

**WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**  
**DELEGATED REPORT**

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>S6/2010/1359/MA</b>
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**NOTATION:**

The site lies within Employment Area EA6 as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

The application site accommodates a large warehouse parcel distribution centre, which is located on the southern end of Frobisher Way within the Hatfield Business Park. The main building is rectangular and has 160 docking bays along the eastern and western long elevations. Parking areas for the tractor and trailer sections of lorries surround the eastern and western boundaries, currently there are 88 dedicated trailer spaces and 27 tractor spaces.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

The proposed development would involve alterations to the site layout to allow additional tractor (lorry) parking spaces. The main alterations would be made to the south western corner of the site where that partly provides 12 tractor spaces and landscaping would be altered to provide 24 trailer spaces.

The other alterations would only involve changes to the existing marking and designations to the hardstanding areas. To the north west of the site an existing parking area would be reduced to provide an area for pallet storage. To the north of the building 7 additional parking bays would be created. To the eastern side of the building 34 trailer parking spaces would be divided in two to provide 68 tractor spaces. The result of the alterations would accommodate 80 tractor parking spaces and 69 trailer spaces.

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

S6/2000/0536/FP – Erection of covered external staircase to existing warehouse – Approved (19/06/2000)

S6/1997/0651/AD – Erection of illuminated signs – Approved (02/09/1997)

S6/1997/0300/FP – Erection of gate house building and canopy, in connection with distribution warehouse – Approved (12/05/1997)

S6/1996/0053/FP – Erection of regional distribution centre (Class B8) and vehicle repair workshop (Class B1c/B2 Development) – Approved

S6/1993/0717/DE – Erection of B8 storage and distribution building (Reserved matters following outline permission S6/0223/91/OP) – Approved (20/01/1994)

S6/1992/0758/DE – Formation of lorry parking for 25 vehicles. Approval of reserved matters under Ref: S6/0223/91/OP – Approved (21/01/1993)

S6/1992/0608/DE – Layout and construction of internal distributor roads. Approval of reserved matters Ref: S6/0223/91/OP – Approved (29/10/1992)

## **SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:**

National Policy

PPS1: Delivering sustainable development

PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

PPG13: Transport

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

None.

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1: Sustainable Development

GBSP2: Towns and specified settlements

EMP1: Employment Areas

EMP2: Acceptable Uses in Employment Areas

R3: Energy Efficiency

M14: Parking standards for new developments

D1: Quality of design

D2: Character and context

D5: Design for movement

D7: Safety by Design

D8: Landscaping

D9: Access and Design for people with disabilities

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Hertfordshire Highways** – The proposal would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways.

**Welwyn Hatfield Council (Trees and Landscape)** – No objection subject to some amendments to the planting scheme.

**Welwyn Hatfield Council (Environmental Health)** – This is a site where there is a great deal of activity, especially at night. Consequently there are high night-time noise levels associated with the traffic movements. For this reason, when the residential area was developed close to the Southern boundary extensive noise mitigation measures were necessary to protect the residents from excessive noise. These did not only include window and ventilation standards but also the provision of a long bund and fence to provide an acoustic barrier.

The proposed changes would result in some parking bays being provided closer to the houses, but no closer than the roadway itself which runs along the Northern end of the building. I have considered the possible impact noise issue if trailers were to be uncoupled at these closer parking positions, but do not believe the noise generated would compromise the attenuation standards provided.

**The Highways Agency** – No response.

**The Environment Agency** – No response.

## **HATFIELD TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS**

No comments received.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

This application has been advertised and 2 representations have been received. Period expired 17 August 2010. One letter of objection was received from a local resident and a further letter was received from Royal Mail Group (RMG), who occupy a unit on the Business Park.

Objections raised related the following:

- An increase in noise and disturbance to the neighbouring properties.
- Vehicle numbers and movements
- Discrepancies in the information provided, which details the number of vehicles
- The application has not been supported by a transport assessment.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**The main issues are:**

- 1. The proposed development's impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers**
- 2. Transport Matters**
- 3. Trees and Landscaping**
- 4. Other Material Planning Considerations**

1. The proposed development would be sited within an enclosed area of the site, which is screened from the surrounding public areas. The main warehouse building backs onto the area of development and therefore it would not be viewed prominently from the surrounding area or office workers.

The site is adjacent to a area of an area of open Green Belt land to the west, which is separated by a dense screen of vegetation. Even if this are were to decline, the separation distance is sufficient to ensure that any vehicles parked within proposal area would not appear prominent from the surrounding open land.

The adjacent properties on Richard Street and Barlow Close to the south back onto the application site. These properties would retain a similar view as the retained vegetation would screen the proposed works. When vehicles are parked in the proposed spaces they would not appear prominent as the distance separation the adjacent properties is sufficient to offset any changes to the outlook from these properties.

The application documents note that site currently operates above the capacity of the existing parking layout. This results in vehicles circulating to find spaces and conflict between vehicles and pedestrians within the site. As the proposal aims to reduce the level of unnecessary manoeuvring, it should also help reduce the number of sounds produced from engines, reversing warning noise and if vehicles need to sound their horns. Therefore, the smother operation of the site should result in less noise and disturbance being generated. Therefore, as the proposed development would improve the internal operation and efficiency of the site, it is likely to reduce activity and noise generated associated with the existing awkward arrangements.

The proposal involves realigning the lighting within the site. As existing there are column lights within this area of the site and the positioning would not be significantly closer to the residential properties. Provided the proposed lighting does not exceed the height and intensity of the existing lighting, if appropriately positioned to focus into the site, the new lighting arrangement would not have an adverse impact upon the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers.

2. The details of the proposed level of parking required are set out in the Planning, Design and Access Statement. Within this statement there is a discrepancy between the existing level of tractor and trailer parking noted when table and the drawings are compared, but the numbers have since been clarified by the applicant. The applicant has submitted amended information which notes there are currently 88 trailer parking spaces, 34 tractor parking space and there are 160 docking bays.

The information submitted notes that the amount of parcels being processed has increased from 75,000 per night in 1997 to 200,000+ now. Due to the increases in the number of parcels being processed, the vehicles are currently being managed within the site, but beyond the capacity of the parking spaces allocated. The number of parcels processed is 200,000 on an average night which equates to 500 vehicles entering the site and 500 leaving the site between the hours of 16:00 and 06:00.

The application has set out that the proposed works are to improve the internal management and safety of the site. No details have been provided that would relate to an increase in the number of vehicles, therefore, the proposed works would not result in any further impact outside of the site.

The statement notes that no changes are proposed to the access arrangements. A minor amended to the staff car parking is noted, which may be subject to a separate application. Considering the proposed development is not to increase the capacity of the site further, it is not envisaged that the proposal should have a knock on affect to lead a substantial increase in staff parking requirements, which may be contrary to the parking standards of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

Improvements in the internal layout and additional parking spaces will enable vehicles to manoeuvre more easily within the site and allow vehicles to be parked within the site. The site is already operating at a level that the applicant wants to facilitate with the proposed layout and the proposal will not result in an increase of traffic on the highway network. Therefore, there is no requirement for the application to be supported by a Transport Assessment. For these reasons the Highway Authority have not objected to the application.

3. Currently there are no Tree Preservation Orders on or adjacent to the site, however, the landscaping within and surrounding the site is important to screen and soften the appearance of the built development. The proposal involves partially removing an area of soft landscaping to make more parking spaces.

The maintenance plan included with the application is reasonable and includes the points that the Council's Landscape Officer would expect to see. A few small changes to the schedule were suggested. Aspen is listed in the proposed trees, but this would be discouraged and it has been suggested to plant three more hornbeam. Within the woodland mix are privet and goat willow, which would also be discouraged. The quantity of privet can be split between thorn and field maple and the number of goat willow should be added to hornbeam.

The suggested amendments take account of which species thrive in this area and appropriate species that will tolerate pruning, as this may be necessary if the trees either obscure the lamp columns, CCTV or overhand the parking spaces.

The amendments were incorporated into the landscaping proposals and an amended plan was submitted. The amended planting plan is considered to be acceptable and meets the requirements of Policy D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

4. Policy EMP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 requires proposals within employment areas to comply with certain criteria, which have been assessed below:

- The proposal is associated with the internal operation of the site. The proposed changes are not of a scale which would have a significant impact on the demand for housing within the travel to work area.
- The proposal has been assessed by Hertfordshire Highways and it has been concluded that the proposal is not proposing to increase the amount of trips generated. The development therefore would not result in any significant further impact upon the local or strategic transport infrastructure.
- As assessed within section 1 of the report the proposed development would not have an adverse impact upon the residential amenities of the adjoining occupiers.
- The application sets out that the proposal is to improve the operation and safety of the site, rather than increase the level of work and productivity. Therefore, the development should not relate to a need to increase the amount of staff or need for further parking space, or affect servicing and access areas.
- The proposal does not involve any retail element.

The application has been submitted with a sustainability checklist and the Design and Access Statement include some further information. These details state that the development would help prevent vehicles from having to circle the site looking for a parking space, which would help prevent unnecessary vehicular emissions within the site. The proposal would also involve replacement planting within the south western corner of the site. Considering the development mostly involves resurfacing and altering the layout of the site, these provisions are a reasonable effort to meet the requirements of Policies SD1 and R3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed development would not have an adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the locality or the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers. The applicant has detailed that the proposed works are to improve efficiency and safety within the site and the development would not result in further trips being generated than the existing site. Therefore, the proposal would not have a further impact upon the surrounding highway network than the existing site. Subject to conditions the application complies with the requirements of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and is considered to be acceptable.

**RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

**CONDITIONS:**

1. C.2.1: Standard Time Limit
2. C.13.1: Development in accordance with approved plans/details (90)08 & (90)06 A & 1984/2A 1984/3B received and dated 30 June 2010 and 1984/3B received and dated 24 September 2010

Post Development

3. The proposed lighting shall not exceed the height of the existing columns and shall be positioned to focus light within the site and prevent overspill to neighbouring residential area.

REASON: To prevent light pollution and disturbance to the neighbouring residential areas and prevent loss of residential amenity to the adjacent residential occupiers. In accordance with R20 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

4. The landscaping of the site shall be carried out in accordance with plan 1984/3B received and dated 24 September 2010 and the David Jarvis Associates planting proposals five year maintenance plan received and dated 30 June 2010.

REASON: The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted in accordance with Policy D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

5. C.4.2: Landscape management

**SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:**

Reason for Grant of Full Planning Consent:

The proposal has been considered against Planning Policy Statement/Guidance PPS1, PPS4, PPG13 , and development plan policies SD1, GBSP2, EMP1, EMP2, R3, M14, D1, D2, D5, D7, D8, D9 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

**INFORMATIVES:** None.

**Signature of author..... Date.....**