OMEGA ZONE 8, ST HELENS

Omega St Helens Ltd / T. J. Morris Limited

TJM Plot: Design and Access Statement

Document No. UNIT 1 DOC.6

PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION CENTRE
OMEGA ZONE 8, ST HELENS

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

for

T J MORRIS LIMITED

aja architects

10 December 2019

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL

AJA Architects have been appointed by T J Morris Limited ('TJM') to act as architects for a proposed distribution centre on a site known as Omega Zone 8 off Omega Drive, St Helens.

1.2 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of the 'full' element of a hybrid planning application by Omega St Helens Limited and T J Morris Limited. The full application comprises the erection of a distribution warehouse with ancillary structures, access and servicing arrangements, car parking and landscaping. The distribution warehouse will be known as Unit 1, Omega Zone 8. The balance of the hybrid application is in 'outline' with all matters reserved. This includes TJM expansion land immediately to the east of the Unit 1.

1.3 PROPOSALS

The design and access proposals as shown on accompanying drawings have been produced to meet the client brief, following a study of the site and its setting.

This statement provides a summary of the considerations evaluated during the design process and a review of access requirements for this development.

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

2.0 DESIGN

2.1 USE

Unit 1 comprises a distribution centre with ancillary offices falling within Class B8 of the Use Class Order, together with vehicle and pedestrian access, servicing, staff and visitor car parking all in a landscaped setting.

The site sits within a larger development area that includes existing buildings of the same or similar use, and so is entirely consistent with the wider context of its surroundings.

2.2 AMOUNT

The Site Layout Plan indicates the following gross internal areas: -

Warehouse	829,725 sq.ft / 77,084 m²
Ancillary accommodation	48,287 sq.ft / 4,486 m²
Total	**878,012 sq.ft / 81,570 m²**

2.3 SITE LAYOUT

The layout of the site is influenced both by the immediate context and operational factors.

The building has requirements for service yards on all sides, of varying depth to suit the internal operational layout required by the automated handling equipment within, in order to achieve an efficient flow of goods into, out of and around the building. The building is therefore generally centrally located within the plot, albeit that the staff car park on the Southern side displaces it towards the North. In addition, land to the East has been set aside for potential future expansion, which effectively displaces the building towards the Western side of the plot.

With service yards on all sides of the building, this achieves good vehicle circulation, parking and manoeuvring around the site, which means it can be serviced efficiently.

The plot is bounded immediately to the North by the M62 motorway between Manchester and Liverpool, and is close to junction 8.

Against the Eastern boundary and alongside the expansion land, is a corridor set aside for diversion of services, in particular overhead powerlines, plus an existing landscaped tree belt that is typically 20m wide. This will aid screening of the building from this side.

To the South, much of the site borders other development plots, but along the Southwest corner it is screened by an existing tree plantation known as Booth's Wood.

To the West, the shortest boundary of the site is also adjacent to an existing tree plantation, which will help screen the building further. In addition, between this tree belt and the nearest service yard, it is proposed to locate the main drainage basins, which will be designed as part of the overall strategy for handling expected rainwater. It is also proposed to have additional drainage swales inside part of the Northern boundary, sitting outside the edge of the service yard and also to the Southeast of the car park.

Three storey offices on the front, Southern facade of the building will be accessed from the car park, which is sited adjacent to this element of the building. The car park is stepped closer to the building directly opposite the office entrance to afford safe access, avoiding the need for staff to cross a wide area of service yard that would otherwise be frequented by articulated vehicles.

2.4 SCALE

The overall footprint of the building measures approximately 449m long x 221m at its widest.

The scale, shape and proportions of the building are generated as a result of achieving the required amount of internal designated storage areas with associated automated goods handling equipment and racking, with as efficient interconnection as possible, all to suit the particular needs of the occupier.

Consequently the footprint outlined above is effectively divided into two areas. The first, is a lower, rectangular area approx. 274m long x 164m wide, with a curved apex roof typically 24.8m at the overhanging eaves up to 29.4m at the crown.

The second area is typically square, housing high bay racking. This is approx. 175m long x 191m wide, again with a curved apex roof typically 36.3m at the overhanging eaves up to 41.6m at the crown.

Sitting astride the two main storage areas, on the front elevation is the offices, comprising a three storey feature as a central focal point. This is approx. 65m long x 30m wide, with a dual pitched roof concealed behind a parapet at approx. 14.5m high.

2.5 LANDSCAPING

HARD LANDSCAPING

Proposed hard landscape materials are as follows:-

Tarmac with white / yellow line markings for parking bay demarcation and delineation of pedestrian walkways / crossings.

Service Yard to have concrete surfacing with white / yellow line markings for bay demarcation and delineation of pedestrian walkways / safe areas.

Office entrance frontage and pedestrian connections, high quality concrete block paving.

SOFT LANDSCAPING

Fundamental to this objective, is to ensure that the building form is carefully detailed and articulated, so as to provide interesting and attractive views from both the immediate and more distant surroundings. Working alongside this approach, new landscaping areas are to be provided along with existing planting, to soften views and assist in harmonising the new proposal within its immediate context.

The following describes the setting and measures to be taken to ensure that the proposals provide a high quality distribution development, in keeping with the character of the area and particular, its immediate neighbours.

EXISTING SITE

The site is presently covering several fields lying along the south side of the M62 Motorway west of the recently-completed Omega logistics Park.

The site's fields are in part cultivated for cereals and silage and in part lying fallow as ley. Appearing flat and only falling very gently by 6.0m from the Northwest to the Southeast, they are lower than motorway by between 0.5m and 2.5m. Surface water tends to lie easily and dissipates where there are ditches or swales; these are often linked to a pond, of which there are several across the site. To the East the existing logistics park is at a similar grade. A track runs South-North across the Western sector of the site to a bridge that rises over the M62 to give access to farmer's fields on the North side. The bridge embankments are clothed in ruderal herbage, gorse and bramble.

Vegetation on the site, other than the cut silage stubble and ley pasture, comprises small groups and belts of trees and shrubs associated with some ponds and the ditches. Immediately beyond the south-west boundary of the site is a woodland, Booth's Wood that has been designated as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS). For most of the length of the east boundary of the site is a tall hedgerow, mainly of Hawthorn; whilst running alongside the northern boundary is a timber post-and-rail fence, behind which is an intermittent widely-spaced row of trees growing in the motorway verge.

For detailed information on the trees relevant to the site and on the site's ecological condition, please refer to separate Arboriculture and Ecological Reports by The Ecology Practice.

CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

The main principals behind the landscape design are as follows: -

- Retaining trees, hedgerows and woodland that lie on and beside the site's boundaries.
- Introducing trees wherever possible in order to soften the outline and enhance the appearance of the building, car and lorry parks and service yards.
- Setting aside a strip of land between the motorway and the site that can be utilised for mitigation drainage and habitat, and for tree/woodland planting where space permits. The incorporation of trees within this zone will help to soften views of the proposed building from the M62 and for glimpses from the Country Park and public footpaths beyond the motorway.
- Allocating land on the Western side of the site that can be employed as an area for SUDS and ecological mitigation / enhancement. This area to incorporate ponds that contain permanent water for wetland habitat creation, as far as can be achieved.
- Conserving the 1.0m-wide strip of locally-rare grassland specie identified by the Ecologist alongside the northern boundary fence.

- Planting mixed native woodland in unsurfaced areas around the service yards where practicable, to help replace woodland that has been lost to the development.
- Additionally, the loss of woodland and pond habitats will be mitigated for by the provision of such features anew within a triangular field that has been set aside for this purpose, to the immediate west of the site.
- Planting unsurfaced areas in the car parks and by the offices where practicable with hardy semi-ornamental shrubs and ground cover that require comparatively little maintenance. Shrub planting is also better suited to vegetating embankments where there are any proposed within the scheme to overcome level differences.
- Planting a species-rich native hedge along exposed boundaries of the site.
- Incorporating species-rich grassland away from the amenity areas, including around the proposed ponds and within the area allocated for future expansion.
- Generally employing organic shapes to the landscaped areas where possible, to soften the outline of the proposed buildings, car parks and service yard.

PLANTING PROPOSALS

The planting proposals are to incorporate both locally native species for the landscape structure, and semi-ornamental species for the detailed areas where staff and visitors frequent.

The semi-ornamental planting proposals include for some trees of interesting form and/or colour, in order to promote a sense of place.

Individual trees will be planted as Heavy or Extra Heavy Standards, except for Oaks and Birch which establish better as smaller stock. All trees will be root-balled or container-grown for assurance of establishment.

Native woodland and hedgerows will utilize bare-rooted transplants of native species where proposed alongside outer boundaries; species will include those known to thrive locally to the site. They will be protected against damage from rabbits with appropriate guards.

The ornamental shrubs proposed to be planted as part of the scheme will be low-maintenance, largely evergreen varieties of various species with the ultimate size depending upon the location on the site, and position within the planting bed. The ornamental shrubs are selected for their amenity values, providing colour, shape and texture whilst being hardy. Where sight-lines around vehicle accesses are required, low ground-cover will be employed. The majority of shrubs and groundcovers will be supplied in 2 or 3 litre pots, planted at a density of 3/m² or 4/m² depending on the specie/growth rate and size.

All landscape will be appropriately maintained to a high standard as part of the construction contract for 12 months and thereafter handed-over to the incumbent's management agent/team.

2.6 APPEARANCE

The site lies within the context of the much wider Omega Development and in particular, Omega Zone 8. This development is now well established with a series of similar distribution facilities.

The character of this area is therefore entirely consistent with an established distribution and employment development. In general terms, the proposed building is a typical example of their use in terms of form and materials, and should therefore harmonise with its surroundings.

The majority of the roof is made up of two areas of dual pitch with overhanging eaves and a central curved apex. This limits the need for access onto the roof to clear gutters. Other smaller, lower areas of roof comprise multi-pitch with angled ridges, all concealed by parapets. The roof covering is profiled steel sheeting with translucent grp rooflights wherever practicable to utilise as much daylight as possible, thus lessening energy demand.

The external wall treatment comprises a carefully selected palette of materials, including horizontally spanning composite cladding to the offices and vertically and horizontally spanning profiled cladding to the main building. These have been composed to create a clearly articulated rhythm of subtly varying textures and neutral colours, using white, grey and pale blue. This is in keeping with the existing similar buildings within Omega Business Park. Colour banding has also been carefully selected to both unify the different elements of the building and to act as a mechanism to break up the expanse of the elevations, in a manner to visually deceive the height of the building.

The approach to the design of the main office elevation is to create a high quality frontage. This is achieved through the use composite micro-rib cladding using white and grey colours to match the main building and grey tinted glazing within dark grey frames to horizontally spanning windows. The amount of glazing provided to the offices aims to maximise the amount of natural daylight and offer a good internal environment.

The entrance to the offices is to be defined by composite flat panel cladding to provide a focal point clearly visible from the approach. This is to be further emphasised by a glazed entrance canopy.

The parking areas will be illuminated during the hours of darkness, to an appropriate lighting level. The lighting design will utilise good quality, attractive ‘dark sky’ downward directional fittings with no light spillage above the horizontal to avoid light pollution.

The service areas will be similarly illuminated with building mounted fittings over and adjacent to service doors and column mounted lighting as required at the perimeter.

The access road will be illuminated with column mounted luminaires designed to ensure no light spillage to LPA requirements.

3.0 ACCESS

3.1 VEHICULAR

Access to the site is from a new roundabout to be constructed at the end of Catalina Approach, feeding into the Southwest corner of the site. Catalina Approach connects onto Omega Boulevard, which connects onto Skyline Drive, which in turn connects directly onto Junction 8 of the M62 motorway – a total distance of approx. 2000m. This gives the site good interconnectivity between local and national highway networks.

All goods and service vehicles will access onto the site directly from the new roundabout, whereas staff access and visitors (cars, motorbikes, pedal cycles and pedestrians) will be from a junction onto a separate spur road continuing off the Southern arm of the new roundabout.

By segregating access, this avoids any potential conflict between the management requirements of different types of traffic.

The service yards are designed to provide adequate circulation and manoeuvring space to satisfy the servicing and unloading requirements of all relevant forms of delivery vehicles. The gradients in this area will be carefully considered to allow for the safe movement and efficient use of both delivery vehicles onto and around the site and forklifts into and out of the building.

Within the car parking area, car, motorbike and pedal cycle spaces are accessed via two-way circulation to help avoid congestion. Accessible DDA compliant parking for disabled staff is provided adjacent to the main office entrance.

In summary, the access solutions will provide safe and efficient access and egress to the new development for all forms of vehicles.

3.2 PEDESTRIAN

The footpath on Catalina Approach continues down the Southern spur road off the new roundabout. Pedestrian access onto the site is alongside the car park entrance road, which leads around the parking spaces direct to the main office entrance, with a pedestrian crossing linking to the building itself. The footpath links into the wider pedestrian network with access to nearby bus stops.

Connection is also possible from the new 3.5m wide footway/cycleway to the south of the car park, being installed as part of the development

3.3 CYCLE

Segregated pedestrian cycle lanes and footpaths will be provided along the new access road to link in with those around the wider development. There is also a proposed footway / cycleway running directly along the Southern boundary of the site that is to link the wider development to St. Helens.

Cyclists have easy and direct access to designated, covered and lit cycle shelters within the car park, as near to the main office entrance as possible. They are therefore in a highly visible and readily serviceable location.

3.4 INCLUSIVE ACCESS

Accessible DDA compliant parking is provided adjacent to the main offices. Gradients in the parking areas will be carefully considered to allow safe and convenient access to all.

3.5 PARKING

Staff Car Parking	541 spaces
Accessible Car Parking	35 spaces
Total Car Parking	576 spaces
Pedal Cycle Parking	156 spaces
Motorbike Parking	48 spaces

A total of 35 normal and disabled car parking spaces will be designated as future electric vehicle charging points, as identified on the layout drawings.

3.6 SECURITY

It is important that this development responds to the issues relating to security, such as criminal and anti-social behaviour, by incorporating appropriate design features as follows: -

- The car parking areas are laid out around the main offices in order to assist in natural surveillance.
- The car parking area will be fenced and fitted with barriers to provide out of hours security.
- Covered Cycle parking is provided to facilitate secure parking for cycles located in a highly visible and readily supervised location.
- External lighting will be designed in accordance with BS5489 to achieve an appropriate level of illumination in all areas.
- Landscaping will be designed so as not to interfere with the natural surveillance of public areas.
- The building will comprise robust construction to all elevations.
  The building fire exits and personnel doors will generally comprise steel door sets with appropriate ironmongery.
- The service area will be enclosed within an appropriate secure enclosure, complete with lockable gates.