



Summary Proof of Evidence Mr Edward Mellor, CEng, MCIHT, MICE. On behalf of St Helens Council

Land to the West of Omega South, and South of
M62, Bold, St Helens

March 21

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1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1.1 My name is Edward Mellor. I am a Divisional Director with Mott MacDonald, a global, employee owned multidisciplinary design consultancy. I am a Chartered Engineer and a member of both the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation and the Institution of Civil Engineers and as such am bound by their respective codes of conduct.
- 1.1.2 I was instructed in January 2021 by St Helens Council (StHC) in respect of the proposed development proposals at Omega Zone 8 to represent the council as their Highways expert witness.
- 1.1.3 I have previously advised StHC and acted as an expert witness on their behalf, most recently at the conjoined Parkside Phase 1 (PPh1) and Parkside Link Road (PLR), and the Haydock Point North (HPN) call-in Inquiries.
- 1.1.4 I am familiar with the site and surroundings. I have visited Omega Park on a number of occasions to observe the traffic operation on the highway network.
- 1.1.5 My experience with the transport and logistics matters of large development proposals is relevant to the matters being considered.
- 1.1.6 This Summary Proof is made on behalf of St Helens Council in respect of highway matters relating to Omega Zone 8 .

2. SCOPE OF EVIDENCE AND MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION.

2.1.1 My evidence covers the transport appraisal undertaken for the Omega Zone 8 proposals

2.1.2 A Statements of Common Ground (SoCG) concerning highway matters has been agreed between StHC and the Applicant.

2.1.3 In my main evidence I consider:

- The existing transport network and level of service, and a summary of the submitted scheme proposals.
- The Transport Assessment and the subsequent updated technical notes.

2.1.4 The purpose of my evidence is to present my review of highway and transport aspects.

3. THE PROPOSALS.

- 3.1.1 The setting and context of the proposals are shown on the drawing in Appendix K of my main proof of evidence.
- 3.1.2 The site comprises of an area of 75 hectares (ha) of undeveloped greenfield land. The proposals were submitted as a hybrid planning application (P/2020/0061/HYBR) for c.205,500sqm (c.2,210,500sqft) B2/B8 industrial uses.
- Full Planning Permission for the erection of a B8 Logistics Warehouse (c. 880,000sqft) with ancillary offices, associated parking, infrastructure, and landscaping; and
 - Outline Planning Permission for Manufacturing (B2) and Logistics (B8) development with ancillary offices and associated car parking, landscaping, and infrastructure (detailed matters of appearance; layout and scale are reserved for subsequent approval).
- 3.1.3 The site is located on the westerly side of Omega Park South which is south of the M6 motorway. Vehicular access to the development will be via a new roundabout to be constructed at the western end of Catalina Approach. Aside from the proposed site access roundabout the adjacent highway network is within the borough of Warrington.
- 3.1.4 At its eastern end Catalina Approach (also variously referred to as Catalina Way) connects into the wider highway network at the Catalina Approach/Omega Boulevard roundabout junction. To the north of the roundabout Omega Boulevard connects to Skyline Drive which provides direct access to the M62 (at Junction 8) without the need to traverse residential areas. The distance from Junction 8 to the proposed Omega Zone 8 access roundabout is approximately 2km/1.25miles. 600m south of the Catalina Way/Omega Boulevard roundabout Lingley Green Avenue connects to Omega Boulevard via a roundabout. The area of Lingley Green is predominantly residential.

4. TRANSPORT POLICY.

4.1.1 In my main proof of evidence, I address what I consider to be the relevant national and local transport policies and guidance. I make particular reference to;

National Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework [CD 1.1]
- Planning Practice Guidance: Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and statements
- National Planning Practice Guidance

Local and Regional Policy

- Third Local Transport Plan for Merseyside (LTP3) [CD 22.35].
- St Helens Local Plan Core Strategy [CD 2.2].
- St Helens Local Plan Preferred Options [CD 3.22]
- St Helens Borough Local Plan 2020 – 2035, Submission Draft January 2019 [CD 3.18]
- St Helens Local Plan 2020 – 2035, Transport Assessment January 2019 [CD 22.22]
- St Helens Local Plan 2020 – 2035, Transport Assessment January 2019 [CD 22.21]
- Warrington Council Local Transport Plan (LTP 3)
- Warrington Borough Council Standards for Parking in new Development (2015)

4.1.2 Although the site has little prospect of being served by rail it is well located to access the M6 which is identified in the Merseyside Third Local Transport Plan as part of the Strategic Freight Network. This meets the requirement of Core Policy CP 2.

4.1.3 The proposals are aligned to NPPF Chapter 9 by providing and facilitating appropriate access to all modes. Omega Zone 8 site is identified in the Local Plan (Site EA1) for future employment land development. The applicant has entered into a S106 agreement to

deliver public transport improvements committing to the requirements of Policy CE1(4) paragraph 4 contributing to improving public transport links.

- 4.1.4 The proposals are supportive of the emerging Local Plan Policies LPA 07 and to make use of the transport network to facilitate economic growth and access.

5. TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT REVIEW.

5.1.1 I have undertaken a review of the transport proposals, impacts and mitigation of the proposals. The applicant has captured their technical assessments in a transport assessment report. This has been supported by additional supplementary technical work including a number of supplementary technical responses and appendices.

Assessment Methodology

5.1.2 The transport consultant WSP consulted with StHC, Warrington Council (WBC) and Highways England (HE) regarding the scope and methodology to be adopted in the assessment in 2019. Since that time there has been an iterative process of reviewing the TA and provision of further information for the purposes of clarification and revision.

Impact on General Traffic

5.1.3 The approach to agreeing impact on general traffic was agreed with St Helens Council. Trip generation for B2 and B8 use classes was derived from Omega Park including established operations at from observed trip rates derived from established Dominos, Asda and Plastic Omnium logistics operations On Omega Park. Trip generation has been assigned to the highway network using separate approaches for light and heavy vehicles. The assessment years included within the Transport Assessment are as follows;

- 2019 baseline
- 2021 opening year, and
- 2020 assessment year.

5.1.4 Committed development has been included in the assessment together with an adjusted TEMPro growth factor applied to the 2019 base year.

Assessment

1.1.1 Through a process of engagement (applicant, StHC, WBC and HE), it was agreed that the following junctions within St Helens needed to be modelled.

- Burtonwood Road / Lockheed Road roundabout;
- M62 Junction 8 signalised gyratory;
- M62 Junction 8 merge and diverge slip roads.
- Burtonwood Road / Charon Way signalised junction;
- Burtonwood Road / Kingswood Road signalised junction;
- Burtonwood Road / Westbrook Way roundabout;
- Skyline Drive / Fairchild Road priority junction;
- Omega Boulevard / Catalina Way roundabout; and
- Omega Zone 8 roundabout.

5.1.5 With the exception of the immediate site access roundabout all of the junctions are in Warrington. The HEs interest is the operation of Junction 8.

5.1.6 The site access roundabout is forecast to operate with adequate reserve capacity, as is the Omega Boulevard / Catalina Approach roundabout which is the main site access junction to the sider Omega Park

5.1.7 Mitigation is proposed at junction 8 involving amendments to the carriageway markings on the gyratory section of the roundabout. In addition, Skyline Drive is to be widened to 2 lanes in each direction between Junction 8 and Fairchild Road roundabout together with an improvement to the roundabout. It should be noted that the Omega Park operator has recently widened Skyline Park too two lanes in each direction between junction 8 and Fairchild Road roundabout.

5.1.8 Neither WBC or HE were willing to enter into a SoCG but they have formally submitted responses of no objection [CD 34.28 and 34.58]. All matters are therefore agreed with the relevant local statutory consultees.

Walking and Cycling.

5.1.9 Assessment of walking and cycling was undertaken adopting StHC guidance. In summary the assessment revealed that:

- The nearest bus stop on Omega Boulevard is beyond a comfortable walking distance.
- The nearest rail stations at Warrington West and Sankey for Penketh are beyond a comfortable walking distance, but accessible by bicycle.
- Much of St Helens residential communities and areas of deprivation are beyond comfortable walking and cycling distances.

Bus and Rail.

5.1.10 The Applicant recognises the barriers the Zone 8 site has to bus accessibility and has committed to an improvement plan which is a matter of agreement in the SoCG.

5.1.11 The applicant proposes to divert the existing B52 bus service into Omega Zone 8 as part of its route and has committed to a s. 106 contribution of £900k of funding over 5 years. In addition, a new bus stop will be installed within the Omega Zone 8 boundary providing less than 5-minute walking time from all four units.

5.1.12 The applicant has committed to a s.106 contribution of £750,000 over a 5 year period for the extension of an existing St Helens bus service to the site, with the specific details to be implemented by MerseyTravel, which will make the site accessible from St Helens.

5.1.13 In my opinion the financial support to both the B52 and the 30 or 32 bus service extension are essential to provide the required level of connectivity. The bus services will not only connect areas of deprivation in St Helens they will also support the delivery of the Travel Plan initiatives and reduce the reliance of private car trips.

5.1.14 The delivery of the public transport improvements is required by Policy CE1(4) and complies by contributing to improving public transport links. The measures to improve public transport access also support NPPF paragraph 109 , which requires development sites to ensure sustainable travel opportunities which are appropriate to the development are adopted, and appropriate access is considered for all users.

Framework Travel Plan.

5.1.15 The Applicant has included a Framework Travel Plan (FTP) in the TA. A detailed Travel Plan will be developed when the site is occupied. The Travel Plan will align with the overarching Omega Park TP objectives and strategy. The Applicant has committed to a contribution of £10k per annum for a minimum of 10 years through a s. 106 agreement to support this coordinated approach.

Car Parking.

5.1.16 The Applicant is proposing a level of car parking below the maximum requirement in StHC guidance [CD 3.2]. This is supported my analysis undertaken by Mott MacDonald and is to be encouraged to support delivery of the TP.

6. STATEMENT OF MATTERS.

6.1.1 The Secretary of state has identified a number of issues that they wish to be informed about. Relevant to transport and highways are the following matters referenced from the management case conference notes. Relevant to highways and transport are;

- The extent to which the proposed development is consistent with Government policies for building a strong, competitive economy (NPPF Chapter 6);
- The effect of the proposal on the highway network and how the development can contribute to meeting sustainable transport objectives.

I have considered both of these matters in my evidence and conclude that

6.1.2 The Applicant is improving access by sustainable transport and supporting a stronger economy by funding the improving access by bus and connecting areas of multiple deprivation to an area of employment opportunity.

6.1.3 The Applicant has considered impacts on the highway network and mitigation is proposed that has been agreed with Highways England and Warrington Council.

7. REPRESENTATIONS AND OBJECTIONS

7.1.1 There are no Rule 6 Parties making representations to this Inquiry. I have considered some of the common transport themes made during the planning application consultation process.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.

- 8.1.1 I have considered the appraisal undertaken to assess the transport impacts of the development proposals including matters raised by the Secretary of State.
- 8.1.2 I have used my professional judgement to carefully consider the development proposals which I have set out in my evidence. My conclusion is that there are no transport impact or policy related considerations that should prevent the Omega Zone 8 proposals being granted planning consent
- 8.1.3 I am satisfied that proposals are consistent with the relevant national, regional, and local transport policy and guidance.
- 8.1.4 The support the Applicant proposes to strengthen accessibility by bus will connect areas of multiple deprivation to employment opportunity in Omega Park and offset set the weakness in walking and cycling access.