



# Land at YODEL Hatfield, Frobisher Way, Hatfield

Planning, Design and Access Statement

November 2016

prepared by Vincent and Gorbings



architecture  
town planning  
interior design  
urban design

**VINCENT AND GORBING**  
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 car park/yard area at Yodel'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, reconfiguration of parking for trailers and additional onsite car parking.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 As well as this Planning, Design and Access Statement, the planning application comprises :-
- The planning application form
  - Layout drawings prepared by Vincent and Gorbings
  - Landscape proposals prepared by David Jarvis Associates.
  - Drainage Strategy prepared by EAS Limited.
- 1.5 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 YODEL OPERATIONAL ISSUES

- 2.1 The application site has been in operation since late 1997. It was originally opened by Securicor Omega Express, followed by DHL Domestic/ Parcelpoint and now Yodel Home Delivery Network.
- 2.2 The site is a major hub for the Yodel network providing a sort operation which services for several bases around the Country, the site is operating at its capacity, having regard to parking capacity and without further alterations to the site layout cannot continue to grow.
- 2.3 The lack of sufficient on-site trailer parking is creating operational difficulties due to trailers being unable to leave the loading bays pending departure, due to no remaining 'hold-over' parking. During peak periods, this is being somewhat mitigated against by informal trailer parking arrangements with Booker Cash and Carry opposite and the conference centre at the end of Frobisher Way.
- 2.4 This arrangement is far from ideal and creates difficulties during the period of peak demand (October to December) for Yodel as this coincides with Bookers period of peak demand and therefore Bookers have limited spaces available.
- 2.5 Off-site staff/trailer parking has also been previously used as a mechanism to maximise the efficiency of the site. This causes logistical difficulties as staff are need to be transported between the off-site parking sites and the Yodel Depot. This is creating unnecessary additional vehicle movements and reduces the efficiency and sustainability of the business operation.
- 2.6 Reconfiguration of the service yard as proposed in this planning application will :-
- reduce the amount of vehicles circling the surrounding road network to maximise efficiency on site and reduce impact on road capacity.
  - reduce operational difficulties by reducing congestion and keep the yard flowing smoothly
  - reduce number of movements as drivers do not have to keep circling the area waiting for vacant parking bays.
  - increase productivity on site enabling increased activity and employment.
- 2.7 The above benefits will clearly reduce overall use of vehicles and thereby have sustainability benefits by reducing emissions from the site, whilst enabling increased employment.
- 2.8 Full consideration has been given to alternative solutions; however the proposed solution is the only potential way of addressing the current issues.
- 2.9 Off site parking or some form of remote service centre has been considered and tested but is impractical due to tight operational turnaround times, lack of

availability in peak periods and leads to increased journey lengths, a decrease in productivity, loss of control and an increase in costs.

- 2.10 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 Within the overall site there are 69 trailer and 87 tractor parking spaces, with 382 car parking spaces.
- 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. There is a further dedicated arm off the roundabout service the office site and car park.
- 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.”*
- 3.10 Planning permission was later granted in 2010 (LPA ref. S6/2010/1359/MA) for the re-configuration of the yard layout to enable additional tractor spaces to be provided.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

- 3.11 The application seeks planning permission to re-configure the car park and yard areas to meet operational needs, which are currently hindered by the discrepancy in trailer parking spaces when compared to the number of loading bays.
- 3.12 The changes are shown in the application drawings. Along the eastern boundary, some areas of landscaping are proposed to be lost to facilitate an additional 5 trailer bays, with the re-configuration of some of the existing layout to provide additional capacity.
- 3.13 To the northern boundary of the yard area, the re-configuration of the layout and loss of some landscaping in this area facilitates the provision of a further 11 trailer bays.
- 3.14 The most significant changes occur within the car park adjacent to the office building, where re-configuration of the existing layout and removal of some peripheral landscaping facilitates the provision of a further 9 parking spaces and 23 tractor spaces.
- 3.15 Full account has been taken of the peripheral landscaping areas around the site, with a mitigating landscaping scheme being submitted in support of the application. 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. This will ensure that the screening function and quality of the landscaping is maintained in the long term, whilst ensuring that the site can operate effectively.
- 3.16 No changes to the access into this part of the site are proposed.
- 3.17 The vehicle parking situation can be summarised as follows:-

	Before	After
Trailer parking	69	93
Tractor parking	87	110
Car parking	382	391

#### 4.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

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

##### DISTRICT PLAN

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

4.3 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.

4.4 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, and is designated within the emerging Local Plan as part of the Watling Chase Community Forest.

4.5 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.



**NPPF – BUILDING A STRONG, COMPETITIVE ECONOMY**

- 4.6 The NPPF sets out the Government approach to planning for employment. It is aimed at achieving sustainable economic growth. It supports existing business sectors, whether expanding or contracting and requires policies to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate change and allow rapid responses to economic circumstances.

## **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.
- 5.4 Adjoining the western boundary of the site it is proposed to retain the existing landscape belt. Additional planting will be 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. Adjacent to the car park area, native hedgerow is proposed, along with a native woodland mix to the north-west corner of the site.
- 5.5 The landscape proposals will serve a number of functions. Firstly it will ensure that the amenity and openness of the adjoining Green Belt is protected. Secondly it will ensure that a landscape buffer to Watling Chase Community Forest 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 Yodel and hence the employment being provided, is such that re-configuration of the parking is essential for efficient and effective operation of the site. 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 Yodel is encouraged. If a resolution to the existing unloading/loading issues is not resolved, Yodel may be forced to look for alternative accommodation.

7.4 As also set out above, the improvements in parking on site will have sustainability benefits and reduce the number of vehicles circling the adjacent road network until space becomes available on site.

### **LANDSCAPING AND GREEN BELT CONSIDERATIONS**

7.5 As highlighted above, the application is accompanied a landscape plan. 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. The proposed alterations to the site layout have been kept away from this boundary and minimise the impact on these properties. There is no increase in capacity proposed. 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 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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