

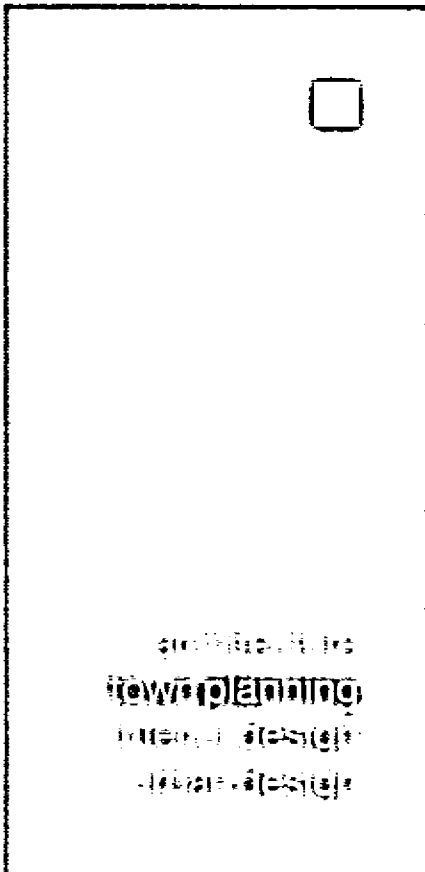


WELWYN HATFIELD  
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# Land at DHL Hatfield, Frobisher Way Hatfield

## Planning, Design and Access Statement June 2010

prepared by Vincent and Gorbings



**VINCENT AND GORBINGS**  
CHARTERED ARCHITECTS AND TOWN PLANNERS

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Vincent and Gorbings Planning Associates in order to allow Welwyn Hatfield Council to fully assess the planning implications of proposed changes to the yard area at DHL's distribution centre at Frobisher Way on Hatfield Business Park.
- 1.2 The proposals allow for safer and more efficient use of the site by providing additional spaces for HGV tractors and reconfiguration of parking for trailers.
- 1.3 This document complies with Section 42 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires that a statement is prepared and submitted with planning applications, covering design principles and access issues. It fully takes into account the advice within DCLG Circular 01/2006 *Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System* and is based on guidance issued by the Commission for the Built Environment entitled *Design and Access statements : how to write, read and use them*.
- 1.4 The information is considered to be sufficiently comprehensive to allow for the planning application to be considered within the Council's target timetable of 8 weeks.
- 1.5 As well as this Planning, Design and Access Statement, the planning application comprises :-
- The planning application form
  - Layout drawings prepared by Dash Dot Architecture
  - Landscape proposals prepared by David Jarvis Associates.
- 1.6 The above documents, together with the assessment in this statement, set out a clear case in support of a development which is fully in accordance with the Development Plan.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND ON DHL AND OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 2.1 The application site has been in operation since late 1997. It was originally opened by Securicor Omega Express, the site is now owned by DHL Domestic/ Parcelpoint.
- 2.2 The site is a major hub for the DHL/Parcelpoint network providing a sort operation which services 50+ out based sites around the country. The site processes an average 200,000 parcels per night, increasing to 300,000 during peak times. During the operation approximately 500 vehicles enter the site, with a further 500 vehicle movements within the yard. Of these, 250 trailers/ 16T and 100 units are based on site permanently, the rest requiring temporary parking whilst on site. Approximately 20 16T "demountable" boxes are also based on site.
- 2.3 The success of the business has led to an increase in processing volumes increased since 1997. Average throughputs were 75,000 parcels per night in 1997, which has now risen to 200,000+. This has resulted in a gradual increase in vehicle numbers and movements through the site. Further to this, business requirements necessitate more vehicles being hub based instead of site based. The business has changed further over the last 12 months whereby there is a decrease in 16T boxes (circa 40+) and an increase in trailers (circa 30+).
- 2.4 Lack of parking on site creates several operational difficulties. The reduced space also creates safety issues. Vehicles and trailers are required to double park and trailer manoeuvres have to be carried out in areas too confined for such movements. This increases the risk of collision or damage to property. Pedestrians are required to walk alongside vehicles manoeuvring in such conditions increasing the danger and likelihood of injury.
- 2.5 Reconfiguration of the service yard as proposed in this planning application will :-
- reduce the amount of vehicles double parked or parked in inappropriate locations;
  - reduce operational difficulties by reducing congestion and keep the yard flowing smoothly
  - reduce tailbacks caused by vehicles manoeuvring in constrained areas
  - reduce number of movements as drivers do not have to keep circling for parking bays.
  - create more space for vehicle manoeuvres reducing the likelihood of collision or damage to property
  - reduce the distance drivers have to travel to reach their vehicles in a yard full of moving vehicles

- create a safer, more openly visible environment for pedestrians
  - help keep walkways free of vehicular obstructions
- 2.6 The above benefits will clearly reduce overall use of vehicles and thereby have sustainability benefits by reducing emissions from the site.
- 2.7 Full consideration has been given to alternative solutions; however the proposed solution is the only potential way of addressing the current issues. Off site parking or some form of remote service centre has been considered but is impractical due to tight operational turnaround times, would lead to increased journey lengths, a decrease in productivity, loss of control and an increase in costs.
- 2.8 The proposals are therefore essential for the successful continued operation of the site, will reduce vehicle movements and will improve safety on the site.

### 3.0 THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

#### SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The site is located at the southern end of Frobisher Way on the Hatfield Business Park.
- 3.2 It comprises two distinct areas, namely (i) the main distribution centre and associated yard and commercial vehicle parking and (ii) an area of staff parking to the north.
- 3.3 The land is located at the southern end of Frobisher Way. It lies to the west of further warehousing development and to the north of recent residential development on Richards Street. To the west the site is bound by open land which formed part of the former Hatfield Aerodrome site.
- 3.4 The building comprises a distribution centre of some 11,000sq.m. with ancillary offices located at its northern end and a large distribution space some 295m x 38m. The building has 160 loading doors arranged along its western and eastern elevations.
- 3.5 Parking is provided around the outside of the yard, with 54 trailer and 2 tractor parking spaces along the eastern boundary, and a further 34 trailer spaces and 24 tractor spaces along the western boundary.
- 3.6 Between these areas of parking are peripheral landscaped planting areas of varying widths.

#### EXISTING ACCESS

- 3.7 The site is accessed from a dedicated arm off a roundabout on Frobisher Way via a two way security cordon.
- 3.8 Frobisher Way forms part of a network of highways on Hatfield Business Park which lead to the A1(M) at junction 3 and junction 4.

#### PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.9 Planning permission for the premises was granted in 1996 (LPA ref. S6/0053/96/FP). The operative planning permission is subject to a planning condition requiring that *"parking, turning and loading space shown on the plan hereby provided shall be provided and marked out prior to the occupation of any buildings on the site, and shall be retained for those purposes thereafter."*

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

- 3.10 The application seeks planning permission to re-configure the yard area to meet operational needs and enhance the safety of the site.
- 3.11 The changes are shown in the application drawings. Along the eastern boundary, 34 existing trailer parking spaces will be sub-divided (by painting only) in order to provide for tractor parking in a tandem formation. No new hard surfaces will be required.
- 3.12 Along the western boundary, 24 new trailer parking bays will be created in an area presently accommodating tractor parking and landscaping. This element of the proposal will involve the creation of new hard surfaced areas. All drainage from these areas will be accommodated in the existing surface water drainage system for the site.
- 3.13 Full account has been taken of the peripheral landscaping areas along the western boundary. The proposed planting has been designed to restore the screening vegetation as quickly as possible using an appropriate, attractive and varied mix of native species. Whilst the landscape corridor will be made narrower, a new landscape plan and management strategy is submitted as part of the planning application. This will ensure that the screening function and quality of the landscaping is maintained in the long term.
- 3.14 No changes to the access into this part of the site are proposed. A minor amendment to the staff car park access is proposed but is subject of a separate planning application.
- 3.15 The commercial vehicle parking situation can be summarised as follows:-

	Before	After
Trailer parking	76	69
Tractor parking	34	80

## 4.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 4.1 The planning policy context for this proposal is provided by the East of England Plan (RSS14) and the saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan (2005).

### EAST OF ENGLAND PLAN

- 4.2 Whilst providing strategic advice, one of the key objectives of the East of England Plan is to realise the economic potential of the region and its people by providing sufficient and high quality employment land.

### DISTRICT PLAN

- 4.3 The site is located within one of the District's key employment areas as defined in Policy EMP1.

- 4.4 The site also lies within the defined boundaries of the Hatfield Aerodrome site and is therefore covered by policies HATAER1 – 4. These policies, together with guidance in the published Supplementary Planning Guidance for the aerodrome seek to put into effect the overall strategy for the wider site, which includes ensuring :-

- that development is sustainable
- the provision of suitable employment
- development provides high standards of environmental quality
- a fixed Green Belt boundary.

- 4.5 The western boundary of the application site defines the edge of the Green Belt. The land to the west forms part of the future proposals for the Ellenbrook Country Park, although may also be subject to mineral extraction given its identification as a preferred area of search in the Minerals Local Plan.

- 4.6 The District Plan also provides advice on the design of employment related development in Policy EMP13. It states *inter alia* that the Council will expect all proposals to reach a high standard of design and site layout and that attention should be paid to landscaping as part of the fundamental design of proposals. It also states that schemes should provide adequate servicing and access arrangements and not harm the amenities of any nearby residential properties.



#### PPS4 – PLANNING FOR SUSTIANABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

- 4.7 PPS4 sets out the Government approach to planning for employment. It is aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth. Policy EC10.1 states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development and that such applications should be treated favourably.

## 5.0 DESIGN AND ACCESS ISSUES

- 5.1 The character of the area is defined by the large scale of the existing building, open areas of car parking, the open land to the west and the residential areas to the north.
- 5.2 The design of the proposals has been based on making the best and most efficient use of the site without undue impacts on the surrounding landscape.
- 5.3 The proposals include a comprehensive landscaping scheme. A detailed description of the planting proposals and five year maintenance plan is described in detail in the accompanying documentation.
- 5.4 Adjoining the south western boundary of the site it is proposed to retain a landscaped corridor approximately 4m wide. This will be planted with native tree species to retain the existing green edge to development and filter low level views of the yard. A small woodland block adjoins the site boundary and currently offers a good degree of screening for the site. Areas of the existing landscape margin to the north and south of the woodland block affected by the proposals are to be planted with individual heavy standard deciduous and evergreen tree species in order to restore the screening vegetation as quickly as possible. The accompanying maintenance plan seeks to ensure the successful establishment of the planting proposals and long term effectiveness of the screen belt planting.
- 5.5 The landscape proposals will serve a number of functions. Firstly it will ensure that the amenity and openness of the adjoining greenbelt is protected. Secondly it will ensure that a landscape buffer to Ellenbrook Park is retained. Finally, it will maintain biodiversity corridors around the site linking the site to the surrounding area.

## 6.0 ACCESS ISSUES

### ACCESS TO THE SITE

- 6.1 The site is in an accessible location. The surrounding road network is predominantly flat with good facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 6.2 The site is also well located in relation to public transport, with high frequency bus routes in close proximity.
- 6.3 No changes are proposed to the vehicular access arrangements for this part of the site.

### INCLUSIVE ACCESS

- 6.4 The proposals will ensure better safety by helping to manage pedestrian and vehicular movement. Aside from this, there will be no impact on access for able bodied or those of limited mobility.

## 7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

7.1 The key planning considerations are :-

- The need and benefits that will arise;
- Impact on landscaping and the Green Belt
- Impact on residential amenity.

7.2 We comment on each of these as follows.

### NEED AND BENEFITS

7.3 As set out above, the successful operation of the site by DHL and hence the employment being provided, is such that re-configuration of the yard is essential for efficient and safe operation. As a major employer in one of the key employment areas within the District, it is important in terms of the wider planning strategy of the area that the success of DHL is encouraged.

7.4 As also set out above, issues regarding health and safety of employees will be addressed by these proposals as well as reducing unnecessary vehicle movements.

### LANDSCAPING AND GREEN BELT CONSIDERATIONS

7.5 As highlighted above, the application is accompanied a landscape plan and management strategy. Whilst the proposal will result in some loss of landscaping, it is considered that the overall screening impact of that which remains will ensure that the effect of the site on the Green Belt will not be worsened in the long term.

### IMPACT ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

7.6 A significant landscaped bund and boundary fencing separates the site from the neighbouring properties on Richards Street. Whilst the proposed layout will bring some trailer parking into an area at the south west corner of the site which is slightly closer to neighbouring properties than the existing parking, there will still be a considerable degree of separation. There will be no adverse impacts on visual amenity and no noise or pollution impacts will arise.

## 8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 Given the above assessment, it is considered that the proposal accords with national planning guidance and the relevant policies of District Plan.
- 8.2 The development will positively assist the operation of an existing employment site and improve safety and operational efficiency. There will be no demonstrable adverse impacts on the Green Belt, the wider landscape or on residential amenity.
- 8.3 On this basis we commend the application to the Local Planning Authority.

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