

APPLICATION NO:	25/00102/FUL
LOCATION:	Howdens Joinery Limited, Astmoor Road, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 1PQ.
PROPOSAL:	Proposed extension to the rear of manufacturing facility comprising Class B2 industrial floorspace including a canopy area and Class B8 warehouse floorspace, including overhead canopy space for loading and unloading, removal of portal frame storage facility to the front of the main building, changes to the car parking and HGV trailer parking, and associated changes to on-site plant and other facilities on the site at
WARD:	Halton Castle
PARISH:	None
APPLICANT:	Howdens Joinery Limited
AGENT:	Jolande Bowater, Harris Lamb
DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (2022)	ALLOCATIONS: Employment Renewal Area
DEPARTURE	No
REPRESENTATIONS:	None
RECOMMENDATION:	Authority be delegated to the Director – Planning and Transportation.

SITE MAP



1. APPLICATION SITE

1.1 The Site

The site subject of this application is Howden's Joinery Limited, Astmoor Road, Runcorn, WA7 1PQ. The site is allocated as an Employment Renewal Area in the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Policies Map. The site comprises 9.71 hectares of land, including the existing Howdens manufacturing plant and its surrounding yard and parking area located within the Astmoor Industrial Estate.

The site is located immediately South of the Manchester Ship Canal, beyond which is Wigg Island and the River Mersey. To the West of the site is the A533 Mersey Gateway Bridge. Located to the East, South and West of the site are industrial and commercial land uses.

1.2 Planning History

The site has been subject to many planning applications. Those more recent have been set out below:

11/00030/FUL- Proposed construction of new Portal Framed Building to provide for additional storage. **Approved**

14/00442/FUL- Proposed removal of existing wood chip silo and installation of new wood chip silo. **Approved**

18/00492/FUL- Proposed installation of gas powered generator with 15 metre flue stack. **Approved**

23/00084/FUL- Proposed extension to the existing Runcorn factory building, and the conversion of some external gravel/grass margins to concrete hard-standing in order to improve the efficiency of vehicle movements around the site. **Withdrawn**

2. THE APPLICATION

2.1 Proposal

Proposed extension to the rear of manufacturing facility comprising Class B2 industrial floorspace including a canopy area and Class B8 warehouse floorspace, including overhead canopy space for loading and unloading, removal of portal frame storage facility to the front of the main building, changes to the car parking and HGV trailer parking, and associated changes to on-site plant and other facilities on the site.

2.2 Documentation

The planning application is supported by the following documents:

- Associated plans (all viewable through the Council's website)
- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Statement
- Addendum Planning Statement
- Noise Assessment
- Noise Addendum Note
- Transport Statement
- Transport Statement Addendum
- Health Impact Assessment
- Statement of Community Engagement
- Phase II Geoenvironmental Report
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Energy Statement
- Flood Risk Assessment
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3. **POLICY CONTEXT**

Members are reminded that planning law requires for development proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.1 Delivery and Allocations Local Plan ('DALP') (adopted March 2022)

GR1 Design of Development
GR2 Amenity
ED2 Employment Development
C1 Transport Network and Accessibility
C2 Parking Standards
HE1 Natural Environment and Nature Conservation
HE7 Pollution and Nuisance
HE8 Land Contamination
HE9 Water Management and Flood Risk
CS(R)18 High Quality Design
CS(R)19 Sustainable Development and Climate Change
CS23 Managing Pollution and Risk
CS24 Waste

3.2 Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPD')

Design of New Commercial and Industrial Development SPD

3.3 Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan (2013)

The following policies, contained within the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are of relevance:

- WM8 Waste Prevention and Resource Management;
- WM9 Sustainable Waste Management Design and Layout for New Development.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Below are material considerations relevant to the determination of this planning application.

3.4 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in December 2024 to set out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied.

3.5 Equality Duty

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 created the public sector equality duty. Section 149 states:- (1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Officers have taken this into account and given due regard to this statutory duty, and the matters specified in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 in the determination of this application.

There are no known equality implications arising directly from this development that justify the refusal of planning permission.

3.6 Other Considerations

The application has been considered having regard to Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out a persons rights to the peaceful enjoyment of property and Article 8 of the Convention of the same Act which sets out his/her rights in respect for private and family life and for the home.

Officers consider that the proposed development would not be contrary to the provisions of the above Articles in respect of the human rights of surrounding residents/occupiers.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The application was advertised via the following methods:

Site notice posted near to the site, press notice, and a web advert. Surrounding neighbours were notified by letter. The following organisations have been consulted and any comments received have been summarised below and in the assessment section of the report where appropriate:

- **Lead local Flood Authority**
No comments provided to date
- **Environment Agency**
No comments provided to date
- **HBC Environmental Protection**
No Objection, condition requested.
- **HBC contaminated Land**
No objection, condition requested
- **HBC highways**
No objection
- **Natural England**
No comments received
- **HSE**
Do Not Advise Against
- **Halton Castle Ward Councillors**
No comments received
- **United Utilities**
No objections, suggested condition

5. REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been publicised by 42 neighbour notification letters sent on 06/03/25. A further consultation was undertaken on 25/04/25. This report has been published before the end date of the consultation period, therefore any new representations received will be added as an update in due course. Currently, from this publicity, no representations have been received.

6. ASSESSMENT

6.1 Principle of development

The application site is located within an established employment area and forms part of the Employment Renewal Area, as designated in the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan Policies Map.

Policy ED2 of the DALP states that within Primarily Employment Areas, development for office, research and development, light industrial, factory or storage and distribution uses will be acceptable.

Redevelopment and regeneration within existing employment area and Employments Renewal Areas will be supported where they make an improvement in the use of the site for employment purposes, having regard to:

- a. The quality and type of employment floorspace provided;
- b. The quality, type, number and density of jobs to be accommodated; and
- c. The environmental quality of the site.

Paragraph 4 of policy ED2 highlights that all proposals for new employment development, including extensions to existing properties, must where appropriate:

- a. Be compatible with existing and proposed surrounding uses;
- b. Not have a significant adverse effect on the character and appearance of the locality in terms of its size, scale, materials, design and siting;
- c. Be designed to allow for future flexibility for a range of uses, including future subdivision and/or amalgamation for a range of business accommodation;
- d. Have adequate access that would not create a traffic hazard or have an undue environmental impact;
- e. Be served by public transport and provide pedestrian and cycle links to adjacent residential areas
- f. Design storage areas to minimise visual intrusion
- g. Make adequate provision of space for on-site servicing and, where appropriate, waiting goods vehicles;
- h. Provide adequate screening, if the layout and design cannot be amended in other ways, to obscure and conceal any unsightly feature of the development;
- i. Locate security fencing, where required, to the internal edge of any perimeter landscaping; and
- j. Provide substantial peripheral landscaping where sites and join residential areas, open countryside or Green Belt areas.

It is considered that the proposed development complies with the policy set out above in Policy ED2. The provision of this additional employment floorspace and retention of jobs will contribute to the employment land supply targets set out in Policy CS(R)4 of the DALP. The principle of development is acceptable in accordance with policies CS(R)1, CS(R)4 and ED2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

The principle of the development type has been established on site and also within the immediate surrounding area and therefore the proposed development would be sympathetic to the surrounding area.

6.2 Appearance

The area in which the extension is proposed is currently external hardstanding used for trailer parking and the storage of materials. The new development proposals will transform the area to make more efficient use of this space and meet the site's current need for more manufacturing and internal storage space.

The proposed materials are designed externally to match the cladding of the existing building and the colour scheme will tie in with the existing one based on Howdens corporate colours of black and red. The proposed building will have black vertical cladding up to a height of 8m, above which the cladding will be colour graded to reduce the visual impact. Matters relating to the height and massing of the building are addressed under the Scale section of the report.

The roofscape of the proposed extension will be steel sheet ridged and similar in form to the existing building. PV panels will be mounted on the roof to help meet the energy requirements of the scheme with 12% roof light coverage. The roof of the eastern canopy will be closed, but the board store canopy and the main loading canopy for the docking station will have Goosewing Grey roof cladding cover.

The design of the extension is consistent with the existing site and the surrounding area, and the subsequent implementation of the external facing materials should be secured by a planning condition. This would ensure compliance with Policies GR1 and CS(R)18 of the DALP.

6.3 Layout

The layout of the proposal has been altered following the submission of updated plans and associated documents.

Additional manufacturing floorspace will be created to the eastern half of the extension. In addition to this, a new enclosed loading bay will be constructed to the rear of the factory to allow space for 2 HGVs. Parallel to this will be an external loading bay with space for 4 HGVs. The existing board store to the east of the site will remain unchanged. There will be an overall increase of 11,204sqm of new B2 floorspace.

The remainder of the extension will provide additional warehousing space which can be defined in three sections: main warehousing extension, central area and a canopy loading area. The central area will add 1,683sqm of storage racking and transition space and added to this will be a large canopy area at a size of 1,430sqm.

The main warehouse extension will provide an external area increase of 5,281sqm of B8 storage.

New external plan and equipment is proposed as part of this application in the form of silos, extraction plant sprinkler tanks and associated pump house. This will be located in the northwest corner of the site, in the narrow area between the existing main building and the existing board store.

Overall, the proposed extensions, plant equipment and other amendments have been laid out in a way that they are in keeping with the current operations on site and allow continued efficient movement and use of the site. This is considered to be compliant with Policy GR1 and GR2 of the DALP.

6.4 Scale

The scale of the proposal has been altered following the submission of updated plans and associated documents.

The main building on site is a rectangular shape and spans a large majority of the site, this currently has 45,000sqm of B2 and B8 floorspace. In terms of scale, this proposal will increase the amount of internal floor space by a significant amount, as stated in the previous section.

The new floorspace is to be created to allow for additional storage as well as space for new and improved machinery. Not only this, but new canopy areas will improve operational efficiency and capacity.

The scale of the new height of the building is also to be considered, as this proposal aims to increase the current maximum eaves height of 9.52 metres, up to 19.49 metres. The highest ridge point will be 20.73 metres. This height will be to the west of the site where the storage area will be extended. It is understood that this height is required to create sufficient capacity for storage of goods and materials.

The additional height, particularly in respect of the warehousing element of the scheme will undoubtedly result in additional visual impact being significantly higher and greater in scale than the existing building.

The location of this site means that it is not directly visible from residential properties, however it is visible from public view points within the borough. Wigg Island, that is a park and nature reserve located on the opposite side of the Manchester Ship Canal, has some view points onto Howden's current building and will likely have more of a view following this proposal.

The site is also visible from the Mersey gateway bridge. The site will become larger and likely more prominent to those travelling over the Mersey Gateway Bridge or visiting Wigg Island.

From the street, the extension will set back within the site and behind the existing building although the sprinkler tanks are located to the front of the site. The large mature trees along the northern boundary of the site will offer some screening of the proposed extension and its impact will be mitigated to some extent through in visual terms through the use of a graduated colour scheme which will lighten as the height increases. Moderate weight can also be attributed to the potential economic and social benefits including the retention of jobs and the improved working conditions for current employees.

6.3 Ground contamination

The following document has been submitted in support of the application:

- Phase II Geoenvironmental Report- Ref: JMS/SLH/CC/51410-Rp-001-December 2024

The Council's Contaminated Land Officer has advised that Historically there has been little change to site until the development of the industrial facility onsite, potential risks of contamination onsite are likely to be linked to presence of made ground during site development/infilling of ponds. Use and parking of vehicles and/or storage of fuels and chemicals present a localised source of contaminants. Offsite there is potential for migration of contaminants originating from former and existing industrial sites: Kemet Site, Aluminium Works and Fuel filter bed.

A Phase II site investigation report has been submitted in support of the application consisting of 6nr boreholes, 6nr window sample boreholes, 4nr trial pits and associated chemical and asbestos testing. The initial conceptual site model (CSM) classified the site as moderate risk and identified potential contaminants at heavy metals, TPHs & PAHs originating from fuels, oils & lubricants from vehicle operation on site and presence of asbestos fibres/ACMs and ground gas generation from potential made ground on site. No exceedances of target contaminants have been detected against an applied GAC of commercial end use from soil samples (17nr subsurface & from depth) and no asbestos has been identified. 6nr rounds of gas monitoring have been proposed for site but have not yet been undertaken. A revised CSM has classified the site as Low risk and therefore no remediation has been proposed prior to proposed development.

While the development is split across the Northern (extension) and Southern (car parking) sections of site there has been limited investigation within the northern section, however, given the findings of the previous intrusive investigation undertaken relating to application 11/00030/FUL - which

encountered benzo(a)pyrene within the upper made ground only with the development foundations eliminating the pathway – and the proposed site end use, the Contaminated Land Officer is in agreement with the findings of the investigation, however, as gas monitoring has not yet been undertaken onsite, they recommend that a condition be placed on the application, should it be approved that a condition is added to the permission regarding the completion and reporting of the ground gas monitoring programme outlined in the Phase II Site Investigation and, if required, details of any proposed gas protection measures & verification procedures to be implemented.

A condition regarding the submission of a site verification/completion report, as well as a condition regarding the discovery of unidentified contamination, is considered necessary to ensure the development is compliant with Policy HE8 of the DALP.

6.5 Drainage and Flood Risk

The application is supported by the following document:

- Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment- JJS/JMcA/BC-48001- RP003_P13- April 2025.

At the time of writing a response from the Lead Local Flood Authority and the Environment Agency have not been received. Members will be updated Orally.

6.6 Transport and highways

The following document has been submitted to support the application:

- Transport Statement- Ref: SJT/26142-02c- February 2025.
- Transport Statement Addendum- Ref: SJT/JA/26142-06- April 2025.

The current car parking provision on site is 174 spaces, which is reasonable for the current staffing which sees a maximum of 170 cars on site at peak times. This application proposes for 40 new parking spaces to a redeveloped area to the front of the site, where the existing portal frame storage area is to be removed. Given that there are no new employees proposed following this development, this increase in spaces is acceptable and allows for potential growth in the future.

Following amendments to the original proposal, new figures for HGV parking were provided and a transport addendum submitted.

For HGV's, there is currently provision for 164 trailers. Approximately 50 of these spaces are used for storage purposes, given the existing limitations for storage on site. In addition to this provision, there are currently 3 off site parking sites which are used by Howden's. on-site HGV parking will reduce from 164

to 57 spaces. A large reasoning for this is that the proposed internal storage arrangements will prevent the need for temporary HGV trailer storage.

Members should note that the applicant has also recently submitted an application for adjoining vacant land under the bridge Ref: 25/00186/FUL. That application is for a *“proposed HGV and lorry trailer park, including the creation of a new access off Astmoor Road and a secondary access onto Goddard Road, the erection of sprinkler tanks and an associated pump, the creation of an open pallet store, the formation of access points on the eastern boundary into the neighbouring Howdens Joinery site, and associated infrastructure work including the formation of bunds and the provision of a new drainage outfall”*. . That application is to be determined under delegated powers.

The Council’s Highways Officer has reviewed the Transport Statement and the Transport Addendum Statement and have provided no objections to the proposal.

6.6 Ecology

The following documents have been submitted to support the application:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), (Harrislamb, April 2025, ref HLPC PE0490

This is an updated PEA submitted following comments Council’s originally made by the Council’s retained adviser, Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS), MEAS has confirmed that further surveys and confirmations are required in relation to:

- Further justification for bat survey results.
- Emergence bat surveys required

This additional information and further response from MEAS are awaited at the time of writing. MEAS has however recommended a number of conditions which have been included within the recommendation section of the report as deemed appropriate. Members will be updated Orally.

6.7 Climate change

The following document has been submitted to support the application:

- Energy Statement for Planning- Rev D- February 2025

Policy CS(R)19 of the DALP sets out some principles which will be used to guide future developments.

The supporting text for policy CS(R)19 states that new development will be encouraged to incorporate current best practice in sustainable design and construction. In achieving this, development proposals must offer an integrated

approach to sustainable development incorporating climate change resilience and carbon management measures.

Policy GR1 also states that all major development proposals involving the construction of new buildings must demonstrate how sustainable design and construction methods will be incorporated to achieve resource efficiency and resilience to climate change in accordance with policy CS(R)19 taking into account the site specific viability of the development, where appropriate.

The Energy Statement sets out that a fabric first approach to reducing energy demand is to be implemented, this is welcomed and in line with the energy hierarchy. This document, along with the roof plans indicate the potential for positioning of the Solar Panels which will further reduce energy demand from the grid. Whilst the final measures to be implemented are not confirmed it is considered that the final measures can be agreed and secured by appropriately worded planning condition.

6.9.Noise

The following document submitted with the application has been reviewed:

- Plant Noise Egress and Operational Noise Assessment- Ref : 025503-R02-B-February 2024.

- Noise Addendum Note- Email from Jack Parrott dated 15.04.2025

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the report and addendum note, and is in agreement with the conclusions. They request that the proposed new fixed plant equipment is no louder than is specified on in the acoustic report and that this be secured by condition. It is also considered appropriate to restrict construction hours during piling in the construction phase in the interests of amenity.

It is anticipated that the proposals would result in no increase in HGV deliveries/operations and a reduction in trailer spaces on site when the extension is built, so internal trailer movements within the site will be reduced. On that basis the Council's Environmental Health Officer has confirmed that it can be determined that no air quality report is required.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has highlighted that the development site currently holds an Environmental Permit under the Pollution Prevention and Control Act 1999 / Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2007, issued by Halton Borough Council reference.

This permit seeks to monitor emissions to air from the as a result of onsite operations and this permit will continue to be in effect, to ensure the emission levels as specified within the permit continue to be adhered to.

There will overall be no adverse effects in terms of air quality or noise following this proposal, this is in accordance with Policy HE7 of the DALP.

6.10 Waste Management

Policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan are applicable to this application along with policy CS24 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

In terms of waste prevention, construction management by the applicant will deal with issues of this nature and the developer would be required to produce a Site Waste Management Plan which can be secured by condition.

In terms of on-going waste management, there is sufficient space within the development to deal with this and will not change following this proposal. The proposal is considered to be compliant with policies WM8 and WM9 of the Joint Merseyside and Halton Waste Local Plan and policy CS24 of the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan

6.11 Conclusion

It is considered that the proposed development complies with the policy set out in Policy ED2 of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan. The provision of additional warehousing and manufacturing space will ensure future viability of the site and will retain Howden's use of the site as it is adapted to their growing needs.

The proposed new areas of B2 and B8 floorspace will be consistent with the layout and operations of the existing site and will overall be compatible. The proposed elevations show that the building will be largely increased in height, however any issues that arise are considered to have mitigated as far as possible and are outweighed by the positive social and economic impacts of this development.

The development is considered to be acceptable in accordance with the relevant policies contained within the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

7. RECOMMENDATION

That Authority be delegated to the Director – Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair to determine the application and that, subject to resolution of the outstanding matters relating to drainage and ecology the application be approved subject to the conditions below to be amended in line with outstanding consultation responses received.

8. CONDITIONS

1. Time limit - full permission
2. Specifying Approved Plans
3. Submission and agreement of Materials
4. Submission and agreement of a Site Waste Management Plan
5. Covering actions for Unidentified Contamination
6. Submission and agreement of Gas Monitoring Report and mitigation as required
7. Implementation and Retention of Parking Layout
8. Restricting Construction Hours for Piling
9. Restricting noise from external plant
10. Submission and agreement of Construction Environmental Management Plan
11. Reasonable Avoidance Measures for Mammals
12. Breeding Birds (time restriction for build)
13. Drainage
14. Notice to Council regarding piling works

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The submitted planning applications are background papers to the report. Other background papers specifically mentioned and listed within the report are open to inspection at the Council's premises at Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes, WA8 7QF in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

10. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

As required by:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2024);
- The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015; and
- The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2015.

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