

Comments for Planning Application P/2020/0061/HYBR

Application Summary

Application Number: P/2020/0061/HYBR

Address: Land To The West Of Omega South & South Of The M62 Bold St Helens

Proposal: Hybrid Planning Application for the following development (major development);|cr|(i) Full Planning Permission for the erection of a B8 logistics warehouse, with ancillary offices, associated car parking, infrastructure and landscaping; and |cr|(ii) Outline Planning Permission for Manufacturing (B2) and Logistics (B8) development with ancillary offices and associated access infrastructure works (detailed matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval)

Case Officer: Miss Jennifer Bolton

Customer Details

Name: Not Available

Address: Not Available

Comment Details

Commenter Type: Councillor

Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application

Comment Reasons:

Comment: Jennifer Bolton

Senior Planning Officer

Development Control

St Helens Council

14th February 2020

Re P/2020/0061/HYBR: Land to west of Omega South and south of M62

Hybrid Planning Application for the following development (major development); (i) Full Planning Permission for the erection of a B8 logistics warehouse, with ancillary offices, associated car parking, infrastructure and landscaping; and (ii) Outline Planning Permission for Manufacturing (B2) and Logistics (B8) development with ancillary offices and associated access infrastructure works (detailed matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval)

Dear Miss Bolton

Great Sankey Parish Council is formally objecting to the above planning application. The decision

to submit this objection was passed at a meeting of the Council held on Wednesday 12th February 2020. The Council's reasons for the rejecting the proposed planning permission are summarised below:

1. The Local Plans of both St Helens Council and Warrington Borough Council are still in draft form and have not yet been approved and published. Available information confirms that the Warrington Plan has been delayed until sometime later this year. References to this proposed development within the St Helens Draft Plan are brief and have a difference in emphasis to the Warrington Local Plan.
2. The assessment and conclusions regarding the impact of increased traffic fails to take into account other relevant information which will contribute to unsatisfactory levels of inconvenience for residents of the Great Sankey area.
3. The decision to build on Green Belt land by use of the 'Very Special Circumstances' cannot be justified, and this development will commence urban sprawl between the two Boroughs.

We outline our reasons in more detail below.

Comments re Local Plans

The draft Warrington Local Plan comprises a total of 308 pages and the only reference to the Omega West Extension is contained at Section 3.3.21, point 4. This merely states that St Helens Council is proposing to facilitate the westward extension of Omega in their Local Plan, which is also still currently in a draft state. Both Councils state that the development would contribute to Warrington's employment needs.

The St Helens Local Plan comprises 170 pages and also confirms at Section 4.6.2 that the site development is being sought by Warrington Borough Council.

The Executive Summary of the planning statement submitted jointly by Omega St Helens Ltd and T.J. Morris Ltd (Home Bargains) states on page 2, paragraph 5 that there is an identified need for employment land to deliver large scale logistics development in both Boroughs and that the application proposals will help to meet employment land supply needs of both Boroughs. However, para 5.3.3. states that this development will primarily help Warrington Borough Council.

The St Helens Local Plan (para 4.6.11) also recognises the need for an improvement in public transport and active travel links to the Omega site and in particular to provide links to this area from deprived areas within the borough of St Helens (para 4.6.18). We submit that the planning statement completely fails to address the issue and our rationale will be explained in more detail within the next section.

We further submit that the planning application should be rejected on the grounds that Warrington Borough Council and St Helens Council have failed to consult with local residents and approved groups including ourselves regarding the proposed development.

Traffic Management

Section 2.10 of the Planning Access statement submitted by Omega St Helens/T. J. Morris Ltd states that the existing highway structure is sufficient to facilitate the development of Omega.

Sections 9.24 and subsequent deals with Development Impact. It is stated at Section 9.28 that a thorough assessment has been undertaken of the proposed development and its impact on the local road network and that necessary improvements have been highlighted. As a result, it is concluded that the proposed development site is considered suitable in transport terms (para 9.30). Great Sankey Parish Council fundamentally disagrees with this statement for the following reasons:

- the road network prior to the development of Omega, i.e. Lingley Green Avenue, was built at a time when the proposals for Omega were entirely different to the present-day provision of a logistics park. The original plan was for a development of housing, offices, science park, leisure facilities and hotel. It is our understanding that this was not pursued for reasons of finance, resulting in a hiatus before the proposals for logistics development were commenced. This is relevant as a logistics park will by its very nature, encounter a significant increase in vehicle movements, especially when these operate on a 24/7, 365 shift patterns. The requirement for a large number of employees to travel to and from the location by car will significantly add to peak time traffic build up on Lingley Green Avenue and the surrounding areas.
- It is also stated that HGV's will exclusively enter the proposed site from J8 of the M62. There is no mechanism to enforce this and our experiences in dealing with residents' concerns provide evidence that HGV's are already making inappropriate use of local roads for access and parking within Great Sankey. As a result, Warrington Borough Council have set up a site whereby residents can forward photos of offending vehicles. The proposals for the current planning application include 383 HGV/trailer parking spaces which will only exacerbate the current issues being experienced by residents. These have not been addressed within the planning statement.
- The planning application also includes provision for over 500 car parking spaces which will only add to the existing traffic problems in the area.
- Outline permission is also sought for a further three warehouse units on the same site with details to be approved at a later date. The highway provision for these is not considered within the scope of the current application, nor is any overarching acknowledgement made of the further development of warehousing and housing on the existing Omega South site and the impact on the wider community.
- Considering the major increase in vehicle movements associated with the Omega site, we feel that any assertion that the existing road network can meet the traffic demand, even with improvements, is incorrect. Current improvements relate to the widening of the carriageway at junctions and roundabouts and these may be sufficient to alleviate current queues at peak times

(shift changeovers and school hours) but plainly will not address the proposed increases in traffic demand.

- When the Omega South site was first being discussed, the provision of a second motorway junction on the M62 was actively being considered. The Parish Council is extremely disappointed that both Councils are supporting the further development without a concerted campaign for an additional motorway junction. We are aware that Highways England do not support this but feel a properly structured business case with lobbying of appropriate Government officials should be undertaken. Failure to do this will result in an erosion of the wellbeing and community spirit for the existing residents of Great Sankey.
- The Planning Statement refers to the proximity of three major rail corridors (Section 2.14). There is, however, no direct rail link between Warrington and St Helens and any journey undertaken by employees would therefore also need to involve further alternative transport modes.
- The Transport Statement recognises that the rail stations, both Warrington West and Sankey-for-Penketh, are approx. 3.8km from the proposed development site (Sections 3.4.4 & 3.4.8) and that this is in excess of the maximum recommended walking distance of 800m (CIHT 2015). To mitigate this, Section 3.4.11 suggests that 'it is anticipated that a new or existing bus service will link the station with Omega South' although there is no detail on any discussions or agreements with bus companies. However, in addition and somewhat contradictorily, Section 3.4.4 states that the distance from the rail stations is expected to be greater than the recommended maximum walking distance as the site is deliberately placed outside the residential area of Warrington to take advantage of the strategic road network.

Green Belt

Section 8 of the Planning Statement deals with 'Very Special Circumstances' which justify the development. Section 8.2 a) refers to occupier-led need and is expanded upon in Section 8.4. The statement makes no reference to the fact that the applicant company are currently based on a comparatively recently developed industrial estate (Gilmoss, East Lancs Road). Internet research shows that there are still units available for occupation on this site. No evidence has been put forward as to why the existing recent and modern premises are not capable of servicing their current and future business requirements.

The existing site provides easy access to the M57 which allows ongoing motorway access to the M62 or M6. The final line of Section 8.4 states that the company wish to take advantage of the specific locational advantage provided by the application site. It must be the case that, in order to justify the requirement of 'Very Special Circumstances' which allow Green Belt development, the 'specific locational advantage' provided by the site should be fully outlined and considered before making a decision to build on Green belt land which only has two points of ingress/egress via a neighbouring authority.

The applicant suggests that harm to permanence within the Green Belt will be limited because development will be seen as a natural extension to the current Omega site, and that any harm will not be substantial (para. 7.45). However, Sections 8.11 and subsequent of the Planning Statement deals extensively with the need for further logistical expansion, particularly within the North West and Liverpool city region. This application, if approved, will allow development on Green Belt land, leaving a further area of Green Belt land within the borough of St Helens to the west of the site as far as Clock Face Road. Given the stated need for employment opportunities, it is our view that this proposal will set a precedent and the longer-term temptation will be to extend further development onto the remaining Green Belt land and contribute to urban sprawl.

It is our view that insufficient evidence has been supplied as to why alternative sites not on Green Belt land cannot be found. This is especially so in respect of the needs of the Port of Liverpool as mentioned because the current owners, Peel, have extensive plans for the full development of the northern dock area.

Other Issues

On 13th January 2020, Great Sankey Parish Council forwarded a letter to the planning department at St Helens Council with copy correspondence to Warrington Borough Council requesting that the Parish Council be added to the consultation list for the Omega development. This was prior to any knowledge of the current planning application being listed.

We were extremely disappointed to find out about this application through word of mouth rather than any official notification from St Helens Council. Furthermore, the timeframe for response is extremely short given that there are over 200 supporting documents for the application. In the timeframe available, this is an initial response outlining the objections of Great Sankey Parish Council.

We would also like to point out that information provided to the local community has been non-existent. Given the existing concerns of residents regarding traffic levels, infrastructure difficulties and parking issues, which Warrington Borough Council are aware of, there are clearly issues arising from the lack of consultation.

As a result, Great Sankey Parish Council submits that the planning application should be rejected based on the reasons given in this letter as well as on the grounds of failure to consult with residents and appropriate groups, including ourselves.

We respectfully request that the following conditions are met:

1. The deadline for submission of comments by members of our community be extended to allow for proper consideration of the application.
2. That we are allowed to submit amending documents/further information if required.

3. Once a date is set for the consideration of the proposed development, Great Sankey Parish Council is granted a right of audience with the ability to contribute as necessary.

Yours sincerely

