

Application No: 18/0228N

Location: Bentley Motors Ltd, PYMS LANE, CREWE, CHESHIRE, CW1 3PL

Proposal: Construction of two 7,200sqm, 4 storey office blocks and related external works

Applicant: Mr Andrew Robertson, Bentley Motors Ltd

Expiry Date: 30-Apr-2018

SUMMARY:

This proposal would bring economic benefits and investment in an area with a longstanding association with the manufacture of motor vehicles. Bentley Motors are a major employer located within one of the principal growth areas of the Borough where national / local plan policies strongly support such development.

The proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and the design, scale and form of the buildings would not appear incongruous within their context owing to the character of the area and the construction of a similarly designed building to the east of the site. This proposal would occupy the position of a previously proposed five storey Engineering Technical Centre approved under planning ref; 16/0341N and instead would provide 2 smaller buildings which would have lesser impact in planning terms than the previously consented scheme.

The proposals will have a moderate effect on the landscape, which in time, will be mitigated by additional planting to the north of the site and in the fullness of time by potential development to the north of the site identified for development under Strategic Site Policy LPS 4 under the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.

The impact of the proposal on trees and hedges would not be significant and environmental considerations relating to flooding, drainage, land contamination (subject to further investigations) and ecology would be acceptable.

The impact on neighbouring residential amenity would be acceptable owing to the low impact nature of the use (predominately offices and research and development), the generous separation with neighbouring properties and having regard to the context of the area as a centre for automotive manufacturing.

Satisfactory access and parking provision can be provided and the development would not result in 'severe harm' on the local highway network. Any additional vehicular movements and parking generated by the proposals could be accommodated by the existing highway network and the existing and proposed parking provision at the site.

On this basis, the proposal is for sustainable development which would bring environmental, economic and social benefits. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant saved policies of the adopted Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan, the policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE with Conditions

PROPOSAL:

This application seeks full planning permission for the construction of two 7,200 square metre (14,400 square metres in total) four storey office blocks in use class B1b (research and development) and related external works for Bentley Motors on land to the north of Pym's Lane, Crewe.

The proposed buildings would occupy the position of a previously proposed five storey Engineering Technical Centre approved under planning ref; 16/0341N.

SITE DESCRIPTION:

This application relates to the site of Bentley Motors, a large industrial site for the manufacturing of motor vehicles located within the settlement boundary for Crewe. This application relates specifically to land on the north side of Pym's Lane directly opposite the main entrance to the plant.

The site measures some 1.1 hectares in size and comprises part of the former Council Waste Transfer Depot comprising primarily hard surfaced land and several industrial/storage units which are presently undergoing demolition.

The site is bound to the north by other land owned by Bentley Motors which benefits from planning permission to erect a proposed workshop building under planning ref; 16/0341N. Beyond this, the site is bound by 'Meadow Brook Cemetery', to the east by a 4 storey office building beyond which there are residential properties fronting Pym's Lane. To the south of Pym's Lane is the main production plant. Directly to the west of the site, are other industrial and commercial units and associated parking further along. There are other areas which are within the applicant's ownership for car parking, a showroom and ancillary development.

The site falls entirely within the settlement boundary of Crewe as designated in the Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Replacement Local Plan 2011. Land to the north of the site is identified as Strategic Site LPS 4 under the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy. This seeks to promote the development of a new sustainable neighbourhood at Leighton West and promotes the creation of an automotive research, development and supply hub, in partnership with Bentley Motors, in order to provide new employment opportunities and expand the automotive related investment in Crewe and the wider area.

RELEVANT HISTORY:

There is an extensive planning history for the Bentley Motors site. However, the only applications of relevance to this proposal are as follows:

12/4373N - New build showroom with associated car parking approved on 6th February 2013

12/3418N – Full planning permission approved to develop site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 478 parking spaces on 30th November 2012

12/4319N – Resolved to grant full planning permission (subject to S106 Obligation) for the erection of a two storey temporary office accommodation with links to an existing building to accommodate existing staff relocated on site on 1st May 2013

12/4426N - Proposed development of the site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 1817 car parking spaces plus lorry parking for up to 14 HGV's – Approved 03-Jun-2013

13/5114N - Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) on application 12/4426N (proposed development of the site to provide a permanent car park with a total of 1817 car parking spaces plus lorry parking for up to 14 HGV's) – Approved 18-Feb-2014

14/2944N - Construction of a new Painted Body Store Warehouse and ancillary accommodation totalling approximately 5060sqm gross internal floor area. The relocation of fuel tanks and a fuel filling location. The proposed building comprises a large warehouse with one and a half portal frame structure, a single storey office annex to the North elevation with rest and WC facilities, an enclosed link to the existing adjacent warehouse to the east and an enclosed bridge link above the private road to the adjacent property to the North. A 10m overhanging canopy will be provided for the full width of the building to the west elevation and a 2m deep canopy to the north side of the east link – Approved 29-Aug-2014

14/5262N - Proposed pre-fabricated building, complete with services to be installed as office and restrooms for lorry park on site at Bentley Motors – Approved 09-Feb-2015

15/3665N - Construction of a 4 storey office building on the site of an existing carpark – Approved 28-Oct-2015

15/3869N - It is proposed to convert the existing field into a private car park for Bentley Motors. The site is an existing green area which will be converted to hard standing material to suit the needs of a car park. The car park will be enclosed with fences. North east and south of the proposed car park, a 14m width band will be dedicated for planting – Approved 18-Mar-2016

15/4141N - Alterations to E1 Car Park, realignment of internal road, construction of a vehicle test building, relocation of Gate 3 Security Lodge and amendments to gate arrangement, installation of 5 No. entry gate positions and relocation of cycle and motor cycle shelters – Approved 18-Nov-2015

16/0341N - Demolition of all existing on-site buildings and structures, the construction of a five storey engineering technical centre comprising offices at the front of the building and warehousing at the rear, the construction of a two storey design centre comprising offices and a workshop together with associated works – Approved 27-Oct-2017

17/4011N - Hybrid Planning Application for - Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for means of access and layout for Production and Manufacturing Facility 2) for the erection of 2 no. production and manufacturing facilities; two covered links connecting one of the production and manufacturing facilities with Bentley's existing manufacturing facility; an engine test bed facility together with associated car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure. Full planning application for the erection of a gatehouse, security fencing, pedestrian turnstile and associated turning facilities to the west of the existing Bentley Motors site on Pyms Lane; the erection of a gatehouse, security fence, pedestrian turnstile, bin store, reconfiguration of visitor parking and associated turning facilities to the east of the existing Bentley Motors site on Pyms Lane; the erection of a gatehouse, security fence, cycle store, pedestrian turnstile and associated turning facilities together with a further gate on Sunnybank Road – Resolved to approve at SPB meeting of 28/02/2018 subject to the signing of a s106 agreement

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

National Policy:

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

Of particular relevance are paragraphs 7, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 28, 56, 65, 109, 111 and 118.

Development Plan:

Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan Saved Policies:

NE.5 (Nature Conservation and Habitats)
NE.10 (New Woodland Planting and Landscaping)
BE.13 (Buildings of Local Interest)
BE.1 (Amenity)
BE.3 (Accessing and Parking)
E.4 (Development on Existing Employment Areas)
TRAN.3 (Pedestrians)
TRAN.6 (Cycle Routes)
TRAN.8 (Existing Car Parks)

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS):

Policy MP 1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy PG 1 Overall Development Strategy
Policy PG 2 Settlement Hierarchy
Policy PG 7 Spatial Distribution of Development
Policy SD 1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
Policy SD 2 Sustainable Development Principles
Policy LPS4 Leighton West
Policy IN 1 Infrastructure
Policy IN 2 Developer Contributions
Policy EG 1 Economic Prosperity
Policy EG 3 Existing and Allocated Employment Sites

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

Other Material Considerations:

National Planning Practice Guidance

CONSULTATIONS:

Highways: No comments received

Environmental Protection: No objection, subject to conditions / informatives restricting hours of construction, submission of details of noise mitigation for fixed plant etc, submission, compliance with the submitted travel plan and a further contaminated land survey/verification.

Environment Agency: No objection subject to conditions for remediation of unsuspected contamination and waste management.

Flood Risk Officer: No objection subject to submission of a surface water drainage scheme.

Public Rights of Way Unit (PROW): No objection. The proposals do not affect a public right of way.

United Utilities: No objection subject to foul and surface water being connected on separate systems and submission of a surface water drainage scheme.

CREWE TOWN COUNCIL:

No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS:

None received.

OFFICER APPRAISAL:

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Background

The area and site has a longstanding association with the manufacture and production of motor cars and as such, it is considered that the compatibility of the site and the area for such use is well established. More recently, the Local Planning Authority has considered and approved a number of planning applications to facilitate future investment at Bentley Motors at the Pym's Lane site, the most notable of which are:

- A 7,200 sq. m business building providing office and business space
- A 32,148 sq. m Engineering and Technical Centre containing workshop, design and technical centre

This application involves part of the site approved for the 32,148 sq. m Engineering and Technical Centre and seeks instead to provide 2 x no. 7,200sqm four storey office blocks in place of the previously approved Engineering and Technical Centre building.

In addition to this, Members will recall that at the meeting of the Strategic Planning Board on 28/02/2018, it was resolved to approve a Hybrid Planning Application (planning ref: 17/4011N refers) for the erection of 2 no. production and manufacturing facilities, two covered links, an engine test bed facility together with associated car parking, landscaping and associated infrastructure. The application also included the erection of security gatehouses resulting in the closure of Pym's Lane and Sunnybank Road to general traffic and pedestrians to "create an internal campus where manufacturing, design, research and development, and engineering operations are fully integrated within a single site" (Bentley Development Framework and Masterplan).

Principle of Development

In terms of the Local Plan, the site is within the settlement boundary of Crewe where development is acceptable provided that it is compatible with surrounding uses and accords with other relevant local plan policies. Owing to the longstanding association with the manufacture and the production of motor cars in the area, it is considered that the compatibility of the site and the area for such use is well established.

It is important to recognise that Bentley Motors is a major employer in the area. This proposal forms part of a key component in the long term vision to invest in operations at the plant, which has previously been accepted by the Local Planning Authority. This proposal is an alternative proposal for the previously approved Engineering Technical Centre and would assist in the delivery of this part of the overall vision by providing 2 smaller separate buildings. Accordingly, there remain significant benefits arising from the scheme that would support future economic growth in the locality and the Borough.

The development of science, enterprise, manufacturing and advanced engineering is a key component of the economic vision for Cheshire East within the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPs). The economy of Cheshire East is one of the most successful in the North of England and consequently a principal aim of the CELPs is to "*ensure the right foundations are in place to sustain this success over the next twenty years*", including capturing the success and

strengths of the *Crewe High Growth City/M6 Corridor*. Indeed, the Council's economic growth strategy seeks to secure "a growth proposition for the south of the Borough centred around Crewe as a principal town but linking to a wider set of growth 'nodes' using the M6 Corridor as a key attractor and asset to support our ambition". It is considered that such benefits are in line with the local plan.

The NPPF requires Local Planning Authorities to adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development. Planning applications that encourage sustainable economic development should be treated favourably and this view is further reinforced in Policy EG 1 of the Council's Local Plan Strategy. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant planning considerations.

Design

The NPPF and local plan Policies and SE 1 and SD 2 emphasise the importance of securing high quality design appropriate to its context. NPPF 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."

The proposed buildings would each have a floor-space of 7,200 square metres spread across four floors and would replicate the recently constructed office building to the east. The buildings would be of modular prefab construction and would measure 15.98 metres in height with a combined frontage to Pym's Lane of c185 metres. The buildings would be positioned to the west of the existing office building beyond which there is the beginning of residential development on the north side of Pym's Lane. The proposed buildings would be set back between 14 and 16 metres from the beginning of the highway which would allow for appropriate hard and soft landscaping to be accommodated to the front of the building.

With reference to the architectural detail, the buildings would be simple in terms of their form and shape. Owing to their size, the massing of the elevations would be broken up with sections of glazing and alternate coloured facing materials. This would improve the appearance of the buildings. It is important to note that the area is characterised predominantly by commercial and industrial premises including the similarly designed and recently constructed office building and as such, the proposed buildings would not appear incongruous within this context. The size, scale and general appearance of the building would not impact detrimentally on views of the locally listed buildings, which serve as the entrance to the main Bentley production plant on the opposite side of Pym's Lane.

To the west of the proposed buildings would be the lower two-storey height design centre approved under planning ref; 15/3665N, which coupled with the existing office building to the east, would ease the disparity in heights along the Pym's Lane frontage. To the rear of the site, a workshop building approved under planning ref; 15/3665N would adjoin the rear of the site but would be lower in terms of its height.

In terms of the wider visual impact on the area, the impact of the scale and height of the buildings would be moderate within the local context. The effects would be reduced by the hierarchy of buildings. Further, with mitigation planting outside of the site to the north, the visual impacts would be reduced over time. The proposal complies with CELPS Policies and SE 1 and SD 2 (Design).

Landscape

The application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA). This is a review of the previously submitted LVIA for the already granted application (16/0341N). The review identifies that the main consented building that will form the subject of the revised planning application is the Engineering Technical Centre, a building that would be 23 metres in height, the two proposed buildings would be 16m in height, although with roof top cooling and ventilation equipment the height of each structure is actually 19m.

The landscape and Visual review identifies that the landscape baseline remains of Low value and that it is of Medium value, and indicates that the effects will be marginally less adverse compared to the effects assessed in relation to the original Engineering Technical Centre assessment. The visual assessment review indicates that since the proposed buildings are smaller and constrained, with a lower resulting skyline, that they will not have a greater level of visual effect compared to the originally assessed building. The Council's Principal Landscape Officer has confirmed that he broadly agrees with the review. However, the Principal Landscape Officer does not agree that this would merit the reduction to the already consented landscape mitigation, since it was the opinion of the LPA that the visual effects had been undervalued in the original assessment.

The proposals owing to their size, scale and location on the edge of Crewe, will have a moderate effect on the landscape, which in time, could be mitigated by additional planting to the north of the site and in the fullness of time by potential development to the north of the site identified for development under Policy Strategic Site LPS 4 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Submission Version. Subject to the mitigation planting, the proposal is found to be acceptable in landscape terms.

Trees

The application site is set back behind a wide highway verge with grass strips, a footway and a line of trees along this part of Pym's Lane. The application is supported by a Tree Retention/Removal drawing which identifies three Low (C) category trees for removal on the Pym's Lane frontage. No other arboricultural details have been submitted, however, a planting plan has been submitted which indicates proposals for planting of some 35 Extra Heavy Standard trees along the frontage. The Council's Tree Officer has confirmed that the proposed planting would provide adequate mitigation for the loss of trees and as such, it is not considered that there are any significant forestry impacts arising from the current proposal.

Land Contamination

The application site area has a history of previous development such as a council depot, electrical substation, car parking and a former pit; therefore the land contamination cannot be

ruled out. Part of a known landfill site that has the potential to create gas is located partially on land to the east and extends to the north. A number of reports relating to land contamination have been submitted in support of the application. The Council's Environmental Protection Unit has assessed these and is satisfied that subject to further post demolition Phase II ground investigation and risk assessments (which would be secured by conditions), the considerations in respect of land contamination are acceptable.

Parking, Highway Safety and Traffic Generation

Policy BE.3 deals with access and parking and states that development will only be permitted where proposals provide:

- safe pedestrian access
- the provision of any off street parking
- manoeuvring and operational space should be designed to minimise visual impact
- safe vehicular access and egress arrangements

Whilst c38 parking spaces are shown within the site, these would be largely for product parking and not for employees or visitors. Parking for employees and visitors will take place within the existing car parks to the east the plant, which have been expanded to significantly increase parking provision at Bentley Motors. These provide parking for some 1817 cars with the potential future expansion of up to 497 spaces resolved to be approved under planning ref: 17/4011N. The existing car parks lost by these proposals were deemed to be offset by the existing parking provision when the proposals for this site were previously considered and there are no material changes since then that would change these conclusions.

The site offers good integration with local transport networks, including walk/cycle, bus/train. The majority of staff to be accommodated within the new buildings will be relocated from elsewhere on the Pym's Lane site and won't result in significant additional vehicle trips on the local road network. With respect to highway network impact, when previously considering the larger proposal for this site, the Head of Strategic Infrastructure (HSI – Highways) confirmed that the applicant had demonstrated that that all nearby junctions will continue to operate satisfactorily with the proposed development. This proposal would not change this position and accordingly the impact on the local highway network will be acceptable and policy compliant.

Taking the above into account, the scheme is found to be acceptable in terms of its impacts on the local highway network and the existing parking and pedestrian facilities would be sufficient to accommodate the proposed development. The proposal therefore accords with Policy BE.3.

Ecology

Hedgerows

There will be a partial loss of hedgerows associated with the proposed development. However, there appears to be adequate scope within the proposed layout for adequate new hedgerows and native planting to be provided to compensate for this loss. A landscaping condition should be attached to ensure that appropriate species and planting specifications are utilised to ensure the nature conservation value of the new hedgerows are maximised.

Nesting birds

The habitats on site are may support nesting birds including house sparrow, which are a priority species and hence a material consideration. If planning consent is granted it is recommended that conditions are attached to safeguard breeding birds during construction and features are incorporated into the scheme that accommodate bird nesting.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Situated on the opposite side of Pym's Lane to the south, are 2 Art Deco period buildings which form part of the frontage to the Bentley Production Plant. The main building is locally listed and therefore a designated heritage asset. Whilst the proposed buildings will be higher than the existing development found elsewhere on Pym's Lane, the impact upon the setting of both the existing locally listed building and the adjacent building will be minimised by the presence of the intervening road and the pavements, grass verges, hedging and line of trees on either side of the road. The proposed style of the new building whilst modern will compliment the historic locally listed building/its adjacent building to a degree by virtue of its similar use of horizontal lines.

Flooding and Drainage

The site is within Flood Risk Zone 1 and is not therefore at risk from flooding. However, owing to the size of the proposals, a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been undertaken. The Environment Agency and the Council's Flood Risk Team have assessed the FRA and are satisfied that subject to the recommendations within the FRA, the proposal would not give rise to flooding or drainage issues.

Residential Amenity

The impact of the development upon nearby residential properties is a material consideration in regard to noise, disturbance and the physical massing of buildings.

The nearest neighbouring dwelling (no. 23 Pym's Lane) would achieve a distance of 104 metres with the east facing elevation of the proposed Business Building 2. It is important to note that situated in between is the existing four storey office building of the same size and scale directly to the east of the site. Given that the proposed buildings would follow the same building line as the adjoining office building, it is not considered that the proposed development would materially harm neighbouring amenity by reason of loss of light / overshadowing nor would it give rise to direct overlooking.

In terms of the use, and B1b (research and development) uses, which by their nature are less intensive and less noisy than general B2 industrial uses would be unlikely to cause harm to neighbouring residential amenity. The Council's Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) has assessed to application together with the submitted noise assessment and are satisfied that subject to conditions requiring the submission of a validation test for the fixed plant and equipment, then the scheme would not prejudice the amenity of future occupiers or the occupiers of adjacent property by reason of noise or odours.

In terms of traffic generation, the likely increased in vehicle movements will not be significant relevant to the current uses in the vicinity of the site and consequently, in respect of

residential amenity, this will not cause material harm to the residential amenity afforded to the nearest occupiers.

Accordingly, it is considered that the proposal would not materially harm neighbouring amenity by reason of loss of light, direct overlooking, visual intrusion or noise and therefore complies with local plan policy BE.1.

PLANNING BALANCE & CONCLUSIONS

This proposal would bring economic benefits and investment in an area with a longstanding association with the manufacture of motor vehicles. Bentley Motors are a major employer located within one of the principal growth areas of the Borough where national / local plan policies strongly support such development.

The proposal is compatible with the surrounding development and the design, scale and form of the buildings would not appear incongruous within their context owing to the character of the area and the construction of a similarly designed building to the east of the site. This proposal would occupy the position of a previously proposed five storey Engineering Technical Centre approved under planning ref; 16/0341N and instead would provide 2 smaller buildings which would have lesser impact in planning terms than the previously consented scheme.

The proposals will have a moderate effect on the landscape, which in time, will be mitigated by additional planting to the north of the site and in the fullness of time by potential development to the north of the site identified for development under Strategic Site Policy LPS 4 under the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy.

The impact of the proposal on trees and hedges would not be significant and environmental considerations relating to flooding, drainage, land contamination (subject to further investigations) and ecology would be acceptable.

The impact on neighbouring residential amenity would be acceptable owing to the low impact nature of the use (predominately offices and research and development), the generous separation with neighbouring properties and having regard to the context of the area as a centre for automotive manufacturing.

Satisfactory access and parking provision can be provided and the development would not result in 'severe harm' on the local highway network. Any additional vehicular movements and parking generated by the proposals could be accommodated by the existing highway network and the existing and proposed parking provision at the site.

On this basis, the proposal is for sustainable development which would bring environmental, economic and social benefits. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the relevant saved policies of the adopted Borough of Crewe and Nantwich Local Plan, the policies of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy and advice contained within the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Standard time limit (3 years)**
- 2. Accordance with approved plans**
- 3. Materials to be submitted and approved**
- 4. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted noise impact assessment**
- 5. Validation test of any fixed plant / noise generative equipment to be submitted and approved**
- 6. Submission of an Environmental Management Plan**
- 7. Additional Phase II Land contamination investigations and assessments to be submitted and approved**
- 8. Accesses constructed in accordance with submitted details prior to first use**
- 9. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted ecological survey**
- 10. Survey for nesting birds if works carried out during nesting season**
- 11. Scheme to incorporate features suitable for breeding birds**
- 12. Development to be carried out in accordance with submitted Flood Risk Assessment**
- 13. Submission of a sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan scheme**
- 14. Details of foul water drainage to be submitted**
- 15. Surface water drainage strategy to be submitted**
- 16. Updated off site landscaping scheme and planting plan to be submitted and approved**
- 17. Landscape scheme to be submitted**
- 18. Landscape implementation**
- 19. Tree retention in accordance with submitted details**
- 20. Hours of construction restricted**
- 21. Piling method statement**
- 22. Accordance with submitted Travel Plan**
- 23. Details of external lighting to be submitted and approved**
- 24. Details of cycle parking to be submitted and approved**

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

