

Application No: 17/0223N

Location: LAND SOUTH OF, WESTON ROAD, CREWE

Proposal: Full application for a proposed new warehouse unit with ancillary office/welfare, associated landscaping, parking, service yard and access. External works to existing 'Crewe 2' unit to south of site.

Applicant: Mr Paul Cook

Expiry Date: 18-Apr-2017

SUMMARY

The application site lies entirely within the Crewe Settlement boundary as determined by the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Adopted Replacement Local Plan 2011.

The application site also lies within an area of existing employment use.

Policy E.4 advises that within such locations, new employment uses are appropriate. As such, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable.

The development would bring positive planning benefits such as; the creation of new employment opportunities.

Balanced against this benefit must be the dis-benefits (the limited impact on the landscape character of the area) which in this case can be mitigated against with the use of planning conditions. Similarly it is considered ecological matters can be overcome through a Grampian condition.

As a result of the above, it is considered that economic benefit via the creation of jobs on a site outweighs any dis-benefits and it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to conditions

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for a proposed new warehouse unit with ancillary office / welfare, associated landscaping, parking, service yard and access and external works to existing 'Crewe 2' unit to south of site. The proposed building would measure 15.5 m in height at its maximum, 88 m in width and 129 m in length. The building would be constructed in blockwork and cladding.

The entrance and office area would be on the west elevation facing the access road with unloading facilities on the south elevation. The office area would comprise 734 m² (over 2 floors) and the warehouse some 9643 m². The site layout shows provision for parking 20 HGV trailer spaces, 10 HGV docks and 126 car parking spaces all accessed off the existing service road.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site comprises a vacant plot of land and the existing Crewe 2 Unit located within the Crewe Settlement Boundary. The site is located in an existing employment area on the southern side of Weston Road with warehouse units surrounding the site. An existing landscaping mound forms the boundary of the site to Weston Road.

RELEVANT HISTORY ON SITE

P07/1483 - New Warehouse, Two-Storey Office Block, Parking, Service Areas & Access Roads (Renewal of P02/1026) – Approved 29th January 2008

P02/1026 - New warehouse including offices, parking, service areas and access roads – Approved 30th November 2002

P98/0045 - Free-standing warehouse – Approved 5th March 1998

P92/0364 - Distribution centre – 21st May 1992

LOCAL & NATIONAL POLICY

Development Plan:

The Development Plan for this area is the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011

BE.1 (Amenity)

BE.2 (Design Standards)

BE.3 (Access and Parking)

BE.4 (Drainage, Utilities and Resources)

BE.5 (Infrastructure)

E.4 (Development on Existing Employment Areas)

NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats)

NE.17 (Pollution Control)

NE.20 (Flood Prevention)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Submission Version (CELP)

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

PG2 (Settlement Hierarchy)

PG6 (Spatial Distribution of Development)

EG3 (Existing and Allocated Employment Sites)

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)
SE8 (Renewable and Low Carbon energy)
SE9 (Energy Efficient Development)
IN1 (Infrastructure)
IN2 (Developer Contributions)

National Policy:

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of particular relevance are paragraphs 14 and 19.

CONSULTATIONS:

United Utilities – no objection subject to conditions relating to flood risk and drainage

Public Rights of Way – no objection subject to an Informative

VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL:

Crewe Town Council – no comments received at the time of writing the report.

REPRESENTATIONS:

None received.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Design and Access Statement.
Transport Statement
Flood Risk Assessment
Ecological Assessment and Mitigation
Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

APPRAISAL

The key issues to be considered in the determination of this application are set out below.

Principle of Development

The site lies in the Crewe Settlement Zone Line and an employment area as designated in the adopted Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan First Review 2005, where there is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy E.4 states that:

“proposals for new employment development, for the re-use, re-development or intensification of the use of land within existing employment areas will be permitted, (in accordance with policies BE.1 - BE.5).”

The issue in question is whether this proposal represents sustainable development and whether there are other material considerations associated with this proposal which are a sufficient material consideration to outweigh the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Sustainability

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of sustainable development is:

“Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be worse if things stagnate. Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment”

There are, however, three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy

an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Locational Sustainability

The proposal site is situated within the settlement boundary of Crewe where there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It is considered that the application site is situated in a sustainable location, approximately 3 km from Crewe town centre. There are a wide

rang of public transport facilities within walking distance of the application site, including Crewe railway station.

Design and Context

Policy BE.2 of the Local Plan advises that new development will only be permitted so long as; it would achieve a high standard of design, would respect the pattern, character and form of the surroundings and would not adversely affect the streetscene in terms of scale, height, proportions and materials used.

The proposal seeks the erection of a large commercial/industrial unit. The applicant seeks approval for a unit which falls within the unit B2/B8 use class, with an ancillary office.

The building would be sited close to and parallel with the northern boundary of the site and span the majority of the width of the site frontage.

To the rear of the units would be a large parcel of hardstanding that would accommodate 126 parking spaces and 10 HGV loading bays with 20 trailer spaces. It is proposed that access to the site will be taken from Weston Road, utilising an existing access. It is considered that the general layout of the proposed development would not appear incongruous within its setting and conforms with the character of the immediate area.

In relation to scale, the proposed unit would measure 15.5 m in height at its maximum, 88 m in width and 129 m in length. The existing unit to the east measures 13.6 m in height at its maximum, with a width of 41.1 m and a length of 52 m. The planning application for the existing unit to the south (P98/0045) approved a building that is 19.5 m in height at its maximum with a length of 111 m. As such it is not considered that the proposed building would be incongruous in this commercial setting.

It is advised within the application form that the walls of the buildings would be constructed from horizontally and vertically laid profiled, metal, insulated cladding - powder coated in 5 colours – Alaska Grey, Anthracite, Albatross, Goosewing Grey and Pure Grey. The roof would comprise of insulated profiled roof cladding panels in Goosewing Grey with roof lights.

As a result of the above, it is considered that the layout, form, scale and appearance of the proposal would be acceptable and would adhere with Policy BE.2 of the Local Plan.

Landscape and Trees

It is noted that much of the existing significant vegetation cover on the site boundaries appears to have been screen planting. There is similar road frontage planting along Weston Road on the employment site to the north-west. The intended removal of the prominent screen belt fronting Weston Road is a concern. This vegetation affords excellent screening of the site and contributes to the character of the road corridor on an important approach route into Crewe. Landscape proposals have been submitted however the scheme would not mitigate for the loss of the substantial roadside screen and would leave the new building prominent in views from the road. It is noted that a 2002 planning application indicated the road frontage mounding and vegetation removed, the vegetation would have been immature and far less prominent at that time.

At the request of Officers an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been submitted. The AIA indicates that of a total of 8 individual trees and 10 groups have been surveyed. There is one Grade B (moderate value) and 17 Grade C (low value) trees/tree groups within the vicinity of the site.

The report acknowledges that the greatest impact of the development would be on the screening function provided by existing trees and a permanent reduction in the number of trees due to the restriction in the space available for replanting. It suggests that the impact would diminish as replacement planting on the north west boundary matures.

The report makes comment to the effect that the assessed landscape scheme could not fully mitigate for the proposed losses and recommends that native trees with larger ultimate mature size are planted along the northern boundary. It is suggested that replacement planting on the frontage would result in a lower number of better quality trees although their screening function would be less effective.

The latest layout includes amendments comprising a minor rotation of the building and an amended car park layout. The landscape plan suggests greater retained existing vegetation and provides some additional planting and the plans have an annotation *“existing bund along Weston Road would be retained wherever possible. Additional proposed native shrub planting to be determined on site to enhance landscape strip”*.

Other than the single site section there is no detail of the overall proposals for re-profiling of mounds on site. The impact on the frontage bund is illustrated on the section. This clearly shows re-profiling and a significant reduction in the width. There is no indication that these latest proposals have been assessed by the applicant's consultant arboriculturalist. Nevertheless, it is considered that with excavation works within the identified tree root protection area means the risk of harm to existing trees is high. It is not considered that the existing trees could be successfully retained on the frontage bund and notwithstanding the recommendations of the applicant's arboricultural consultant, no replacement trees are indicated. The resulting outcome may be even less screening to the north than proposed within the original landscape plan. It should also be noted that the proximity of the building to the northern boundary is such that there would be limited space available to accommodate large species native trees at maturity.

Although the above concerns are noted, given the character of the area it is considered that, on balance, the impact on the trees (which are not protected but provide screening) would be acceptable subject to conditions relating to proposed levels (including further site sections), a scheme of protection measures for retained vegetation and a detailed landscape scheme.

Ecology

The application is supported by an Ecological Assessment and a Newt Mitigation Strategy. The application site is in an area where there are nearby ponds which are known to have a Great Crested Newt presence.

The UK implemented the EC Directive in the Conservation (natural habitats etc) regulations which contain two layers of protection:

- A licensing system administered by Natural England
- A requirement on local planning authorities (“LPAs”) to have regard to the directive's requirements.

The Habitat Regulations 2010 require LPAs to have regard to three tests when considering applications that affect a European Protected Species. In broad terms the tests are that:

- The proposed development is in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment
- There is no satisfactory alternative
- There is no detriment to the maintenance of the species population at favourable conservation status in its natural range.

Current case law instructs that if it is considered clear or very likely that the requirements of the directive cannot be met because there is a satisfactory alternative, or because there are no conceivable “other imperative reasons of overriding public interest”, then planning permission should be refused. Conversely, if it seems that the requirements are likely to be met, then there would be no impediment to planning permission being granted. If it is unclear whether the requirements would be met or not, a balanced view taking into account the particular circumstances of the application should be taken.

Overriding Public Interest

The provision of mitigation would assist with the continued presence of great crested newts and this is considered to be of the public interest.

Alternatives

There is an alternative scenario that needs to be assessed, this is:

- No development on the site

Without any development, mitigation for protected species would not be provided and as such this would not be of benefit to the species.

Detriment to Species

With appropriate mitigation, as proposed, there would not be significant detriment to the maintenance of species.

The initially submitted ecological assessment stated that the boundary features on the site are of the most nature conservation value. The report also states that the plantation woodland and scrub bordering the northern boundary provides the greatest biodiversity value within the site. Paragraph 4.9 of the submitted ecological assessment also identifies the boundary features of the site being the most important habitats for great crested newts in particular. It is therefore advised that the plantation woodland located on the northern bund should be retained as part of the proposed development. The current proposals include the loss of the majority of the plantation woodland which is a concern.

It is noted that connectivity between the ponds and additional habitats to the south of the site is of importance for the conservation of the local great crested newt population. The proposed development would have the effect of making redundant the existing access road to the existing warehouse. This access road currently presents a barrier to the movement of newts to habitats in the south. However as a consequence of the proposal the current access road will become redundant. The submitted great crested newt mitigation strategy therefore now includes proposals for the planting up of the existing access road when it becomes redundant to increase habitat connectivity. This is welcomed but it is noted that this operation would take place outside the red line of the application site and so is outside the control of this current planning application (however this would be covered by the necessary Natural England license).

Following on from the above initial concerns habitat corridors are now proposed around the site. Although, these are limited it would nonetheless assist in facilitating the movement of wildlife around the site to some extent.

Overall it is advised that; whilst the proposed development falls short of an outstanding scheme the proposals are likely to be licensable by Natural England provided the benefits of the planting up of the existing access road can be secured. As such no objection is raised subject to a Grampian condition relating to the newt mitigation strategy, nesting birds, breeding birds, the submission of a habitat management plan and a lighting strategy.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). United Utilities have advised that they raise no objections, subject to a condition requiring that the drainage for the development be carried out in accordance with the FRA and requiring a sustainable drainage management plan.

The Council's Flood Risk Manager has advised that he has no objections, subject to conditions detailing that the development shall be completed in accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), a condition regarding the discharge should be restricted to the existing rate and attenuated on site above this rate as stated within the FRA and a condition stating that no development shall take place until a detailed design and associated management and maintenance plan of surface water drainage for the site using sustainable drainage methods has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority

Strategic Infrastructure (Highways)

Access to the site is provided via the existing signalised junction off Weston Road. The proposals are to provide a new B2/B8 industrial unit located off Weston Road and will provide a floor area of 10,219m², with associated parking, to be accessed via the existing signalised junction off Weston Road.

There will also be amendments to the access road and additional parking provided for the Crewe 2 site.

Sustainable access

Sufficient pedestrian access is available to and from the site via the footways and pedestrian crossings along Weston Road providing access to the wider Crewe area and to near-by bus stops and railway station.

Bus stops on Weston Road are within a suitable walking distance from the site to encourage use of public transport. The bus stops are located approximately 170 m south east of the site and are not sheltered. It is advised that these bus stops should be upgraded to provide a 2 bay cantilever shelter with full end panels and perch seats.

Safe and suitable access

The existing signalised access to Weston Road was designed to serve the Crewe 1 and Crewe 2 sites and is also considered suitable for this proposal.

The Crewe 3 site will have sufficient on-site parking provision with 126 car parking spaces including 6 disabled spaces and an internal service yard with two turning areas, 10 HGV dock and 20 trailer spaces. Additional on-site parking for cars and HGVs will also be made available at the existing Crewe 2 site.

Network Capacity

A capacity assessment of the nearby Weston Road/University Way roundabout has been carried out which determined that the proposal will have a small impact on the junction, increasing traffic using the roundabout by less than 2% during the peak hours.

Highways Conclusion

The proposal will have sufficient pedestrian access and bus stops are located within an adequate distance from the site. The existing access onto Weston Road, and the proposed parking provision, is adequate to serve the site, and the impact of the development on the network capacity will be minimal. No objection is raised subject to a conditions relating to a Construction Management Plan, bus stop upgrades and an informative relating to a S278 agreement.

Environmental Conclusion

Whilst it is noted that the existing screening is to be removed it is considered that on balance the application would have a limited impact upon the landscape in this commercial part of Crewe located within the Crewe Settlement Boundary.

Subject to conditions, the scheme would be of an acceptable design that would not create any issues with regards to highway safety, forestry, landscape, ecology, drainage and flooding.

As a result, it is considered that the development would be acceptable environmentally.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

The proposed development of B2/B8 uses would bring significant employment benefits.

In addition, it is accepted that the construction of an industrial development of this size would bring the usual economic benefit to the closest shops in Crewe for the duration of the construction, and would potentially provide local employment opportunities in construction and the wider economic benefits to the construction industry supply chain.

As a result of the above, it is considered that the development would provide strong economic benefits and would therefore be economically sustainable.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

A significant social benefit of the proposed scheme would be the job creation that the erection of the development would create.

Amenity

Policy BE.1 (Amenity) of the Local Plan requires that new development will be permitted provided that they are compatible with surrounding land uses, do not prejudice the amenity of future occupiers, do not generate such levels of traffic that they would prejudice the safe movement of traffic on surrounding roads and do not lead to an increase in air, noise or water pollution.

Given the location of the application site in an industrial / commercial area of Crewe, there are no nearby neighbouring dwellings that could be impacted. As such, it is not envisaged that the development would create any amenity issues with regards to loss of privacy, light or visual intrusion.

In relation to environmental disturbance, the Council's Environmental Protection Team have advised that they have no objections, subject to a condition that a staff travel plan shall be submitted and approved, a condition relation to electric vehicle charging and a condition relation to land contamination. In addition it is advised that an informative relating to contaminated land is imposed on any planning approval.

As a result of the job creation benefits of the scheme, it is considered that the development would be socially sustainable.

PLANNING BALANCE

The application site lies entirely within the Crewe Settlement boundary as determined by the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Adopted Replacement Local Plan 2011.

The application site also lies within an area of existing employment use.

Policy E.4 advises that within such locations, new employment uses are appropriate. As such, the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable.

The development would bring positive planning benefits such as; the creation of new employment opportunities.

Balanced against this benefit must be the dis-benefits (the limited impact on the landscape character of the area) which in this case can be mitigated against with the use of planning conditions. Similarly it is considered ecological matters can be overcome through a Grampian condition.

As a result of the above, it is considered that economic benefit via the creation of jobs on a site outweighs any dis-benefits and it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development and is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROVE subject to the following conditions

- 1. Time (3 years)**
- 2. Plans**
- 3. Materials as per application**
- 4. Prior approval of detailed design, management and maintenance of surface water drainage**
- 5. Prior submission / approval of staff travel plan**
- 6. Electric charging points for cars**
- 7. Land contamination**
- 8. Landscape – Details**

- 9. Landscape – Implementation**
- 10. Boundary treatment – Details**
- 11. Development in accordance with FRA**
- 12. Sustainable drainage management/surface water drainage**
- 13. Nesting birds**
- 14. Newt mitigation strategy for adjacent land**
- 15. Breeding birds**
- 16. Habitat management plan**
- 17. External lighting**
- 18. Construction Management Plan**
- 19. Bus stop upgrades**
- 20. Levels – existing and proposed including site sections**
- 21. Scheme of protection for retained trees**

In order to give proper effect to the Board's intentions and without changing the substance of the decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning (Regulation) in consultation with the Chairman (or in their absence the Vice Chairman) of the Strategic Planning Board Board, to correct any technical slip or omission in the wording of the resolution, between approval of the minutes and issue of the decision notice.

