

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD UPDATE

APPLICATION NO: 15/5401M

LOCATION: Alderley Park, Congleton Road, Nether Alderley, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 4TF

PROPOSAL: Full planning permission for the demolition of a number of specified buildings; and outline planning permission with all matters reserved for a mixed-use development comprising the following: • Up to 38,000 sqm of laboratory, offices and light manufacturing floorspace (Use Class B1); • Up to 1,500 sqm of retail, café, restaurant, public house and / or crèche floorspace (Use Classes A1, A3, A4 and D1); • Up to 275 residential dwellinghouses, where up to 60 units could be for retirement / care (Use Classes C2 and C3); • Up to a 100 bed hotel (Use Class C1); • Sport and recreational facilities including an indoor sports centre of up to a 2,000 sqm (Use Class D2); • Up to 14,000 sqm of multi-storey car parking providing up to 534 spaces (sui generis); • A waste transfer station of up to 900 sqm of (sui generis); • Public realm and landscaping; • Other associated infrastructure

CONSULTATIONS:

Sport England – Have confirmed they are happy the submitted Agronomy report confirms the will be a qualitative replacement as well as a quantitative replacement of facilities. They therefore remove their holding objection but recommend a series of conditions covering the following matters:

1. Pitch specifications taking into account the findings of the Agronomy Report and to comply with FA/ECB technical standards
2. Indoor sport specifications to comply with NGB/SE standards
3. Viability Assessment to demonstrate the sustainability of the sporting provision (options 1 and 2) – the Needs Assessment says the 3G AGP will help the viability of the sports facilities so we need an assessment that either confirms that or provides evidence that option 1 is sustainable
4. Management and Maintenance Plan

Highways – Further to their reported comments, they have now confirmed that a contribution of £250,000 is sought towards the improvement to the A34 Congleton Road/A537 Chelford Road junction.

Landscape Architect – Taking each area in turn and commenting on the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) and proposed building height parameters plan and Design Principles:

Mereside – The proposed replacement buildings are no higher than existing buildings on the site, and given the nature of this part of the site, there should be little to no visual impact.

Southern Campus - This part of the site is more visually sensitive and has been the subject of further discussion, and the submission of further supporting information, and resulted in changes to the parameters plan and design principles. Changes made include a reduction in building height on the south western part of the site (“the Ride”) and increase in the parkland planting in this area to screen and filter views of the development; an additional 10m buffer to the kitchen garden area where it comes close to the site boundary; a no build/no gardens buffer to the Serpentine and an increased buffer area within the walled garden.

Suggested conditions include:

1. Landscape Masterplans to be submitted for all three main parts of the site, to include phasing and management arrangements.
2. Requirement for a landscape masterplan for the 170 acres of woodland.
3. Details to be included in the reserved matters application(s) including POS, public/private areas, planting plans etc.
4. Landscape implementation & five year replacement.

Heritage and Design Officer – Commenting on the proposals for the Southern Campus, the illustrative design and layout has not been considered as all matters of design and external appearance are reserved. Comments therefore are restricted to the “Design Principles” document and parameters plan. In general the approach is supported and should provide a good degree of control over future development. There are some concerns about elements of the proposed development, including the proposed new building in the water garden, and the principle of building in the walled garden, however in general most elements are considered acceptable.

In conclusion there is some ‘harm’ identified in the south campus to designated and non-designated assets but the harm is considered less than substantial and should be out-weighted by the public benefits of the proposals. Weight can be added to the expected enhancements and benefits of the scheme and the certainty the proposals bring to the site in preserving these assets. Conditions are recommended as follows:

1. Research and recording of the history and historic development of the site as recommended by the heritage statement.
2. Condition/Method statement for repair to be agreed
3. Restrict development on the site until repairs have been carried out sufficient to retain heritage assets on the site.

REPRESENTATIONS:

The National Trust – Detailed comments have been received, but in summary they welcome the proposals for Alderley Park, as:

“there is the potential to secure a development that is of lasting benefit and that accords with the Development Framework, whilst respecting and enhancing the special qualities of the whole site.”

They do however have concerns about how the benefits are secured as many of the proposed improvements are outside the application site boundary.

East Cheshire Ramblers – The proposals are in line with their proposals for the site given during the consultation stages of this application and are supported. They recommend the strategic routes are formally adopted, and that one of the secondary routes on the western boundary be improved for pedestrians/cyclists to reach the end of the Alderley Edge bypass.

Additional letters of support have been received, including those from:

Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)
Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell President & Vice Chancellor of Manchester University
Dr Menelas N Pangalos Executive Vice President, Astra Zeneca

In addition a further letter of objection has been received from Nether Alderley Rural Protection Association (NARPA) in response to the applicant's follow up letter. In summary:

- They do not feel that the new housing development is in character with Nether Alderley
- They dispute the distances to the Alderley edge Heath Centre and the ability of medical facilities to meet the demands of the new development.
- They feel the Mereside carpark is not justified and should be removed.
- They consider the number of employees given for the site as 7000 is incorrect and it should be 4000.
- They dispute the impact on the local highway network which they feel will be significant.
- Parking in Alderley Edge is problem now and the development will only make it worse.
- The Secretary of State should determine the application.
- They feel the viability report should be a public document.
- The Mereside car park is not Previously Developed Land.

Whilst the majority of these points are considered to have been addressed in the officer's report the issue of the Mereside carpark and numbers of employees is addressed below.

KEY ISSUES

Landscape Impact – The Council’s Landscape Architect has confirmed that following the submission of additional supporting information, and revisions made to the height parameters plan and design principles documents (which would form part of any approved documents), that sufficient control can be made to ensure that subsequent reserved matters applications, for in particular the residential elements of the scheme, to have an acceptable landscape impact. Further conditions are recommended.

For clarity the height parameters plan sets the maximum heights for buildings in different parts of the site, with lower heights being appropriate on the southern and eastern parts of the Southern Campus where the site is more visually sensitive. In general building heights elsewhere are comparable with buildings existing in these areas.

The design principles document sets out a number of criteria subsequent reserved matters applications will need to adhere to. This includes areas of “no build”, buffer zones to boundaries and guidance on layout, scale, appearance, landscape and access in each character area.

Heritage Impact – Whilst there are some concerns about possible development in the walled garden and the building in the water garden, these matters need to be weighed against the many positive elements of the scheme, including finding a use for several heritage assets that are currently unused and are likely to fall into disrepair. As the application is in outline it is difficult to fully assess impacts at this stage, but it is considered that the parameters do give adequate control over future development, although attention to detail at the reserved matters stage will be needed to ensure the quality of development respects the sensitive nature of this part of the site.

Public Access – The National Trust have raised the issue of how will the proposed improvements to public access be realised. All of the improvements on site can be secured by condition as although many lie outside the site edged red, they are within the site edged blue. Improvements off site will be secured by a financial contribution listed under the Heads of Terms.

Highways have suggested a new cycle link should be secured from the site onto the roundabout at the end of the Alderley Edge bypass. This has been looked at but is not considered appropriate for two reasons. Firstly the access would necessitate crossing the roundabout onto the far side to access the cycle way with no traffic control which is not ideal, especially at peak times. There is a traffic controlled site access close by which cyclists could utilize, that would only involve using the main A34 for a short distance which is considered preferable. In addition a number of trees would need to be removed along the site boundary, and a gap created in the wall. Both are not ideal and should be avoided.

Sporting facilities – Sport England have now removed their holding objection and have raised no objections subject to suggested conditions. The Agronomy report submitted by the applicant confirms that the proposed

replacement sports pitches will be at least equal to if not superior in quality to those existing.

Mereside carpark – Whilst this matter is already discussed in the officer's report, it is important to highlight comments made at Strategic Planning Board on the 18th February. At the meeting held to discuss the material to be consulted upon as part of the Local Plan Strategy, the plan showing the extent of Previously Developed Land (PDL) at Alderley Park was discussed, and it was recommended to remove the Mereside area from this plan, on the basis it was only approved as a temporary car park.

There is now some uncertainty as to whether the area in question is or is not PDL given previous views through the endorsed Framework. Therefore whether development of this area is "appropriate" or "inappropriate Development" in the Green Belt, the following important factors need to be considered:

- The proposal is to continue the use of this car park, which has been in existence certainly since 2007, and there are no proposals to build on this land, which would of course require a further application.
- The car park is in the Green Belt and whether the development is or is not "appropriate" development the impact on openness is the main issue.
- The car park has a limited visual impact, and is certainly not seen from outside the site, and even if it is not seen as being "appropriate", the need for the car parking to re-enforce the Life Science proposals are considered to constitute Very Special Circumstances in any event.
- If the car park were to be removed then the 800+ parking spaces would need to be found elsewhere. There are no realistic options for an open car park in the Mereside area, as all would have a greater visual/openness issue than the existing location.
- If additional 'decks' were put on the proposed multi storey car park (and two would be needed to replace the numbers lost) there would be a significant visual impact and it would add significantly to overall costs and therefore impact on viability.

In short it is considered a strong case has been put forward to retain the car park as an essential part of the Life Science proposals.

Employees/residents on site – There is a concern that the number of employees on site is mis-represented in the application, and therefore the overall impact of the development, especially on highways will therefore be greater than indicated. The application states that there were some 7,000 employees on site at the "height" of Astra Zeneca occupation, whereas NARPA state is was little over 4,000. This has been examined, and whilst Astra Zeneca did employ some 4,000 people, Syngenta, a subsidiary company of Astra Zeneca, employed a further 2,000 people and there were at least 1,000 people employed as contractors and suppliers on site, hence the 7,000 quoted.

CONCLUSION:

There are **no** changes to the officers recommendation, but some of the conditions recommended by the Landscape Architect & Heritage & Design Officer (most are already covered in the report) and those recommended by Sport England are recommended to be included should Members be Minded to Approve the application.