

Application No: 16/5371N

Location: Admiral Court, ELECTRA WAY, CREWE

Proposal: The proposed construction of a 4 storey office building extending to 6,136 square metres and provision of 182 car parking spaces.

Applicant: Miss Isla Longmuir, Pochin Developments Ltd.

Expiry Date: 07-Feb-2017

## **SUMMARY**

The principle of employment development is supported within the NPPF and the statements made by the Planning Minister in relation to 'Planning for Growth' and a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Furthermore employment development on this site is supported within the emerging Cheshire East Development Strategy and the site forms part of a long standing allocation within the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan. Therefore the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

The development would provide important economic benefits in terms of new jobs within Crewe and this weighs in favour of this application.

The development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity, trees the highway network, flood risk/drainage, ecology or the wider landscape.

The design is considered to be acceptable in this location.

It is considered that the benefits outweigh any harm identified and as such the application is recommended for approval.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Approve with conditions subject to completion of a Unilateral Undertaking**

## **PROPOSAL**

This is a full application for the erection of a four storey office building, together with car parking (182 spaces) and landscaping.

The proposed development would take the form of an L-shaped block which would be sited to the north of the plot. The development would provide 6,136sq.m of office space.

The vehicular access to serve the site would be taken from Emperor Way to the west of the site.

The application includes the provision of 182 car parking spaces to the front of the building together with a small ancillary building housing a generator, substation and bin store.

## **SITE DESCRIPTION**

The application site extends to 0.82 hectares and is an area undeveloped land located on the northern side of Electra Way to the east of Emperor Way. The site lies within the Crewe Settlement Boundary.

To the east of the site on the opposite side of Emperor Way is a flat roofed five storey hotel with a three storey office building to the rear. To the west of the site is a three storey office building with hipped roof. To the northern boundary of the site is an area of vegetation/landscaping and land levels drop down to an existing watercourse which is located to the north.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

P07/1481 – Reserved Matters - Erection of New Office Development with Associated Parking Facilities and Landscaping, to include 2no. Two Storey Units and 1no. Three Storey Unit Providing a Flexible Mix of Office Spaces – Approved 9<sup>th</sup> January 2008

P06/0324 - Environmental Information for Part Full/Part Outline Application for the Erection of 7,910 sq m B1 Office Development and Full Application for Erection of 114 Bedroom Hotel with Associated Car Parking, Access, Servicing and Landscaping Arrangements -

P06/0313 - Part Full/Part Outline Application for the Erection of 7,910 sq m B1 Office Development – Approved 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2006

P99/1021 - Outline Application for Office Development and Associated Access and Landscaping – Approved 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2000

P99/0927 - Screening opinion for outline application for office development.

7/13981 - New access road and sewers including new junction with improvement of A534 Crewe Road – Approved 19<sup>th</sup> March 1987

7/11951 - Development of a high technology site – Approved 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1985

## **POLICIES**

### **National Planning Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of particular relevance are paragraphs:

14 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

17 – Core planning principles

18 – 22 Building a Strong Competitive Economy

28 – Supporting a Prosperous Local Economy

109-125 – Natural environment

**Local Plan policy**

BE.1 – Amenity  
BE.2 – Design Standards  
BE.3 – Access and Parking  
BE.4 – Drainage, Utilities and Resources  
BE.5 – Infrastructure  
BE.6 – Development on Potentially Contaminated Land  
NE.2 – Open Countryside  
NE.5 – Nature Conservation and Habitats  
NE.9 – Protected Species  
NE.17 – Pollution Control  
NE.20 – Flood Prevention  
E.1.1 – Existing Employment Allocations  
TRAN.3 – Pedestrians  
TRAN.9 – Car Parking Standards  
TRAN.5 – Provision for Cyclists  
RT.9 – Footpaths and Bridleways

**Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version**

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

PG6 – Spatial Distribution of Development  
SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East  
SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles  
SE1 - Design  
SE2 – Efficient use of Land  
SE3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity  
SE4 – The Landscape  
SE5 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland  
SE6 – Infrastructure  
SE9 – Energy Efficient Development  
IN1 – Infrastructure  
IN2 – Developer Contributions

**Other Considerations**

The EC Habitats Directive 1992  
Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010  
Circular 6/2005 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System

**CONSULTATIONS:**

**CEC Head of Strategic Infrastructure:** No objection subject to a condition relating to a construction management plan and a s106 contribution will be required for the monitoring of the travel plan at a cost of £5k to cover a 5 year monitoring period. Furthermore a s106 contribution will be required for the traffic management works to mitigate the impact of parking, at a cost of £7.5k.

**CEC Environmental Health:** No objection – conditions suggested in relation to construction management plan, piling, electrical vehicle infrastructure, travel plan, dust control and contaminated land. Informatives suggested in relation to hours of operation and contaminated land.

**CEC Flood Risk Manager:** No objection. Conditions suggested.

**United Utilities:** No objection subject to the imposition of a planning condition.

## **VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCIL**

**Crewe Town Council:** Welcome the application and the creation of jobs by a local company, but in view of existing parking problems on the Business Park which also impacts on nearby residential areas, we would request careful evaluation of the parking provision.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

A letter of support has been received from Cllr Brookfield raising the following points of observation;

- Welcome this planning application and the employment it brings to Crewe.
- It is requested that the Council work with employers, other organisations and local members to address the significant parking problems in this area
- Whilst it is noted that this application makes a very good effort in providing 182 parking spaces I would contest that this is still not adequate due to the number of potential employees. There is little public transport in terms of a bus service serving the Business Park and inevitably employees use private cars.
- 182 car parking spaces does not quite meet the National Planning Framework requirements in providing 1 parking space for 30sqm of floor space - it is significant when compared to other companies on the Business Park.

## **APPRAISAL**

### **Principle of Development**

The National Planning Policy includes a strong presumption in favour of economic growth in support of this application with Paragraph 19 stating that:

*‘The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth’*

Paragraph 20 of the NPPF then goes onto state that:

*‘To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century’*

And at paragraph 21 the NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should:

*'set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth'*

The proposed development relates to an office development which is defined as a 'main town centre use' as part of the NPPF. As a result the proposed office use would usually require a sequential test and impact assessment as it is not located within an existing centre.

However in this case the application site is allocated for office use under Policy E.1 (Existing Employment Allocations) of the Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan. Specifically this policy identifies that on Crewe Business Park B1 (office) uses are allocated together with uses required by and associated with Manchester Metropolitan University. Therefore the proposed development would comply with Policy E.1.

The emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Policy EG1 (Economic Prosperity) supports the provision of employment development (including B1 uses) within the Principal Towns. Proposals for employment development on non-allocated employment sites (this site is not allocated within the emerging Local Plan) will be supported where they are in the right location and support the strategy, role and function of the town.

In this case, the proposed employment development has considerable support within the NPPF and the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan. The principal of the development is considered to be acceptable and the sustainability of the development will need to be considered as part of the planning balance.

## **Highway Implications**

The test contained within the NPPF is that:

*'Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe'*

The application site is located in an established location and business park with adequate footways, cycleways and sheltered bus stops within a short walking distance from the site.

A Travel Plan has also been submitted to promote sustainable modes of travel, and will be updated after occupation and monitored in liaison with CEC.

The proposed access would be sited onto Emperor Way (a private road) to the west of the site which would enable the retention of the two lines of trees along the Electra Way frontage. The access would have adequate width. An established safe and suitable access to Emperor Way already exists from Electra Way.

The Council's parking standards for a B1 use are 1 space per 30sqm of GFA. CEC standards would equate to a requirement for 205 car parking spaces. The application proposes 182 parking spaces which is 23 spaces short.

The Transport Assessment (TA) has used data from standard trip generation software to determine the likely parking accumulation that would result from this size and type of development. Whilst the

use of this method to justify a lower parking provision can be accepted, the detail of the method used in this situation can be questioned and the proposal could lead to additional off-site parking.

During the case officer site visit cars were seen to be parking within the grass verge along Electra Way and wheel tracks were seen along the footways outside the site and along Electra Way. This proposal could lead to further indiscriminate parking taking place and as such the Head of Strategic Infrastructure has suggested that the applicant should contribute £7,500 towards a traffic management scheme which would mitigate the impact of this additional parking. It is also suggested that a contribution of £5,000 will be required for Travel Plan monitoring in this location.

The proposal would generate around 100 to 130 two-way vehicle trips during the peak hour. The impact on the Electra Way/A534 Crewe Road junction was assessed using standard software and was found to be negligible.

Accordingly, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure has raised no objection in relation to this planning application.

### **Amenity**

There are no residential uses within close proximity to the site. The nearest residential dwellings (excluding the nearby student accommodation) are approximately 200m from the site. The site is well screened and there are intervening buildings to the nearest residential dwellings. On this basis it is not considered that the development would have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity.

### **Air Quality**

An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) has been submitted as part of the application. The report considers whether the development will result in increased exposure to airborne pollutants, particularly as a result of additional traffic and changes to local traffic flows. The report considers both the impacts from construction and operational phases of the premises to be not significant on local air quality, although it should be noted that Crewe does have three AQMA's within the town and any changes in traffic flow could impact these areas.

Modern Ultra Low Emission Vehicle technology (such as all electric vehicles) are expected to increase in use over the coming years (the Government expects most new vehicles in the UK will be ultra low emission). As such it is considered appropriate to create infrastructure to allow work based charging of electric vehicles.

In order to ensure that sustainable vehicle technology is a real option for future members of staff a condition will be attached in relation to electric vehicle infrastructure.

### **Contaminated Land**

A land contamination assessment has been submitted in support of the above application. It includes a recent summary of older reports (a Phase I preliminary risk assessment and a Phase II ground investigation). Although a low potential for land contamination was identified, further ground investigation for geotechnical purposes is proposed – which shall include some

contamination assessment. This will be controlled through the imposition of a planning condition. The Contaminated Land team has no objection to this application.

## **Landscape**

The site is located within an existing employment area and the trees around the boundaries of the site are to be retained (the impact upon trees is considered below). It is not considered that this development would have a detrimental impact upon the wider landscape in this urban area of Crewe.

## **Design**

The importance of securing high quality design is specified within the NPPF and 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.”*

In this case the application site is a vacant plot of land which is sited between existing office development and a hotel on the northern side of Electra Way. To the west of the site is an existing hotel (5 stories in height) with a 3 storey office building to the rear. These buildings are both flat roofed and are a mix of render and grey cladding. To the east of the site is a 3-storey office building which is finished in red brick with a hipped roof.

This proposal relates to the provision of an L shaped office block which would be located to the northern boundary of the site with car-parking to the frontage of the site. The proposed building would be 4 stories in height and a sectional plan submitted with the application indicates that the proposal would be taller than the adjacent units to the west and east. The parapet wall of the proposed office would be approximately 18.6m in height with a louvered plant room sited on the roof (this would be set back from the parapet wall). Although the proposed building would be slightly taller than the hotel and office at either side the proposal would be set back into the site and any impact variation in height would not be conspicuous when viewed in the street scene. As a result the height of the proposed building is considered to be acceptable in this location.

In terms of the layout of the site the proposed development would be sited to the northern boundary of the site with car-parking to the south of the site. The two rows to the south of the site (one along the southern boundary and the other within the existing grass verge) would be retained as part of the proposed development.

Ideally the proposed car-parking would be sited to the rear of the building which could then be sited further south in line with the office building to the east and the hotel in the west. This would help to screen the proposed car-parking from the street scene. In response to this the applicant has stated that the building has been sited on the northern boundary of the site to take advantage of the views over the landscaped area to the north which includes trees, landscaping, a footpath and a stream. In addition the applicant has identified that the two rows of trees to the south would be retained and that a high quality scheme of landscaping scheme will be secured within the car

park area. It should also be noted that the car-parking area for the adjacent hotel is also visible from within the street scene from both Electra Way and Emperor Way.

The detailed design of the building includes a flat roof with parapet wall (a recessed plant room would be sited on the roof of the building). The L shaped building includes a projecting entrance feature which would largely be glazed and would be 4 stories in height (but set slightly lower than the parapet wall). This glazed feature with the use of both hard and soft landscaping around the entrance of the site would make the entrance a prominent feature on the front elevation of the building.

The building has been designed to include a large number of openings which will be required to serve the proposed office use. The fenestration will be located in vertical rows along all elevations of the building this together with the use of cladding provides a horizontal emphasis and rhythm to the building.

The materials palette to be used on this building would be render, anodised metal cladding and a dark grey brick plinth. These proposed materials are considered to be appropriate in this modern employment area and would not appear out of character with the adjacent hotel and office development.

It is considered that the design and layout of the development is acceptable and that it would comply with policy BE.2 and the NPPF.

## **Trees**

This application includes an Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) and Method Statement (AMS).

The AIA indicates that a category C group of young trees (G1) would have to be removed from the site and a further Grade B group (G2) would have to be pruned back to allow for safe works distance. The report suggests that the loss of G1 would have low arboricultural impact. The group to be pruned (identified as mainly Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Field Maple) is described as relatively young and expected to respond well to the level of pruning proposed.

The AIA also identifies that there would be construction works including drainage and a part of a patio area encroaching into the root protection area of Group G2.

Protection measures are proposed for retained trees with works in root protection areas to be undertaken under arboricultural supervision with no dig construction for part of a patio.

The submitted tree protection plan shows a line of tree pruning and a tree protection fence beyond the site edge red boundary. The implications identified in the AIA confirm that it would be preferable to achieve greater separation to protect the vegetation in G2 and to allow sufficient space to construct the development without the need to resort to pruning and construction works in the root protection area.

In this case the harm is considered to be relatively limited and conditions will be attached to any approval.



## Ecology

### Great Crested Newts

A number of ponds are located within 250m of the proposed development. Great Crested Newts have been recorded as being present at three of these ponds. The application site however offers limited habitat for Great Crested Newts and does not support any features likely to be utilised by newts for shelter and protection and the proposed development would not result in the fragmentation or isolation of Great Crested Newt habitat.

The potential impacts of the proposed development are limited to the low risk of any newts that venture onto the site being killed or injured during the construction process and the loss of relatively low quality terrestrial habitat. In order to address the risk newts being harmed during the construction phase the applicant's ecological consultant has recommended a suite of 'reasonable avoidance measures' be implemented.

The Council's Ecologist advises that provided these measures are implemented the proposed development would be unlikely to result in a breach of the Habitat Regulations. Consequently, it is not necessary for the Council to have regard to the Habitat Regulations during the determination of this application.

In order to compensate for the loss of terrestrial newt habitat the applicant is proposing the enhancement of a number of offsite ponds. These ponds are located on land within the ownership of Cheshire East Council. The Council's Ecologist advises that the enhancement of these ponds would deliver significant benefits for the local Great Crested Newt population. These works will be secured through the imposition of a planning condition.

### Japanese Knotweed

The applicant should be aware that Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) is present on the proposed development site. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to cause Japanese Knotweed to grow in the wild. Japanese knotweed may be spread simply by means of disturbance of its rhizome system, which extends for several meters around the visible parts of the plant and new growth can arise from even the smallest fragment of rhizome left in the soil as well as from cutting taken from the plant.

Disturbance of soil on the site may result in increased growth of Japanese Knotweed on the site. If the applicant intends to move any soil or waste off site, under the terms of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 any part of the plant or any material contaminated with Japanese Knotweed must be disposed of at a landfill site licensed to accept it and the operator should be made aware of the nature of the waste. An informative will be attached to the decision notice to remind the developer of their responsibilities in relation to this issue.

### Bats

To avoid any impacts on foraging bats resulting from any lighting associated with the proposed development the Council's Ecologist recommends that if planning permission is granted a condition should be attached requiring any lighting proposed to be agreed with the LPA.

### Other protected Species

No evidence of other protected species was recorded during the submitted survey. However, as the status of other protected species on a site can change within a short timescale the Councils Ecologist recommends that in the event planning consent is granted a condition should be attached requiring an updated survey to be submitted to the LPA prior to the commencement of development.

### Nesting Birds

If planning consent is granted a condition can be attached to safeguard nesting birds.

### **Flood Risk/Drainage**

In this case part of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding, although an area of Flood Zone 2 skirts around the northern boundary of the site.

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) indicates that a surface water outlet for the site has been installed as part of the earlier Phase 1 development (the hotel and office to the west) and the surface water will continue to discharge from this outfall to Valley Brook at a rate of 26.5 l/s as established by that drainage system. An additional below ground cellular attenuation is to be installed beneath the car park of the Admiral Court Development to supplement that existing beneath the constructed Phase 1 development such that all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus climate change event are catered for.

The Councils Strategic Flood Risk Manager and United Utilities have considered the Flood Risk Assessment and have raised no objection subject to the imposition of a planning condition.

### **CIL Regulations**

In order to comply with the Community Infrastructure Regulations 2010 it is necessary for planning applications with planning obligations to consider the issue of whether the requirements within the S106 satisfy the following:

- (a) necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- (b) directly related to the development; and
- (c) fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

In this case there is a deficiency in parking provision on this site and there are existing on-street parking issues in this area. The Council has a scheme of Traffic Management Scheme for this area which would help to protect against inappropriate parking on the existing grass verges whilst the Travel Plan monitoring would also look at reducing the use of private vehicle to this development. The contributions are necessary, directly related to the development and fair and reasonable.

On this basis the S106 recommendation is compliant with the CIL Regulations 2010.

### **PLANNING BALANCE**

The principle of employment development is supported within the NPPF and the statements made by the Planning Minister in relation to 'Planning for Growth' and a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. Furthermore employment development on this site is supported within the emerging Cheshire East Development Strategy and the site forms part of a long standing allocation within the Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan. Therefore the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

The development would provide important economic benefits in terms of new jobs within Crewe and this weighs in favour of this application.

The development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity, trees the highway network, flood risk/drainage, ecology or the wider landscape.

The design is considered to be acceptable in this location.

It is considered that the benefits outweigh any harm identified and as such the application is recommended for approval.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE** subject to the completion of a Unilateral Undertaking to secure the following;

- **A contribution of £7,500 towards a Traffic Management Scheme**
- **A contribution of £5,000 towards Travel Plan Monitoring**

**And the following conditions;**

- 1. Standard Time 3 years**
- 2. Approved Plans**
- 3. Prior to the use of any facing/roofing material details of materials to be submitted and agreed**
- 4. Prior to the use of any facing/roofing material details of boundary treatment to be submitted and agreed**
- 5. Details of Levels to be submitted and agreed**
- 6. Prior to the use of any facing/roofing material details of landscaping to be submitted and agreed**
- 7. Landscaping implementation**
- 8. Development to proceed in accordance with the GCN reasonable avoidance measures**
- 9. Method Statement for off-site habitat works to ponds including a timetable for implementation shall be submitted and agreed**
- 10. Nesting birds timing of works**
- 11. Prior to the use of any facing/roofing material details of external lighting to be submitted and agreed**
- 12. Prior to the commencement of development an updated survey for other protected species shall be submitted and agreed**
- 13. Piling Method Statement to be submitted and agreed**
- 14. Travel Plan to be submitted and agreed**
- 15. Contaminated Land**
- 16. Provision of electric vehicle charging points**
- 17. Construction Management Plan to be submitted and agreed**
- 18. Compliance with the submitted FRA**

- 19. Detailed design and associated management and maintenance plan of surface water drainage to be submitted and approved**
- 20. Implementation of the tree protection measures**
- 21. Addendum to the AMS to include details of the supervising arboriculturalist**

**In order to give proper effect to the Board`s/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 her absence the Vice Chair) of the Southern Planning Committee, 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 the application be subject to an appeal, the following Heads of Terms should be secured as part of any Unilateral Undertaking:**

- A contribution of £7,500 towards a Traffic Management Scheme**
- A contribution of £5,000 towards Travel Plan Monitoring**

