dropping as required to access points into the existing blocks. A number of 'bridge' links are also used to address sudden level changes within the landscaped curtilage of the built form.

Within the existing landscaped courtyard the storey height in level change is evident from the existing western entrance in an easterly direction.

### **Previous Developed Land:**

The majority of the site comprises 'Brownfield' land in the form of building, a surface car park, and some landscape areas.

### **Access:**

The park lies just off the A34 allowing access by road to Manchester International Airport in around 20 minutes and to Wilmslow in 7 minutes. From Alderley Edge railway station, Manchester city centre is accessible by train in 30 minutes and Manchester Airport in only 10 minutes. The Arriva 130 bus runs through the site between Macclesfield and Alderley Edge every half hour Monday to Friday and hourly on Saturdays. In addition, from Monday to Friday the 27A bus also passes through the site twice a day in either direction between Macclesfield and Knutsford.

The proposal will retain the existing road infrastructure to the perimeter of the Block 15 buildings and in addition will create a defined drop off point adjacent to the westernmost entrance. Emergency service vehicles will be able to access the full perimeter of the site and will in addition be able to access the pedestrian biased route between the conjoined buildings and the pavilion blocks J and E.

The car parking provision for the buildings is within the existing multi-storey block.

The principal pedestrian routes provide access to the western entrance and the second entrance to the east of the conjoined buildings. Full access is however afforded to the perimeter of the buildings. The axial east / west pedestrian route through the Mereside campus extends into the new landscaped space to the centre of the buildings and this linkage will be significantly enhanced as part of this development.

A separate cycle hub and shower facilities are provided within the Mereside campus and customers of Block 15 will have full access to the facilities.

Temporary waste storage and recycling space will be provided within the buildings for collection on a regular basis and removed from site.

### **Surrounding Land Uses:**

Alderley Park is located to the south of Alderley Edge and is somewhat hidden from the adjacent road network. The site has a world class setting, with Radnor Mere, a significant expanse of open water to the north and mature managed and farmed parkland to the south. Elsewhere established woodland creates a green backdrop to the site, with the extensive Beech Wood reaching northwards from the site and enveloping the Mere along its northern perimeter.

The Block 15 site also benefits from this woodland context. Views from within the site to the north and east capture the dense wooded vista, with land to the south extending out beyond the access road and Parklands building into the managed estate. The neighbouring buildings to the west of the Block 15 site are varied in scale and use, with a mix of ancillary and laboratory buildings.

## DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 with laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and development and associated uses (Use Class B1).

The proposals will bring back into use a currently vacant group of buildings to form a series of modern and adaptable laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and development purposes. This will provide grow-on space for the BioHub as well as flexible accommodation for new customers to Alderley Park. A new roof is also proposed that will create an internal atrium area providing internal breakout spaces for collaborative working with ancillary retail and café facilities to serve users of the complex.

Partial demolition works have already commenced on-site under Section 81 of the Building Act 1984 and will remove all buildings deemed unsuitable for refurbishment. In total, this removes 12,654 m<sup>2</sup> (GEA) or 12,162 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA) of floorspace which subsequently creates an opportunity to open up the site as well as create new built development including an atrium roof, new entrance features and some glazed upper accommodation. The proposed new build floorspace totals 9,312 m<sup>2</sup> (GEA) or 9,144 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA) which is considerably less than that which is being removed. All remaining floorspace will be refurbished in accordance with the specifications set out in the Design and Access Statement. Overall, the total floorspace of the proposed Block 15 complex is 30,441 m<sup>2</sup> (GEA) or 29,519 m<sup>2</sup> (GIA).

The layout of the proposed Block 15 complex largely mirrors that of the existing facility given that the majority of the retained floorspace will be refurbished only. The biggest change to the layout will result from a new atrium with associated entrance features.

The scale of the proposed Block 15 complex will also remain essentially the same to that of the existing facility. As detailed above, the total proposed floor area is less than that for the existing complex. Furthermore, the total volume of the proposed facility is *circa* 3% less than that which exists now (see Section 5 below for further details). With regard to the height of buildings, only

Blocks E and I are proposed to be increased through the addition of a glazed upper level of accommodation.

The proposed development will retain as much of the existing brickwork as possible, allowing for repair works and cleaning. The new atrium roof will be covered with a metal standing seam product and will be finished with a recessed aluminium channel eaves profile. To the underside of the roof structure a lacquered plywood finish will be used internally, which will switch to an external grade plywood finish externally. A machined timber finish will also be utilised in the façade of the two new projecting pods which nestle beneath the cantilevered atrium roof. A curtain-wall system will be used on various elevations incorporating expressed vertical timber fins. Finally, the new lightweight glazed extensions will be designed to appear as simple vertical extensions, with limited interface at the junction between the head of the curtain-wall and roof. Low e-glass will be used to form new glazed elements here and elsewhere in the proposed scheme.

A landscaping strategy for the site has been designed to create three interconnected landscaped areas that complement the changes to the main building fabric. These include new landscaping around the main entrance, within the proposed central courtyard, and around the newly proposed secondary entrance. Movement lines will be focused on these spaces and entrances allowing connection to the wider Mereside campus and surrounding parking areas. It is intended that the proposed landscaping strategy will establish a new campus character around the building and its approaches, with an emphasis on introducing new planting and lawn areas that will help to create a calm and relaxed working environment. Spill out and gathering spaces are proposed to allow workers the opportunity to make full use of external areas, whilst new tree lined avenues define key pedestrian walkways. The landscaping strategy is indicative at this stage and a detailed scheme will be required to be brought forward in accordance with the principles set out therein.

### **Access:**

The proposed development will retain the existing road infrastructure surrounding the site but will create a defined drop-off point adjacent to the western entrance. The east to west route that currently runs through the Mereside campus (which will be enhanced for pedestrian usage as part of the wider site proposals) extends into and terminates within the new landscaped space to the centre of the Block 15 complex and will be significantly enhanced as part of the proposals. Furthermore, the scheme has been designed to provide fully inclusive access to all users including improved disabled and emergency service access. Separate cycle and car parking facilities are already provided within the Mereside campus to which users of the proposed development will have full access; and it is also intended that the existing site-wide waste management strategy be extended to cover the proposed facility with temporary waste storage and recycling space to be provided within the buildings for collection and removal from site on a regular basis.

### **RELEVANT HISTORY**

Following a review of the Council's records it is evident that there have been a number of applications for numerous buildings, and significant landscaping improvements across the Alderley Park Estate, however these are not relevant to this application proposal.

### **POLICIES**

By virtue of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan for Cheshire East currently comprises the saved policies from the Congleton Borough (January 2005), Crewe and Nantwich (February 2005) and Macclesfield Local Plan (January 2004).

### **Local Plan Policy:**

The application site lies within the Green Belt as defined by the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan. The relevant Local Plan policies are considered to be: -

#### Environment

- NE2 Protection of Local Landscapes
- NE5 Historical landscapes, parklands and gardens;
- NE11 Nature Conservation;
- NE17 Major developments in the countryside
- BE1 Good Design;
- BE21-24 Archaeology;
- BE22 Scheduled Monuments;

#### Green Belt

- GC1 New development in the Green Belt;
- GC4 Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt;

#### Recreation

- RT7 Cycleways, bridleways and footpaths;

#### Employment

- E1 Employment Land Policies;

#### Transport

- T1 General Transportation policy;
- T2 Public Transport;
- T5 Provision for cyclists;
- T6 Highways improvements and traffic management;

#### Implementation

- IMP1 Development sites;
- IMP2 Transport Measures;

#### Development Control

- DC1 High quality design for new build;
- DC5 Measures to improve natural surveillance and reduce crime
- DC6 Circulation and Access;
- DC8 Requirements for Landscaping;
- DC9 Tree Protection
- DC17 Water resources
- DC18 Sustainable drainage systems
- DC63 Contaminated land

## Other Material Considerations:

### NPPF

Since the NPPF was published, the saved policies within the Macclesfield Borough Council Local Plan are still applicable but should be weighted according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The Local Plan policies outlined above are consistent with the NPPF and therefore should be given full weight.

- The NPPF sets out a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 defines sustainable development as having three dimensions: economic, social and environmental;
- Paragraph 9 of the Framework explains that pursuing sustainable development involves *'seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life'*;
- Paragraph 14 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be *'seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking'*;
- Paragraph 17 outlines 12 core land-use planning principles that should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking;
- Paragraph 18 of the NPPF sets out that: *'the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity'*;
- At paragraph 19 identifies that *'the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth'*;
- Paragraph 21 identifies a number of measures for local planning authorities to consider when drawing up their plans to assist investment in business, which it is identified *'should not be over burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations'*;
- Amongst the measures identified in paragraph 21, is the need to support existing business sectors and to build in flexibility to be able to respond to changes in economic circumstances;
- Paragraph 32 indicates that developments generating significant amounts of movement should be supported by a Transport Statement/Assessment;
- Paragraph 24 states that local planning authorities should apply the sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up to date Local Plan;
- Paragraph 26 requires an assessment of impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment and the impact on town centre vitality and viability;
- Paragraph 56 highlights that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development;
- Paragraph 61 sets out that development should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment;
- Paragraph 80 outlines the five purposes the Green Belt serves;
- Paragraph 109 states the planning system should contribute to the enhancement of the natural and local environment and protect and enhance value landscapes, minimise impact on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible;

- Paragraph 111 sets out that *'planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed (brownfield land)';and*
- Paragraph 118 states Council's should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity through principles such as mitigating and compensating for significant harm that cannot be avoided.

### **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP):**

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

Policy MP 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
 Policy PG 1 Overall Development Strategy  
 Policy PG 2 Settlement Hierarchy  
 Policy PG 3 Green Belt  
 Policy PG 6 Spatial Distribution of Development  
 Policy SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East  
 Policy SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles  
 Policy CS29 Alderley Park Opportunity Site  
 Policy IN 1 Infrastructure  
 Policy IN 2 Developer Contributions  
 Policy EG 1 Economic Prosperity  
 Policy EG 3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites  
 Policy EG 5 Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce  
 Policy SE 1 Design  
 Policy SE 2 Efficient Use of Land  
 Policy SE 3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
 Policy SE 4 The Landscape  
 Policy SE 5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland  
 Policy SE 6 Green Infrastructure  
 Policy SE 7 The Historic Environment  
 Policy SE 8 Renewable and Low Carbon Energy  
 Policy SE 9 Energy Efficient Development  
 Policy SE 13 Flood Risk and Water Management  
 Policy CO 1 Sustainable Travel and Transport  
 Policy CO 2 Enabling Business Growth Through Transport Infrastructure  
 Policy CO 4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

### **Supplementary Planning Documents:**

Supplementary Planning Guidance provides a more detailed explanation of how strategic policies of the Development Plan can be practically implemented. The following SPGs are relevant and have been included in the Local Development Scheme, with the intention to retain these documents as 'guidance' for local planning purposes:

- The Alderley Park Development Framework (June 2015);
- The Nature Conservation Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (October 2006);
- Supplementary Planning Guidance on s106 (Planning) Agreements (May 2004);
- Trees and Development Guidelines (February 2004);

- The Cheshire East Employment Land Review (March 2012);
- The Cheshire East Economic Development Strategy (June 2011);
- The Local Plan Strategy Employment Background Paper (March 2014);
- The SQW Report on the Economic Impact of Disinvestment (January 2014);
- The SQW Assessment on Future Demand (February 2014);
- The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012); and
- The Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014)

Circulars of most relevance include:

- ODPM 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation;- 11/95 The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions; and
- Circular 02/99: Environmental Impact Assessment

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011.

Relevant legislation also includes the EC Habitats Directive and the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 2010.

## **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

**Highways:** Comments awaited

**United Utilities:** No objections, subject to conditions requiring a separate system for foul and surface water; with foul connecting into the sewer and surface water details to be submitted.

**Environment Agency:** No objections, subject to conditions dealing with the submission of a remediation strategy detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

**Environmental Health:** No objections subject to conditions requiring the submission of an Environmental Management Plan. A travel plan is also suggested, as well as the provision of Electric Vehicle Infrastructure. As the application area has a history of pharmaceutical research and development use and therefore the land may be contaminated. This site is within 250m of a known landfill site or area of ground that has the potential to create gas. The Report submitted in support of the application recommends further gas monitoring be carried out. We are in agreement with this and would also advise that post demolition site investigation works be carried out. A Contamination Land Phase 2 report will be required.

**English Heritage:** No objection in principle, subject to a scheme of archaeological recording/investigation being carried out.

**Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service:** No objections - the proposed works are not considered to be of such a nature as to require any archaeological mitigation.

**Public Rights of Way:** Advises that the proposed development does not appear to affect the public right of way.

## **VIEWS OF THE PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL**

**Nether Alderley Parish Council:** Raise no objections.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

None received.

## **APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The applicant has submitted the following documents, details of which can be read on file:

- Supporting Planning Statement;
- Design and Access Statement;
- EIA Screening Report;
- Ecological Assessment;
- Transport Statement;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment;
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessment;
- Tree Quality Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement;
- Desk Based Archaeological Assessment; and
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Statement.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

Full Planning Permission is sought for the refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 with laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and development and associated uses.

## **PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT**

### Green Belt

The site is located within the Green Belt therefore, policy GC1 of the Macclesfield Local Plan applies. Policy GC1 states that “*within the Green Belt, approval will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the construction of new buildings unless it is for [inter alia] ... development within Major Developed Sites which is in accordance with Policy GC4.*” Policy GC4 subsequently confirms that the Council will grant planning permission for limited redevelopment proposals within these sites (including Alderley Park) provided they meet the following criteria;

- *Have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it, and where possible have less;*
- *Contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts;*
- *Not exceed the height of existing buildings; and*

- *Not occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings unless this would achieve a reduction in height which would benefit visual amenity.*

### Impact on Openness of the Green Belt

One of the two essential characteristics of the Green Belt is its openness. The NPPF confirms that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate in the Green Belt **except** where this comprises *inter alia* the “*limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development*”. This essentially corresponds with the first criteria of ‘saved’ MBLP Policy GC4. Importantly however, the NPPF states that the extension or alteration of a building **can** be considered appropriate development “*provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building*”. Both exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt apply to this case.

As detailed within the supporting Design and Access Statement, the gross external and internal floor areas for the proposed Block 15 complex represent a *circa* 10% decrease from the existing floor areas. Furthermore, even with the inclusion of a new internal atrium, the demolition of the poorer quality buildings results in a volume *circa* 3% less than the existing building’s volume. Consequently, the proposed reduced size and scale of Block 15 will ensure that the proposals do not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and do not result in a disproportionate addition over and over the size of the original building in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.

	Total GEA (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total GIA (m <sup>2</sup> )	Total Volume (m <sup>3</sup> )
Existing Block 15	33,783	32,554	132,663
Proposed Block 15	30,441	29,519	128,314

With regard to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, the proposed development is entirely within previously developed land and so will not result in the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; it will not lead to neighbouring towns merging or encroachment into the countryside; it will have no impact on the setting and special character of historic towns; and will assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Consequently, the proposed development will have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it. In fact, it will have less of an impact in full accordance with ‘saved’ Policy GC4. The same conclusions apply to ‘saved’ MBLP Policy GC8 which relates to the reuse and adaption of existing buildings in the countryside for commercial uses.

The objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt are a local requirement and not explicitly included within the NPPF. Furthermore, they are listed in MBLP Policy GC2 which is an expired policy. Consequently, there is no requirement for the proposed development to contribute to the objectives for the use of land in the Green Belt as stated.

The vast majority of the proposed Block 15 complex will retain the same building heights as the existing facility. The only exceptions to this are the proposed single glazed upper levels of accommodation to Blocks E and I which are required to make the internal spaces usable thus maximising their potential employment offer. These existing blocks are currently two of the lowest buildings on-site at 3 storeys and are surrounded by other buildings of 4 and 5 storeys. Therefore, whilst an increase in the height of two blocks is proposed, these remain under the height of the tallest existing buildings on-site and within the overall scale of the complex.

The footprint of the existing Block 15 complex is 12,202 m<sup>2</sup>. When taking into account the demolition works currently being undertaken, the footprint of the proposed Block 15 complex (including the new cantilevering pods proposed at both entrances) is 9,749 m<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the footprint of the proposed Block 15 complex is therefore 20% smaller than that of the existing.

The scheme is therefore considered to be in accordance with Green Belt policies.

## **ECONOMIC / SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

The proposals will create *circa* 30,000 m<sup>2</sup> of high-quality laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) floorspace (Use Class B1) to meet the requirements of modern businesses and companies looking to invest in Alderley Park.

The re-use and improvement of existing facilities will ensure that high-quality space is available in the short-term for both existing and new companies. The ability to provide this fantastic facility in the short-term will ensure that talent and skills associated with AstraZeneca can be re-deployed on-site before becoming dissipated thus ensuring sustainable economic growth in accordance with paragraphs 18 and 19 of the NPPF.

Once fully occupied, the proposed development has the potential to provide for *circa* 1,000 highly skilled jobs in accordance with the Core Planning Principles of the NPPF to build a strong and competitive economy.

The proposals also support economic growth in rural areas and the creation of jobs and prosperity through the growth and expansion of existing businesses in accordance with paragraph 28 of the NPPF.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### Layout, Design and Amenity

The application seeks full planning permission for the refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 with laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and development and associated uses (Use Class B1).

In order to remove buildings unsuitable for re-use and to provide a more logical and legible site plan, certain buildings will be demolished.

The net effect of the demolition work listed above means that a logically planned series of buildings can be refurbished and clear axial routes to and through the site can be established. In effect, creating a group of buildings to the west, conjoined and covered with a new and

grand atrium space. To the east, two pavilion buildings; sit adjacent a new linear landscaped space - at the easternmost edge of which two sites for future development close the vista.

The removal of the westernmost extension to Block G along with the removal of some planting and trees in this key location means that an appropriately scaled new entrance can be created. The existing building entrance both here, and generally, are subtly scaled and somewhat hidden from view. The proposal provides a highly visible entrance into Block 15.

This new entrance building will accommodate office space at the upper levels, but at the ground floor will house a new café facility. Each of the retained buildings will be refurbished to a high standard. New windows and curtainwall will be provided throughout and where necessary brick and façade repairs will be undertaken.

With occasional exception services plant space will be accommodated within the footprint of existing plant enclosures, which will be re-clad or remodelled as required.

The major new addition within the proposal is the atrium roof. This key feature of the scheme creates the upper envelope for the new open space which will become the heart of the project and define the sense of place for this new development. This space will be used by the buildings customers and visitors throughout the day and as mentioned above will accommodate lettable customer space, breakout work space, collaborative open meeting space and seating adjacent to the new café area.

Elsewhere, the refurbishment of Block E incorporates a new light weight glazed upper level of accommodation. This provides a potential office space to be co-located with either a laboratory or manufacturing (assembly) space at ground floor.

Brickwork facades will be repaired where necessary and cleaned. Window units and curtainwalling will be replaced throughout with modern polyester powder coated aluminium framed systems and low e glazing.

The atrium roof will be covered with a metal standing seam product and will be finished with a recessed aluminium channel eaves profile. To the underside of the roof structure a lacquered plywood finish will be used internally, which will switch to an external grade plywood finish externally and the supporting expressed column structures painted.

The new atrium roof and particularly its plywood soffit creates a starting point for a palette of materials which will be visually sustainable, natural and complimentary to the existing 'buff' coloured brickwork and occasionally expressed concrete frames. A machined timber finish will also be utilised in the façade of the two new projecting pods which nestle beneath the cantilevered atrium roof. Here, the curtainwall system will incorporate expressed vertical timber fins, creating a dramatic façade composition, but additionally functioning to reduce the amount of solar gain into the space behind.

The application site is located on the eastern edge of the Mereside complex and is surrounded by large-scale existing development to the south and west and woodland to the north and east. It is not visible from Congleton Road; nor to any historic assets, or visually sensitive receptors in and around Alderley

Park. Furthermore, the existing Block 15 complex provides no architectural merit, or significance in itself and is rather outdated in appearance. Consequently, and in accordance with the Development Framework, the site is able to accommodate a more contemporary and innovative design appropriate to its secluded location.

It is considered that the layout provided would be acceptable. Due to Block 15's location within the park, it is good distance away from any neighbouring properties, it is not considered that there would be any impact from the building on neighbouring properties.

#### Landscaping Setting and Trees

Block 15 is located within the PDL boundary and is surrounded by built development and woodland. The proposed refurbishment and partial redevelopment will therefore have no impact upon the historic parklands. However, to consider the impact of the proposals on existing trees and woodland, a Tree Quality Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement has been undertaken to set out the extent of tree loss and the associated tree protection measures, arboricultural working methods, and management recommendations to accompany the proposals. Comments are awaited on these surveys / reports from the Arboricultural Officer and will be provided prior to the SPB meeting.

A high-quality landscaping strategy is proposed which seeks to create three inter-connected landscaped zones that complement the proposed scheme whilst also connecting the site to the wider areas of Alderley Park. In accordance with 'saved' MBLP Policy DC8, the proposed landscaping strategy helps to achieve a better balance between open space and built form; as well as enhance the quality of the layout, setting and design of the proposed development. The landscaped areas have a clear purpose to provide attractive arrival, circulation and breakout spaces for all users of the facility, with appropriate species to be planted throughout. The applicant will retain control of the management and maintenance arrangements for all landscaping spaces. The proposals accord with Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policies DC8 and NE17.

#### Archaeology

The Development Control Archaeologist from the Cheshire Archaeology Planning Advisory Service has been consulted with regard to the proposals and the proposed works are not considered to be of such a nature as to require any archaeological mitigation.

#### Environmental Amenity

The Environmental Health Officers comments are noted. It is considered that the suggested conditions are acceptable which seek to: -

- Ensure that an Environmental Management Plan is provided. The plan shall address the environmental impact in respect of air quality and noise on existing residents during the demolition and construction phase. In particular the plan shall show mitigation measures in respect of;
  - Noise and disturbance during the construction phase including piling techniques, vibration and noise limits, monitoring methodology,

screening, a detailed specification of plant and equipment to be used and construction traffic routes

- Waste Management: There shall be no burning of materials on site during demolition / construction
- Dust generation caused by construction activities and proposed mitigation methodology.
- Details of the phased occupation of the site to protect new occupants.

A travel plan and Electric Vehicle Infrastructure should also be provided. As the application is for new laboratories and offices, which are a sensitive end use and could be affected by any contamination present, means that a Contamination Land Phase II report will be required.

### Ecology

An Ecological Assessment has been undertaken to provide an assessment of any ecological issues associated with redevelopment of the Block 15 complex. The assessment demonstrates that the site is not covered by, or adjacent to any statutorily protected sites. The application site is adjacent to two non-statutorily protected Sites of Biological Importance (SBI). There is a minor risk of incidental disturbance to habitats within the SBIs during construction and therefore fencing is recommended along the eastern site boundary to ensure that vehicle movements and the storage of materials do not affect habitats. Comments are awaited from the nature conservation Officer.

### **Highways**

Although the Strategic Infrastructure Manager has yet to formally comment on the proposals, it is understood that no objections are to be made. The key issue will be as follows: -

- The traffic impact of the development on the local infrastructure

Key Principle 6 of the Development Framework seeks to improve public access to Alderley Park. Whilst this relates more to the masterplanning of the wider site, consideration of vehicular and pedestrian accessibility, as well as impacts upon the local highway network arising from the proposed development of the Block 15 complex have been considered by Vectos in a Transport Statement. This has confirmed that the site is accessible by a range of transport modes, with a number of leisure and retail facilities being present on-site already (as well as those ancillary facilities proposed within the development and to form part of future development proposals). In particular, the site is accessible by bus with services connecting to Alderley Park and providing links to key destinations such as Manchester, Macclesfield and Knutsford in accordance with 'saved' MBLP Policies T2 and DC6. Furthermore, improvements to disabled access have been incorporated into the designs in accordance with 'saved' MBLP Policies T4 and DC6.

With regard to impacts upon the local highway network, whilst not in use at present, the Block 15 complex nevertheless represents an existing development whose use could restart immediately without requiring any planning approval. On this basis, and when considering the slight reduction in floor area, the proposed development is likely to have no material impact on the local highway network. Furthermore, the existing access points from Congleton Road will be retained as well as access to the site from the internal road network within Alderley

Park in accordance with 'saved' MBLP Policies T6 and DC6. In addition, the existing car parking and cycle storage facilities and vehicular service arrangements will be re-utilised by the proposed development in accordance with 'saved' MBLP Policies T5 and DC6.

Further comments from the Strategic Infrastructure Manager will be provided prior to the SPB meeting.

## EIA

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Request was submitted. Following review, it was concluded that the application does not need to be supported by an Environmental Statement (ES). Notwithstanding this, a full EIA has been submitted as part of the proposals for the wider site (application reference 15/5401M). Whilst supporting a separate planning application, that ES considers the proposals for Block 15 cumulatively therein.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION**

It is considered (subject to the comments awaited from outstanding consultees), that the proposals can be approved. The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in this Green Belt location and public benefits arise from the proposal in respect of securing and expanding the Life Science related businesses, significant investment to the local economy, along with direct and indirect employment.

The NPPF is a material consideration to this planning application and sets a clear presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The **benefits** to be generated by the proposal include:

- The proposed development constitutes an appropriate use of the site that seeks to enhance the availability of high-quality research and development floorspace at Alderley Park;
- The proposed development constitutes the retention and enhancement of an existing employment facility, seeking to bring it up-to-date and back into use in the short term;
- The proposed development reduces the impact of the existing built form on the openness of the Green Belt;
- The proposed development constitutes the regeneration of buildings within previously developed land;
- The proposed development constitutes a high-quality design that respects and enhances the character of the existing site;
- The proposed development seeks to maximise the use of sustainable modes of transport;
- The proposed development will improve the landscape setting of the facilities whilst introducing new green infrastructure and future connections to the wider site;
- The proposed development will protect and enhance the ecological conditions of the site; and
- The proposed development respects and enhances the local landscape character and visual amenity.

With regard to the other material considerations relevant to the proposal, landscape; heritage and ecology have all been assessed and mitigation proposed to offset any impact.

The traffic generated by any additional commercial uses proposed will be mitigated through a comprehensive approach to green travel.

The economic case is compelling. The development will significantly enhance employment growth in a high quality and sustainable environment.

The proposed refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 is a critical first step in this process. It will provide high-quality and flexible purpose-built facilities in the short-term for both new and existing companies at the BioHub thus ensuring that that talent and skills associated with AstraZeneca can be re-deployed on site before becoming dissipated.

When the impacts are weighed up against the significant economic benefits and sustainability credentials of the proposal, and taking into consideration mitigation proposed, the balance weighs strongly in favour of granting planning permission and should therefore be granted without delay.

The proposal is not considered to constitute a significant departure from policy, therefore, there would be no need to be refer the application to the Secretary of State should the Council be minded to approve it.

#### Application for Full Planning

#### RECOMMENDATION:

1. Commencement of development (3 years)
2. Development in accord with approved plans
3. Submission of samples of building materials
4. Landscaping - submission of details
5. Landscaping (implementation)
6. At least 10% of the energy supply of the development shall be secured from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources
7. Travel Plan to include Electric Vehicle infrastructure within the car parking area
8. Submission of Environmental Management Plan - to include details of mitigation for noise and disturbance, waste management, and dust generation.
9. Travel Plan
10. Electric Vehicle Infrastructure
11. Contaminated land
12. Foul and surface water shall be drained on separate systems.

13. Surface water drainage scheme to be submitted

