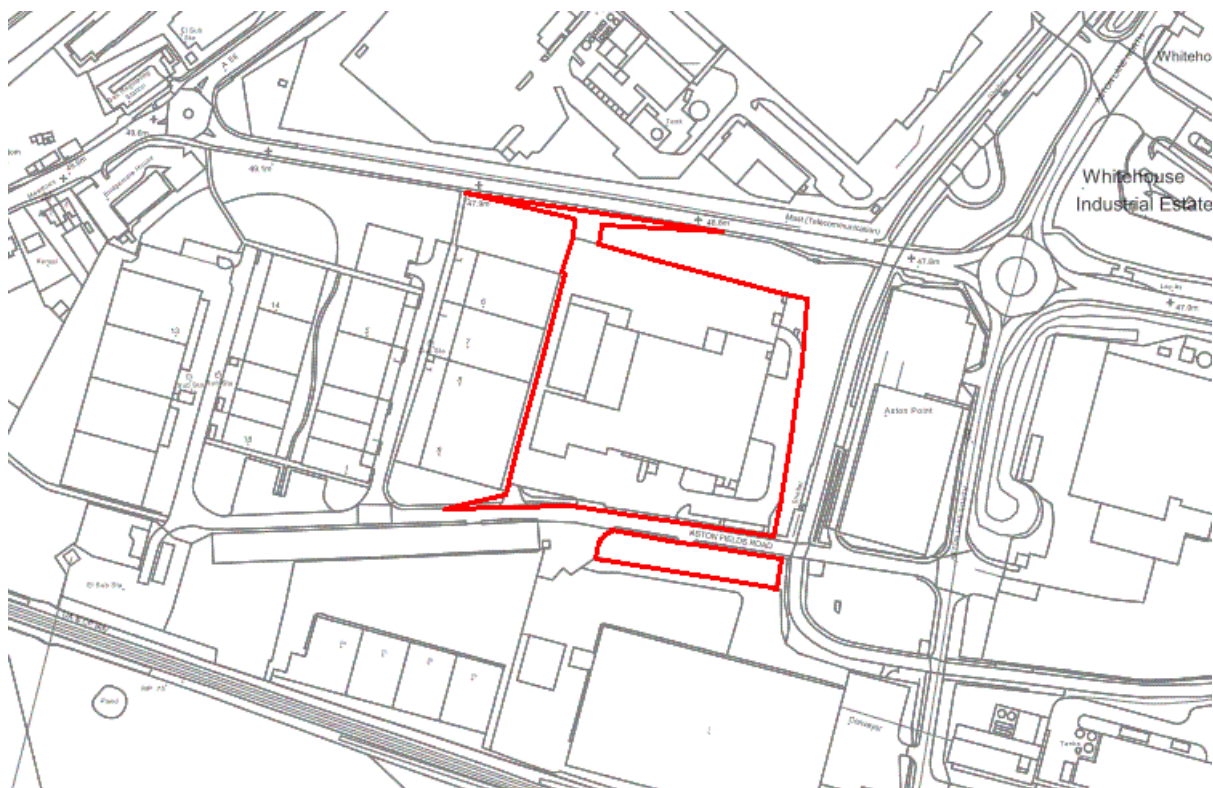


APPLICATION NO:	17/00194/FUL
LOCATION:	Land Between Aston Fields Road and Northwich Road, Runcorn
PROPOSAL:	Full planning permission for 9200sq. metre industrial unit for B1, B2 and B8 use including new access off A533
WARD:	Daresbury
PARISH:	None
AGENT(S) / APPLICANT(S):	Commercial Development Projects Ltd
DEVELOPMENT PLAN ALLOCATION: National Planning Policy Framework (2012) Halton Unitary Development Plan (2005) Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)	Primarily Employment Area
DEPARTURE REPRESENTATIONS:	No 2
KEY ISSUES:	Principle of development; loss of trees, impact on character of the A533 Northwich Road, regeneration and employment; drainage; contaminated land and highway issues
RECOMMENDATION:	Approval, subject to conditions

SITE MAP



THE APPLICATION SITE

The Site

Site is approximately 1.88 hectares, being the site of the former Brakes food production facility located within the Whitehouse Industrial Estate. The site is currently accessed via 3 access points from Aston Fields Road. The site also includes land required for a proposed new access from the A533 Northwich Road. This land is owned by Halton Borough Council and currently occupied by structure planting, including numerous trees which substantially screened the former Brake complex from view.

Planning History

Application ref. 16/00048/DEM was previously submitted relating to the prior approval for demolition of the former Brakes building which has remained vacant since 2015. It was determined that prior approval was not required and that demolition has now taken place. The site is now vacant.

THE APPLICATION

The proposal

Permission is sought for the construction of a 9200sq. metre industrial unit for B1, B2 and B8 use including new access off A533. The application states that “an occupier is already interested in taking the unit subject to planning” but no further details are provided.

Documentation

The applicant has submitted a planning application, drawings and the following reports:

- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Geo-Environmental Desk Study
- Preliminary Tree Survey
- Transport Statement

POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012 to set out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

Paragraph 196 states that the planning system is plan led. Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per the requirements of legislation, but that the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. Paragraph 197

states that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 14 states that this presumption in favour of sustainable development means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where a development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF; or specific policies within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

The government has published its finalised Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) to compliment the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005)

The following Unitary Development Plan policies and policy documents are relevant to this application: -

- BE1 General Requirements for Development
- BE2 Quality of Design
- PR14 Contaminated Land
- PR6 Development and Flood Risk
- TP6 Cycling Provision as Part of New Development
- TP7 Pedestrian Provision as Part of New Development
- TP12 Car Parking
- TP14 Transport Assessments
- TP16 Green Travel Plans
- E3 Primarily Employment Areas
- E5 New Industrial and Commercial Development

Halton Core Strategy Local Plan (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Core Strategy are of relevance:

- CS1 Halton's Spatial Strategy
- CS2 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CS4 Employment Land Supply and Locational Priorities

CS15 Sustainable Transport

CS18 High Quality Design

CS19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change

CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk

Joint Waste Local Plan 2013

WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management

WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design and Layout for New Development

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

Designing for Community Safety Supplementary Planning Document

Design of New Industrial and Commercial Development SPD

CONSULTATIONS

The application has been advertised via the following methods: site notices posted near to the site, press notice, and Council website. Surrounding residents and landowners have been notified by letter.

The following organisations have been consulted and any comments received have been summarised below in the assessment section of the report:

Environment Agency – No Objection
United Utilities – No Objection
British Pipeline Agency - No Objection

Council Services:

HBC Open Spaces – No Objection
HBC Contaminated Land – No objection
HBC Highways – No Objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Two letters of representation have been received from surrounding businesses. These state as follows:

- No objection to the new units but believe an additional access to the A533 would make what is already a very busy road ridiculous. Access should only be from Aston Fields Road.
- The A533 is already very busy and in poor condition. I am concerned about further loading of a road that can cause us considerable delays already, and

with the new M56 junction, this can only add to the problems our business faces.

ASSESSMENT

Background

The application seeks permission to construct a 9200sq. metre industrial unit for B1, B2 and B8 use including new access off A533 Northwich Road. The application submission claims to provide for up to 100 full-time jobs and states that “an occupier is already interested in taking the unit subject to planning”. No further details are however provided.

The site was formerly home to Brakes food production facility which has been vacant since 2015. That building which had been extended over the years is reported to have provided approximately 8,300sq.m.

Principle of Development

The site is designated as a Primarily Employment Area in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP). UDP Policy E3 provides that development falling within Use Classes B1 (Business), B2 (General Industry) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) will be permitted in such areas. As such the proposals are considered to accord with this policy and can be considered appropriate in principle.

The site also includes land required for a proposed new access from the A533 Northwich Road. This land is owned by Halton Borough Council and currently occupied by structure planting including numerous trees which substantially screened the former Brake complex from view. For the avoidance of doubt this land is also designated as a Primarily Employment Area in the Halton Unitary Development Plan and this associated development is also considered acceptable in principle. Wider issues relating to such as highway safety, loss of trees and visual impact are considered later as part of the wider planning balance.

Design and Character

The proposal is for a modern industrial building for B1, B2 and B8 uses. The proposed building will measure approximately 13.9m to eaves and 15.7m to ridge. The ground floor industrial unit will provide a gross internal area of approximately 8,500sq.m plus approximately 1000sq.m of offices over 2 floors.

The building will be constructed from a palette of modern horizontal and vertical cladding panels in a mix of silver and greys with contrasting black flashings. The office frontage will be constructed of blue brick with aluminium framed glazing. The building and wider development is considered to be of a quality appropriate to the site and wider area.

The building, offices and primary car park for staff and visitors will front the A533 Northwich Road. HGV access, loading doors and servicing together with overflow parking will be to the rear accessed from Aston Fields Road and the existing

industrial estate. The frontage of the building will now become much more visible from the A533 which is a principle route in and out of the Borough.

The creation of the new entrance feature and increased visibility of the buildings will clearly have an impact on the character of the road and area. The orientation of the office elements, the quality of the building and attention to providing variety through the various cladding elements all contribute to the quality of the development. The break in the existing structure planting has been minimised and the loss of trees is obviously regrettable, however these are not subject to protections (more detail is provided below under the sub-heading 'Trees'). It is considered that the proposed development will provide a quality frontage such that the impact on the quality of the A533 frontage can be considered a positive one.

Highway Considerations

The existing site is currently accessed via Aston Fields Road and operates with 3 points of vehicle access/ egress. The site links to the surrounding highway network via the roundabout at the junction of the A553 Northwich Road/ Aston Lane South. The application also includes provision for a proposed new access from the A533 Northwich Road.

Whilst the road has a 30mph limit, the road actually operates with the majority of vehicles travelling at higher speeds. Speed cameras and variable speed check signage are regular features on this stretch of the A533. The A553 is part of the Key Route Network.

The application as submitted raised a number of concerns with respect to conflict arising from the originally proposed all movement junction onto the A533 Northwich Road. Detailed discussion with the Council's Highway Officer has resulted in a revised plan being submitted with a Left in / Left out access for the proposed new car park. Those plans have also been revised to show an agreed visibility splay of 4.5m x 90m. Further minor amendments have since been provided including to car park layout, provision for disabled drivers and pedestrian links.

Parking provision of 158 spaces is below the standard set out in the Halton UDP. The Council's Highways Officer has confirmed that a relaxation can be applied in this case to reflect the scale of the proposal and that the proposed number is therefore acceptable. This is reliant on the overflow car park to the rear of the site off Aston Fields Road being available for use for the life of the development. It is considered that this can be secured by planning condition. The site is considered to be adequately served with regards accessibility to bus routes and is served by suitable pedestrian links.

The revised transport statement submitted as part of the application states that the proposed development will not cause a severe impact on the surrounding wider highway network. There is predicted to be a small impact in AM queuing traffic for Northbound traffic at the mini roundabout junction with the A56. The AM peak Ratio to Flow Capacity (RFC) in 2022 is predicted with development increasing from 0.93 to 0.96. However the junction currently has an RFC of 0.87 that would rise to 0.93 with natural growth without development. It is therefore considered that the 0.03

increase does not result in a severe impact and that refusal of planning permission cannot be justified on this basis. It should be noted that there are proposals for significant works in the area to form the new Junction 11A on the M56 and there is likely to be a change in movements following its completion. The impact of this scheme has not been assessed as part of the report.

On that basis the Council's Highways Engineer has confirmed that no objections are raised to the scheme subject to conditions included within the recommendation section of this report. It is therefore considered that no significant transport or highway safety issues are raised capable of sustaining a refusal of planning permission and it is therefore considered acceptable based on NPPF, UDP and Core Strategy Policy.

Trees

The proposals include provision for a proposed new access from the A533 Northwich Road. This land is owned by Halton Borough Council and is currently occupied by structure planting including numerous trees which substantially screened the former Brake complex from view.

The application is supported by a Preliminary Tree Survey. This identifies that a number of trees within the group fronting the A533 will inevitably be lost as a result of the new highway construction. The group of trees within this area are categorised as being category B but it has been identified that the group would benefit from selective clearance and management.

The Council's Open Spaces Officer has confirmed that there are no trees afforded statutory protection and the site is not situated within the Conservation Area. He has confirmed his opinion that a significant number of trees may be required to be felled from the frontage with the A533 and that number may rise to in excess of 100 as the area required for construction and visibility has been increased.

Now that the entrance has been redesigned to the satisfaction of the Council's Highways Engineer a revised tree survey has been undertaken and the final report is awaited to establish the revised extent of tree felling required. It is however considered that the loss of trees, whilst regrettable, must be balanced against the benefits of the scheme in terms of regeneration and job creation. It is also considered that additional benefit can be gained through the clearance of trees, replanting post construction and also through a scheme of selective thinning and replanting within the retained tree group. The applicant has agreed to carry out this work by way of mitigation and compensation. It is considered that the submission and agreement of details and implementation of such a scheme can be secured by planning conditions. Members will be updated as required with respect to the updated tree survey and any further resultant comments from the Council's Open Spaces Officer.

Ecology

No ecological information has been submitted with the application. Whilst the site of the demolished building is considered to be of limited potential with respect to

ecology the Council's Open Spaces Officer has confirmed that before any trees are removed they should be checked for bats and that all works comply with current bird nesting legislation. This issue has been raised with the applicant and a response is awaited. Members will be updated as is necessary.

Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is identified as lying within Flood Risk Zone 1. In accordance with national and local policy the proposed development is therefore considered to be located within an area of low flood risk.

The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) has confirmed that the southern end of the site is shown to be at risk of surface water flooding according to the Council's Surface Water Management Plan mapping. As a result it is recommended that finished floor levels be set at 300mm above estimated flood levels. It is considered that details of site and finished floor levels can be secured by condition attached to any planning permission.

United Utilities has confirmed that they raise no objections however have recommended that conditions relating to submission and agreement of a plan for drainage management and maintenance. They have however stated that they are not in a position to comment on any future submission in this regard.

Due in part to existing underlying ground contamination issues it is unlikely that any form of filtration or SuDS scheme are likely to be appropriate. The application therefore states that it is intended that the site will be drained to existing foul and surface water systems with attenuation to restrict discharge to a rate of 70 per cent of the previous discharge rate to account for climate change. A drainage scheme based on those principles can be secured by planning condition. United Utilities are the authorising body with regards to such discharge. It is not considered that such a recommended condition relating to drainage maintenance and management plan can be justified with respect to the application of the 6 tests contained within the NPPF.

The LLFA has confirmed that it raises no objection

Contaminated Land

The application is supported by a Geoenvironmental Desk Study Report. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has confirmed that the report presents a detailed review of the available information for the site and formulates an initial conceptual site model based on that review. The site is assessed as low to moderate risk as a consequence of the previous industrial development and the potential for contaminated made ground.

The report recommends that further site investigation is required to fully characterise the site and assess the actual level of risk and to determine whether any remedial measures are required.

The Environment Agency has confirmed that they raise no objection in principle to the proposed development as they consider the controlled waters at the site to be of low sensitivity. The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has also confirmed that he raises no objection to the application, but recommends that, if the application is to be approved, it is conditioned to require site investigation, risk assessment and if necessary a remediation strategy with supporting verification reporting. It is considered that this can be secured by suitably worded planning condition.

Waste

The proposal involves construction activities and policy WM8 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (WLP) applies. This policy requires the minimisation of waste production and implementation of measures to achieve efficient use of resources, including designing out waste. In accordance with policy WM8, evidence through a waste audit or a similar mechanism (e.g. site waste management plan) demonstrating how this will be achieved must be submitted and can be secured by a suitably worded planning condition.

The applicant has not provided information with respect to provision of on-site waste storage and management to demonstrate compliance with policy WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan. It is considered that this can be secured by a suitably worded condition.

Conclusions

The application seeks permission to construct a 9200sq. metre industrial unit for B1, B2 and B8 use including new access off A533 Northwich Road. Core Strategy Policy CS2 and NPPF paragraphs 14-16 set out the presumption in favour of sustainable development whereby applications that are consistent with national and up-to-date local policy should be approved without delay.

The use of the site for B1, B2 and B8 development in accordance with UDP Policy E3 securing valuable employment opportunities is therefore considered to be an appropriate use for the site.

It is considered that the redevelopment of such a vacant site for a good quality industrial building and offering potential employment opportunities should be welcomed. The proposals are considered to be of a quality suited to the site in keeping with the area and adjoining developments. It is considered that highway and other issues raised as a result of the original submission have been adequately addressed and that any outstanding issues in can be resolved by way of oral update and appropriately worded planning conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

Approval subject to conditions relating to the following aspects:

1. Standard 3 year timescale for commencement of development
2. Specifying approved and amended plans

3. Requiring submission and agreement of a Construction Environmental Management Plan
4. Materials condition(s), requiring the submission and approval of the materials to be used with the exception of external cladding and brick which shall be carried out as approved (BE2)
5. Landscaping condition, requiring submission and approval both hard and soft landscaping. (BE1/2)
6. Submission and agreement of boundary treatment including retaining walls. (BE2)
7. Construction and delivery hours to be adhered to throughout the course of the development. (BE1)
8. Vehicle access, parking, servicing etc to be constructed prior to occupation of properties/ commencement of use. (BE1)
9. Grampian style planning condition relating to off-site tree management to include selective felling/ pruning and replanting (BE1)
10. Requiring submission and agreement of cycle parking details (TP6)
11. Requiring submission and agreement of electric vehicle parking and charging point(s) details (NPPF)
12. Requiring retention of the approved overflow car park for the life of the use (TP12)
13. Conditions relating to further detailed site investigation/ mitigation/ verification (PR14/15)
14. Conditions relating to/ requiring submission and agreement of detailed foul surface water/ highway drainage scheme including attenuation (BE1/ PR5)
15. Requiring submission and agreement of a green travel plan. (TP16)
16. Requiring submission and agreement of site and finished floor levels with finished floor levels to be a minimum of 300mm above estimated flood levels. (BE1)
17. Submission and agreement of Site Waste Management Plan (WM8)
18. Submission and agreement of a sustainable waste management plan (WM9)
19. Requiring submission and agreement of a car park management plan (TP12)
20. Requiring submission and agreement of entrance feature detail (BE2)

SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

As required by:

Paragraph 186 – 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework;

- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015; and

This statement confirms that the local planning authority has worked proactively with the applicant to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of Halton.