

Application No: 18/5582M

Location: LAND NORTH OF GLASSHOUSE , ALDERLEY PARK, CONGLETON ROAD, NETHER ALDERLEY, SK10 4TF

Proposal: Full planning application for demolition of Block 156; the erection of a multi-storey car park; the creation of a mini-roundabout and other internal estate road works; landscaping and public realm; and other associated works including any necessary infrastructure.

Applicant: C/o Agent, Alderley Park Limited

Expiry Date: 28-Feb-2019

SUMMARY

The development is proposed on this brownfield site within the existing Mereside area of Alderley Park, on previously developed land which has planning permission for office development. The proposals are materially larger than the consented scheme and as a precautionary approach it is considered there is an impact on openness and as such would constitute inappropriate development on this Green Belt site. However as the report sets out, the impact is only slight, and in any event Very Special Circumstances exist to outweigh any possible harm.

The proposed development will assist in rationalising the car parking on the site, and allowing it to be concentrated in two locations at the entrance points to Mereside. This allows for the central site area to be pedestrianised and as a consequence the improving of its general environment for visitors and users alike, re-enforcing the unique nature of this site.

The proposals will therefore have positive benefits for pedestrians and site users, which will have knock-on benefits for the site and help build on the success of the site to the area and Borough as a whole. There are also considered to be traffic management benefits from the scheme.

The proposals will have a neutral impact on most other issues, including, Amenity, Ecology and Environmental impacts including air quality and contaminated land.

There is a slight adverse impact on trees/woodlands, and very minor landscape impacts.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve with conditions

SITE DESCRIPTION

This application relates to a now cleared site in the far north eastern corner of the main Mereside complex in Alderley Park. The site measures some 1.63 hectares and is currently “undulating” in form with substantial areas of crushed demolition waste and soils forming mounds in areas of the site, together with storage of building materials for an adjacent project. There are some existing trees within the site area, and a relatively small structure (Block 156).

The roughly square shaped site is bound by significant areas of woodland to the north and east, to a woodland belt separating the site from the existing open car parks to the west, and by the recently completed “Glass House” development to the south. This development involved retention of the main former office block but with a series of extensions and alterations to modernise it for a new occupier. In the approved development, the site subject to this application was to be developed with additional pavilion type structures as a further phase in the development, but the original structures were not to be refurbished as they were unsuitable for conversion.

The site is at the extreme eastern end of a walkway that runs the complete way through the Mereside complex to the main entrance at the Nether Alderley end of the site.

Also included within the site edged red is the access road to the south leading to a junction with the main internal link road.

The whole of Alderley Park lies entirely within the North Cheshire Green Belt, but is a Major Developed Site within the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

The application title reads:

“Full planning application for demolition of Block 156; the erection of a multi-storey car park; the creation of a mini-roundabout and other internal estate road works; landscaping and public realm; and other associated works including any necessary infrastructure.”

Block 156 consists of a pump house switch room. The proposed multi storey car park building is a substantial structure, measuring between some 22 and 24.8 metres high (due to ground level differences), by 80 metres by 106 metres, and providing 2280 parking spaces (including 43 disabled spaces and 12 motorcycle spaces). The building would amount to 62,702 sq m of gross internal floor-space spread over 7 floors, with the ground floor being effectively below ground to take advantage of the site topography. The roof would be utilized to provide PV panels.

The building would be faced in aluminium cladding on the “ends”, with a more open structure in the middle, with a series of projecting fins to help break up the structure. A green wall is proposed on the southern most prominent frontage extending to the first 3 floors.

In addition to the building itself, the proposals include the widening of the access road to the south, and the provision of a mini roundabout linking to the main internal circulation road.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Alderley Park has been the subject of a significant number of planning applications in recent years, including a series of applications associated with the residential development of the southern campus, re development of the Parklands office block (soon to be occupied by Royal London), a new leisure complex and more minor developments in the Mereside area. Of particular relevance to this application are:

15/4472M The refurbishment and partial redevelopment of Block 15 with laboratory, office and manufacturing (assembly) spaces for research and development and associated uses (Use Class B1) - Block 15 Former CTL, Alderley House, Alderley Park, Congleton Road, Nether Alderley - APPROVED MARCH 2016

This application included the site subject to this application, but only the southern part of the site has been developed.

15/5401M 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 dwelling-houses, 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 – APPROVED June 2016

This application covered the whole of the Alderley Park Site, with this area shown as being developed as the approval above. Importantly the planning approval set volume limits on developments at Alderley Park.

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – 2010-2030

PG 3	Green Belt
SE 1	Design
SE 3	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SE 4	The Landscape
SE 5	Trees, Hedgerows and woodland
SE 9	Energy Efficient Development
SE13	Flood Risk and Water Management
CO 1	Sustainable Travel and Transport

LPS 61 Alderley Park Opportunity Site
Appendix C (Parking Standards)

Macclesfield Local Plan (Saved policies)

NE 3 Landscape Conservation

NE11 Nature Conservation
GC 1 Green Belt – New Buildings
GC 4 Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt
DC3 Design – Amenity
DC8 Design – Landscaping
DC9 Design – tree protection
DC13 Design – Noise

Other Material Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework

Alderley Park Development Framework

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

National Planning Practice Guidance

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

United Utilities - No objections, but recommended conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage being on separate systems, approval of a surface water drainage scheme and advice on management/maintenance of SUDS.

Environment Agency - No comments received at the time of writing the report.

Natural England - They have no comments to make.

Highways - There are no highway objections to the application.

Environmental Protection – Comments on amenity/quality of life, air quality and contaminated land have been received, but no objections have been raised subject to conditions/informative.

VIEWS OF THE PARISH COUNCILS

Nether Alderley Parish Council – No comments received at the time of writing the report.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

None received

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principal of Development/Green Belt

As mentioned above, the whole of Alderley Park falls within the Green Belt, but as set out in the policy section above, the built up areas of the site, which include the application site, are covered by policies

LPS 61 Alderley Park Opportunity Site in the Cheshire East Local Plan, and Saved Policy GC 4 Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt of the Macclesfield Local Plan. The Alderley Park Development Framework, which builds on the LPS policy, clearly identifies the site as Previously Developed Land, which under policy LPS 61 allows for the construction of new buildings (Criteria 3) so long as they meet the criteria set out at 1. Which reads:

1. Development shall be:

- i. For human health science research and development, technologies and processes; or*
- ii. For residential (around 200 to 300 new homes) or other high value land uses demonstrated to be necessary for the delivery of the life science park(96) and not prejudicial to its longer term growth; or*
- iii. For uses complementary to the life science park and not prejudicial to its establishment or growth for this purpose.”*

The provision of a multi storey car park is considered to be complementary to the life science park and is not prejudicial to it.

The second relevant policy test (Criteria 2 having been met as the development is in accordance with the Development Framework) is:

4. Development would not have a greater impact on the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than existing development.

Criteria 5 is primarily concerned with impact on Listed Buildings or other heritage impacts which are not relevant on this site, but does reference landscape assets which are considered further in this report.

These policies are reflected in the NPPF which at Paragraphs 143-147 considers development in the Green Belt. Whilst the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development – which is by definition harmful, there are exceptions listed at Para 145 including:

“g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

- not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
- not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.”

In summary then the proposed development of this site can be considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt, on condition that it does not have a greater impact on openness than existing development. In this case this should consider the buildings approved on this site, but not yet constructed.

Visual impact is further considered below, but as ever there is an overlap with the concept of openness. The applicant's agent considers this issue at length in their Supporting Planning Statement (Page 15), where they give compare the volume of the proposed development to previous development (8,496 sqm to 7,085 sqm respectively), which they consider to be a modest increase in the context of the site, although acknowledge that when height is considered the new building will be

materially larger than the one it replaces. They go on to look at case law on the subject of openness, and look at the site in the context of Alderley Park as a whole, and conclude that:

“the physical increase on footprint, volume and height would not have any greater harmful impact on the openness of the Green Belt.”

They therefore consider that the policy text is met and as such the development is appropriate. The Statement then goes on to examine the Very Special Circumstances that should be considered in the event that Cheshire East council disagrees with their assessment and these are set out at para 5.34 of their report.

Whilst it is agreed the proposed multi storey car park will be materially larger than the buildings it will replace, and on the face of it will therefore have a greater impact on openness, the applicant's agent is right to look at the context of the site, not just at a local level, but in the context of the Mereside Development as a whole – an area as already set out clearly defined in the planning policies.

The site in question is very self contained at the eastern end of the Mereside complex and entirely screened by substantial areas of Woodland to the north and east, and significantly screened by a woodland belt to the west. This only leaves the southern elevation which will be seen in the context of the existing glass house development which is similar in scale and will again substantially screen the building from the south with only a narrow vista of the building being evident from the south west. Whilst the building will be clearly visible, especially as you get closer to the “vista” it needs to be remembered that this is only a very small part of the development and would have been seen in the context of a pavilion building (as approved in this location) with a wooded backdrop. However this is a material consideration as it is not implemented, and as such the current situation in terms of harm needs to be addressed. In this context the building in question can be seen as having an impact on openness and as a precautionary approach the scheme is assessed as being inappropriate. As such Very Special Circumstances do need to be demonstrated in this case.

The NPPF advises that substantial weight must be given to the harm to the Green Belt. Any other harm additional to that of inappropriateness must also be considered. The proposal, due to its scale and nature, will have a significant impact on the openness of the Green Belt, but cause no other harm to the purposes of Green Belt (NPPF para. 143) Never the less substantial weight must still be attributed to the loss of openness.

As noted in the report, there would also be additional (albeit very minor) harm to the landscape and trees/woodland which carries moderate weight against the proposal.

The question then is whether there are other considerations in favour of the development that clearly outweigh the identified harm. If so, then very special circumstances (VSC's) may exist to justify granting planning permission. The applicant sets them out in their supporting statements. In brief these are:

Continuing the success of Alderley Park

- The development enables the first limb of the new public realm within the Mereside campus as part of the movement strategy.
- Improve the quality of car parking provision, which even with the travel plan in place is still required - including EVCP's.

- The development will assist with travel planning being undertaken introducing pay-to-park measures to discourage car use.
- The slight increase in parking is needed to meet the demands from both current and future occupiers including Royal London.
- Alderley Park must compete in the global market for Life Sciences which is highly competitive.
- Allow for a pedestrian focus at Mereside.
- Assist in the delivery of the wider objectives of the site as set out in the Framework and Local Plan.

Other Economic and Environmental Benefits

- The MCCP allows for a consolidation of surface car parking which has significant visual benefits.
- The MSCP has been designed with PV panels which significantly improves the renewable energy production on site.
- The development is on an area of PDL which is strongly supported by the NPPF, and result in significant visual improvement of this site.
- The development enables improvements to landscaping and the public realm.
- The development will result in considerable expenditure and job creation during and after construction.
- As discussed above, the site has planning permission for new build office accommodation which whilst smaller in scale, would certainly have had a similar visual impact in the most prominent part of the site as outlined above.

In conclusion then, the development is considered to fully comply with the Development Plan, and should, under the precautionary approach, the site be seen as inappropriate by virtue of its's impact on openness, then it is considered that the very special circumstances set out above clearly outweigh any harm to the Green Belt. There are therefore no objections in principle to the development.

Site wide context/future proposals

Since the planning permission was granted for the “re-purposing” of Alderley Park (Ref: 15/5401M) proposals have evolved, and the master plan approved at the time did not include the provision of a multi storey car park – hence the need for this full application rather than a Reserved Matters submission. It must be stressed however that the overall objectives of Alderley Park – to create a Life Science Park remain unchanged. Since the original permission it is considered that the overall provision of parking was inadequate for the Park's needs, especially considering the loss of open car parks to other developments, and it was felt that a new multi storey car park on the eastern end of the site, to mirror those at the western end, was the best way to address this need.

Having the car park in this location has two distinct advantages:

- It allows for all the vehicles entering the site from the south to converge on one location, reducing the need for vehicles to drive to multiple locations in the central areas of the site.
- This allows for the re-enforcing of the car free pedestrian link from east to west cross the Mereside area creating a more pleasant and safer environment for users of the Park.

Highway Impacts

It is proposed to construct a new multi storey car park consisting of 2,227 spaces and 41 external visitor spaces. There is a new mini roundabout proposed on the internal spine road.

It is important to note that these are not all new parking spaces on the site as some of the existing car parks are being removed, there is a slight increase overall in the number of spaces on the site. There are no objections to the provision of the MSCP within the site, this will be a privately operated car park within Alderley Park.

The applicant has assessed whether there would be any impact on traffic generation to Alderley Park as part of the proposals, there is slight reduction in trips compared to the consented application.

The proposed mini roundabout on the internal road network is acceptable in design terms, all of the road network within the Alderley Park site is private and the Highway Authority has no liability in regards to its operation.

In terms of sustainable travel, Alderley Park already has a range of measures in place to promote alternatives to the private car. These include

- Shuttle bus services
- Car sharing
- Cycle facilities including free bike hire and changing/showers
- Staggered start and finish times and
- Retail facilities on site to reduce the need to travel off site.

Finally it is the intention to charge for parking at Alderley Park which should prove a very useful management tool.

Landscape and visual Impact

The application is for a multi-storey car park (MSCP) located on previously developed land on the north-eastern edge of the Mereside Campus at Alderley Park. The proposed MSCP is a large scale building consisting of seven storeys plus a basement level. The site is located within the Green Belt and the Alderley Edge and West Macclesfield Wooded Estates Local Landscape Designation Area (LLDA). The site is immediately surrounded to the north, west and east by mature woodland and to the south by a new large-scale office block known as the Glasshouse. The Mereside campus generally comprises large scale commercial buildings.

Landscape and Visual Impacts

The Environmental Statement includes a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Tyler Grange in accordance with current guidelines i.e. the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition, Landscape Institute & IEMA, 2013 (GLVIA).

In accordance with GLVIA potential landscape and visual impacts are considered separately. The effects on all receptors were assessed for both the construction phase and the long-term 'occupation stage'.

Landscape Effects

The LVIA identifies that in the Cheshire East Landscape Character Assessment (2018) the site lies with the Urban Character Type (i.e. the Mereside area of Alderley Park) and is surrounded by the Wooded Estates and Meres Character Type and Capesthorpe Character Area.

The Landscape Character Assessment provides Landscape Guidance for the Wooded Estates and Meres Landscape Character Type including:

“Avoid siting development (including buildings and other structures) in visually prominent areas or areas of complex landform”.

Unfortunately, the LVIA fails to identify that the site also lies within the Alderley Edge and West Macclesfield Wooded Estates Local Landscape Designation Area (LLDA). This is not a recent designation - it was previously within the Parklands Area of Special County Value (ASCV). This is therefore a ‘locally valued’ landscape (in accordance with GLVIA) and this should be taken in to consideration when judging both landscape and visual sensitivity.

The following two landscape receptors were assessed:

Alderley Park Urban Character Type

The significance of effect for the Construction Phase was assessed as Minor Adverse and for the Occupation Phase Minor Adverse

Wooded Estates and Meres Character Type

The significance of effect for the Construction Phase was assessed as Minor Adverse and for the Occupation Phase Negligible

Visual Effects

Fifteen fairly close range viewpoints from within Alderley Park were initially selected for assessment by Tyler Grange. Due to the height and scale of the proposed MSCP and the sensitive location within the LLDA, additional medium to long range viewpoints were requested to determine whether the proposed development would be prominent in the wider landscape. Four additional viewpoints were then selected - three to the north-east (VPs 16, 17 & 18) and one to the west in Chelford (VP 19)

Effects on views/user groups were assessed as follows:

Views from users both within and outside Alderley Park have been considered both for construction and also operation. The document summarises the effects for the Construction Phase as follows:

“The receptors are considered of either Low or Medium sensitivity and generally constitute a Negligible to Medium magnitude of change, aside from users experiencing the local footpaths and surrounding landscape for recreational purposes who will potentially experience a high magnitude of change during construction. Overall, these result in either Negligible or Minor Adverse effects aside from the previously mentioned local footpath users who will experience a Moderate Adverse impact during construction. This receptor is considered to experience a Moderate Adverse impact due to the close proximity to the site and the open views towards the site and MSCP development. There are no significant effects considered for the construction phase”

The document summarises the effects for the Occupation Phase as follows:

“The receptors are considered of either Low or Medium sensitivity and all experience a magnitude of change between Negligible and Medium. Overall, these result in either Negligible or Minor Adverse effects for the occupation phase.

There are no significant effects considered for the occupation phase. Effects can be summarised as being limited and localised”

Impacts on Visual Openness

Recent case law has established that when considering the impacts of development in the Green Belt, both the spatial and visual aspects of openness should be taken into account. The spatial aspects of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt are considered separately in the submission..

The LVIA considers visual openness and concludes:

“Although the height of the proposed development is greater than the previous or consented development, given the massing, height and scale of other existing development across the site, the new car park will not appear to be out of scale or incongruous within the built context. The visual impacts of the proposal will therefore result in minimal change, with the openness of the Green Belt both within Alderley Park and the context of the adjacent landscape and wooded backdrop remain largely unaltered. Impacts of the proposed development upon the perceived visual openness of the Green Belt within and adjacent to Alderley Park will be maintained. Views along movement corridors and along pedestrian routes within the park and the woodland edge will remain, as will the context within which existing and proposed development is experienced.”

Mitigation

The following mitigation measures have been ‘embedded’ into the completed development:

- Siting of the proposed development to enable the retention of mature vegetation to the north west, north, east and south where possible
- A consistency of elevational treatments with the surrounding buildings, including the Glasshouses
- Mass and scale of development nestled into the existing wooded backdrop
- Location of the access road broadly consistent with the existing and established route to reduce impact

Further mitigation measures include:

- The inclusion of both a Living Wall and Vegetated Wire Line system. This element assists in breaking up the mass of the building and provides ‘green’ visual connectivity with the retained off-site trees
- Additional landscaping, including pleached trees in association with the southern elevation and tree planting within the surface car park areas.

Locations for enhancement of the existing woodland are detailed within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment report and summarised below.

- Understorey planting along the route of the decommissioned high pressure pipeline to the east of the MSCP within W1;
- New planting of standard trees along the woodland edge, across from the north western corner of the Glasshouse building where removals have previously taken place;
- Removal of Poplar trees and replacement with native broad leaved woodland species within W1B and adjacent to W1C; and
- Woodland wildflower mix and woodland bulb planting adjacent to W1C.

Officer conclusions

Although the LVIA fails to take the LLDA designation into consideration, which would tend to increase the sensitivity of both landscape and visual receptors, the overall conclusion is broadly accepted, that the development is not likely to result in any significant landscape or visual effects.

Views of the development from within the Mereside campus would be in the context of other very large buildings. The photomontages illustrate how the MSCP would sit alongside the existing buildings. Longer distance views indicate that the development would be screened in views from the north and east by the mature woodland along the Alderley Park boundary and also by intervening vegetation. The MSCP would be visible in this long distance view from Chelford to the west. However, it would be viewed in proximity to the Glasshouse and tall chimney which are currently visible and, at a distance of 3 kilometres, this would have only a minor adverse effect.

The Council's Landscape Officer is therefore satisfied that the development would not be conspicuous in the wider landscape.

Suggested Conditions

The landscape scheme submitted with the application is not fully detailed. If the application is recommended for approval it is suggested that an appropriate landscape condition so that the full hard and soft landscape details must be submitted for approval within a specified timescale. The landscape scheme should also include the woodland enhancement proposals outlined above unless this is required under a separate condition. The standard landscape implementation and 5 year replacement condition should also be applied.

Trees/Woodland

Selected individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands within the site are protected by the Cheshire East Borough Council (Nether Alderley– Alderley Park No.3) Tree Preservation Order 2018.

Woodland (W6) of the TPO stands to the south east of the application site

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (TEP Report Number 11784_R04_CG_JW)

Woodland adjacent to the site to the east known as Beech Wood is replanted Ancient Woodland as part of the Ancient Woodland Inventory which is protected through the NPPF (para 175 (c)). Other woodland beyond the northern and western boundaries are listed as part of the National Forest Inventory 2014.

The application has no direct impact on Ancient Woodland and the Council's Nature Conservation Officer would concur with the applicant's comments regarding the impact on Ancient Woodland.

The Assessment identifies four low (C) category trees (3 Silver Birch and a Maple) that will require removal to accommodate the proposed new roundabout. A mature High (A) category Beech, a moderate (B) category Beech, Three low (C) category trees (a Yew and two Hornbeam) and four low (C) category groups of trees require removal to accommodate the MSCP.

The two Beech trees are prominent individual specimens standing outside the boundaries of the protected woodland. Both trees are not protected by the TPO, nevertheless their loss will have a moderate adverse impact within the immediate area.

Retention of both trees was considered as assessed as part of the pre-application consultation process and dismissed as significant adjustments to the MSCP and other infrastructure provision would be required to accommodate root protection areas and allow adequate working space around the trees which is not considered feasible.

The Assessment refers to the roundabout location requiring the partial removal of a small section of Woodland W1 to the north west and a small area of young trees on an existing embankment and 2 Silver Birch to accommodate the western façade of the MSCP.

The small section of woodland (W1) forms part of the woodland (W3) of the Tree Preservation Order and appears to lie just outside the Ancient Woodland boundary. The removal of this small section of protected woodland presents only a slight adverse impact within the immediate area; impact on the woodland and its contribution to the wider landscape is not considered to be significant.

The removal of a small area of unprotected trees located on the embankment and two Silver Birch has been agreed as part of pre-application discussions on site. The trees are not protected by the TPO and their loss has no significant adverse impact on the wider landscape.

The loss of protected woodland and two mature Beech trees of High and Moderate category having regard to Policy SE 5 requires a net environmental gain by appropriate mitigation, compensation or offsetting where there are clear overriding reasons for allowing the development and impacts are unavoidable.

As part of pre-application discussions, the matter of mitigation and replacement planting was discussed with an emphasis on enhancement of the existing woodlands through management with more favoured broadleaved species and understorey planting. A basis for the scope of mitigation proposed for the loss of trees and a Boundary Enhancement and Mitigation Strategy (Tyler Grange 11784/P10) has been produced (although does not appear to have been submitted).

The Assessment suggests potential impacts on the Root Protection Areas (RPA) of a mature unprotected Silver Birch (T8), Oak (T9), Sycamore (T10) and a protected Sycamore (T11) due to the alignment of the access road and roundabout. Impacts do not appear to be significant however with a proposed footpath (north of T11) potentially requiring a no dig and permeable surface.

Some access facilitation pruning is required along the access road adjacent to the woodland and for adequate working space for scaffolding etc for construction of the MSCP. The pruning, to allow for high sided vehicle access and installation of the footpath adjacent to the proposed roundabout comprises of minor crown lifting work and is broadly in accordance with accepted arboricultural practice.

The proposed drainage scheme presents no significant impacts for trees.

If planning consent is granted conditions relating to tree protection/retention and submission of an AIA are recommended.

Building design

There is no doubt that the proposed building will be a substantial structure, but as set out above, will only be readily seen from the Glasshouse development and from the pedestrian walkway from the south west. As such the design has focused on these elevations where a green wall is proposed on the 3 lower floors, and the “end” of each elevation will be treated in an aluminium cladding system, and the whole structure faced with projecting aluminium “fins”. This design very much echoes the design of Glass house and will give the building a modern, but simple appearance which is considered to be appropriate in this context, and for a building of this nature.

Amenity

The site is a considerable distance from the nearest residential property (on or off site), but is in relatively close proximity to adjacent office accommodation where there could be some amenity impacts if not properly controlled. Environmental Protection have recommended an informative regarding construction hours and the various controls outlined in the submission with regards to light pollution etc. should be conditioned as part of any approval.

Ecology

Badgers

Whilst badgers are known to occur in the wider Alderley Park Site, no evidence of badger activity was recorded on or adjacent to the application site. It is advised that based on the current status of badgers on site the proposed development is not likely to have an adverse impact upon this species.

However as the status of badgers on a site over a short time scale it is advised that if planning consent is granted a condition should be attached which requires the submission of an updated badger survey if works on site have not commenced by the 6th August 2019.

Roosting bats

It is advised that roosting bats are unlikely to be directly affected by the removal of the remaining buildings on site or the proposed tree removal.

Great Crested Newts

Recorded in ponds a number of ponds during the latest surveys. Considering the distance between the known breeding ponds, the poor quality of the on-site habitats and the presence of higher quality intervening habitat, it is advised that the proposed development is not reasonably likely to have an adverse effect on this species.

Common Toad

This priority species was recorded in all ponds subject to detailed amphibian surveys. The application site is however likely to be of limited value for this species and it is advised that accordingly the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact upon this species.

Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Woodland

The application site is located immediately adjacent to Radnor Mere and Woods Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and an extensive area of replanted ancient woodland. Ancient woodlands receive specific protection through the NPPF.

It is advised that the proposed development would not have a direct impact upon the LWS or ancient woodland.

Ancient woodlands are however sensitive to a range of indirect effects. Natural England standing advice advises that a minimum buffer of 15 m should be provided between the development and the edge of the woodland. This has not been provided as part of the current proposals.

Compensatory planting is proposed in the margins of the retained woodland. It is recommended that proposals for the introduction of woodland wildflower seed mix should be removed from the proposals as this is not appropriate in an ancient woodland.

It is advised that it must be ensured that the drainage strategy for the site does not allow the discharge of any surface water into the adjacent woodland. Gully pots should also be offset from kerb edges to prevent entrapment of wildlife this matter may be dealt with by means of a planning condition.

The ES states that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be produced to mitigate the risk of damage from pollution, the storage of materials and construction stage lighting. It is recommended that the CEMP be submitted prior to the determination of the application, or if planning consent is granted the submission of the CEMP should be subject to a pre-commencement condition.

Lighting

It is advised that lighting associated with the proposed car park has the potential to have a significant impact upon foraging bats and wildlife in general associated with the adjacent woodland/LWS habitats. The ES states that measures have been put in place to reduce light spill.

A light spill plan which better illustrates the lux levels upon the surrounding woodlands has been requested and was anticipated shortly at the time of writing this reports. Comments on this matter will be reported in the update report.

Nesting Birds

If planning consent is granted then a condition would be required to safeguard nesting birds.

Enhancement for biodiversity

The provision of features for breeding birds, such as commercially available swift bricks, at this site would be beneficial for biodiversity. The provision of these features would contribute to the aims of Local Plan Core Strategy Policy SE 3. It is therefore recommended that the applicant provides detailed proposals for the incorporation of these types of features. An annotated plan showing the number, type and location of proposed would be sufficient.

Conditions

If planning consent is granted the following conditions are required:

- Submission of updated badger survey if works not commenced by 6th August 2019.
- Submission of Construction Environment Management Plan
- Safeguarding nesting birds
- Off set gully pots.

Flood Risk/Drainage

Comments from the Flood Risk Team are awaited, however no significant issues are anticipated as the drainage systems at Alderley Park have been the subject of extensive discussions on various

applications in recent times, and subject to appropriate mitigation measures (which are proposed in the application) to control flows all matters should be capable of being addressed.

Air Quality

As the Electric Vehicle Charging Points are already shown on the drawings and the existing Travel Plan will be implemented, Environmental Protection has no comments to make.

Contaminated Land

The Contaminated Land team has no objection to the above application subject to the following comments with regard to contaminated land:

- The application area has a history of pharmaceutical research use and therefore the land may be contaminated.
- The report, Phase I and Phase II Site Investigation Report, reference NX347, NX Consulting, September 2018 submitted in support of the application recommends no remedial works. We are in agreement with this.
- It was noted that during the site investigation works access was limited due to large stockpiles of demolition material. There is the potential for unexpected contamination to be encountered during the build.

As such, and in accordance with the NPPF, Environmental Protection recommends a condition and an informative be attached should planning permission be granted:

CONCLUSIONS

The development is proposed on this brownfield site within the existing Mereside area of Alderley Park, on previously developed land which has planning permission for office development. The proposals are materially larger than the consented scheme and as a precautionary approach it is considered there is an impact on openness and as such would constitute inappropriate development on this Green Belt site. However as the report sets out, the impact is only slight, and in any event Very Special Circumstances exist to outweigh any possible harm.

The proposed development will assist in rationalising the car parking on the site, and allowing it to be concentrated in two locations at the entrance points to Mereside. This allows for the pedestrianisation of the central site area and as a consequence the improving of its general environment for visitors and users alike, re-enforcing the unique nature of this site.

The proposals will therefore have positive benefits for pedestrians and site users, which will have knock-on benefits for the site and help build on the success of the site to the area and Borough as a whole. There are also considered to be traffic management benefits from the scheme.

The proposals will have a neutral impact on most other issues, including, Amenity, Ecology and Environmental impacts including air quality and contaminated land.

There is a slight adverse impact on trees/woodlands, and very minor landscape impacts.

Accordingly the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to the following conditions;

- 1. 3 Year start time**
- 2. Approved plans/documents**
- 3. Materials**
- 4. Landscaping**
- 5. Landscape maintenance**
- 6. Tree Protection**
- 7. Tree Retention**
- 8. Arboricultural Method Statement**
- 9. Contaminated land verification report**
- 10. Foul and surface water on separate systems**
- 11. Surface water drainage**
- 12. Bird nesting season**
- 13. Updated badger survey if start not before Aug 19**
- 14. Gully Pots**

Informatives

- NPPF**
- Hours of working**

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Head of Planning Regulation has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Strategic Planning Board, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

