

WESTON AND CREWE GREEN PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 05 APRIL 2024

PRESENT:

Councillors: John Cornell (Chairman), Anne Broome, John Chambers and John Densem.

23/004 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Kiddie and Lewis

23/005 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

23/006 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 November be confirmed and signed as a true and correct record.

23/007 PLANNING APPLICATION 23/0539N

Councillors considered the details of the Full planning permission for Units 1-3 comprising a mix of Class B2 / E(g)(iii) light industrial / manufacturing and B8 warehousing & distribution uses and ancillary areas, together with access, car parking provision, landscaping (including buffers, habitat parks, nature trails), sustainable drainage features (ponds, swales and raingardens), ecological enhancements (wet meadows, woodland planting, wildflower grassland), and other associated works and infrastructure proposed within the northern part of the site, within the curtilage of Units 1 - 3. Outline planning permission for the southern part of the site comprising a mix of Class E(g)(i) offices, B2 / E(g)(iii) light industrial / manufacturing and B8 warehousing & distribution uses, with all matters reserved including (access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) together with works and infrastructure associated with the southern part of the site on Land in the Western Part of Basford East, Crewe.

Cllr Cornell circulated the draft comments, which the Committee reviewed in detail. A number of amendments were suggested including the strengthening of the objection to the height of the buildings and improvements to the landscaping. There was also concern regarding the proximity of the access to Unit 1 to the housing development and this should be moved to the western end of the unit.

During the discussion on the application, it was noted that revised plans had been submitted to planning application 22/3158N for the Construction of road, required to enable alternative access to Arriva Traincare site, which would use the same road as application 23/0539N. It was agreed that further comments would be submitted regarding these revisions.

RESOLVED – that the Parish Council submits comments to this application as set out in the Appendix to these minutes.

**Weston & Crewe Green Parish Council
Supplementary Observations on application 23/0539N –
MUSE Developments Ltd.**

Land on Western part of Basford East

Full planning permission for Units 1-3 comprising a mix of Class B2 / E(g) (iii) light industrial / manufacturing and B8 warehousing & distribution uses and ancillary uses, together with access, car parking, landscaping (including buffers, habitat parks, nature trails), sustainable drainage features (ponds, swales, and raingardens), ecological enhancements (wet meadows, woodland planting, wildflower grassland) and other associated works and infrastructure proposed within the northern part of the site, within the curtilage of Units 1-3.

Outline planning permission for the southern part of the site comprising a mix of Class E(g)(i) offices, B2 / E(g)(iii) light industrial/manufacturing and B8 warehousing uses, with all matters reserved including (access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale together with works and infrastructure associated with the southern part of the site)

The former Weston & Basford Parish Council commented on this application in March 2023 – see attached.

Cheshire East have now received amended plans/details.

The main amendment is the re-orientating of Unit 1, which has been redesigned to activate the site's entrance on the eastern boundary. This in effect takes this Unit further away from the proposed Wimpey housing at this point and relocates the car parking to the rear of the unit, closer to the housing. Notwithstanding this, as a consequence there will be additional noise and nuisance from vehicles entering and leaving the site adjacent to the Wimpey housing. The Parish Council considers that access for vehicles loading and unloading must be restricted to the western side of this unit, well away from the housing.

The Parish Council still considers that this application constitutes overdevelopment of this 39.65 Ha site. Having looked in detail through the amended submission the Parish Council wishes to supplement its previous comments as follows:

- **Local Plan Designation of site.** The detailed drawings still indicate that the 1.3 million sq. ft. of development will be used exclusively for B8 warehousing uses, despite the written description of the content of this application (mix of uses including offices, light industrial, manufacturing in addition to warehousing). Whilst the uses indicated on the plans don't accord with the Cheshire East Local Plan which specifically excludes warehousing, it is recognised that market forces have changed since the Local Plan was approved. Notwithstanding this, any permission **must ensure** that the applicant's description of the intended uses is strictly adhered to. **This site forms a critical part of the Basford East Strategic Development Area which purports to represent**

an exemplar development at the entrance to Crewe and the Northwest, and this must be fully recognised.

- **Traffic generation.** The Parish Council is still having extreme difficulty in understanding the justification for the traffic generation to and from the site, given that the only access will be from the central roundabout off David Whitby Way. This will also be the only access to serve about 800 dwellings, a 2-form entry primary school, and community facilities. The applicants accept in their Transport Assessment that there are current capacity issues relating to David Whitby Way and that the level of parking for the proposed units is below standard.
- **Safe crossing of David Whitby Way.** This is still a key issue in so far as the Parish Council is concerned. It is not accepted that an 'at grade' crossing will in any way be satisfactory. In the event of an approval of this application, the Parish Council urge the LPA to ensure that included in a 106 Agreement are **substantial funds** to help resolve this issue with a much more acceptable crossing facility.
- ****Network Rail Application 22/3158N / HS2.** It is noted that this application is still pending. The Parish Council is unable to ascertain whether the increased traffic generation resulting from this proposed use has been included within the Muse traffic figures. It is acknowledged that HS2b is now no longer an issue.
- **Height of Buildings.** It is noted that this hasn't been modified in the amended plans. The buildings shown are between 20 and 23 metres to the top of ridge line (65 - 75.5 ft) and that the sections still show that the Units will dominate the skyline and dwarf the Wimpey housing. The Parish Council raises strong objection to this part of the scheme. As a comparison, the units on Basford West are limited to a maximum height of 18 metres across the site (14/0378N), with a maximum height of 15 metres in the fringe locations. **If approved the current proposal should be conditioned accordingly and the height restricted.**
- **Design of Units.** The Parish Council considers this to be drab, stark, unimaginative, and uninspiring - colours are limited to various shades of grey. Thought needs to be given as to how the treatment of the units can better harmonise with the surrounding area. Little regard seems to have been given to National Design Guidance.
- **Landscaping and Structure Planting.** The Parish Council urge that, should the application be approved full landscape and structure planting must be undertaken well before any development commences, if it is to have any impact particularly in relation to safeguarding the amenities of the occupiers of the proposed adjacent housing.
- **Biodiversity.** The Parish Council shares the concern of Crewe Town Council that the stated net biodiversity gain of 0.29% is an absolute bare minimum

based on a desktop calculation. Notwithstanding the fact that this application was submitted prior to February 2024, it falls well short of the 10% now required in the Environment Act 2021. **This is a particularly relevant point given that this site should represent an exemplar development.**

- **Liaison Group.** Should permission be granted, the Parish Council consider it's essential, given the scale of this proposal, that a local liaison group is established (local representatives alongside the developer) to monitor the implementation of the scheme, to try to resolve problems before they become major issues.
- **Light pollution and Noise.** The submission seems to be lacking on any proposals to mitigate light pollution, particularly in relation to the proposed adjacent residential development, along with reduction of noise generation.

In conclusion, the Parish Council is of the view that more work is required on this application to achieve a more acceptable scheme before it's presented to the Strategic Planning Board.

FOOT NOTE: ** The Parish Council notes that on the Cheshire East Website additional information has recently been submitted in respect of the Network Rail application 22/3158N. **The Parish Council has not been consulted on this. Given that this application is so intertwined with 23/0539N the Parish Council will be submitting further comments on this within the next few days. The comments will need to be read alongside these now given in respect of 23/0539N.**

WCGPC/ April 2024

Weston & Basford Parish Council
Observations on application 23/0539N - Muse Developments Ltd
Land on the western part of Basford East

Full planning permission for Units 1-3 comprising a mix of Class B2 / E(g) (iii) light industrial / manufacturing and B8 warehousing & distribution uses and ancillary uses, together with access, car parking provision, landscaping (including buffers, habitat parks, nature trails), sustainable drainage features (ponds, swales and raingardens), ecological enhancements (wet meadows, woodland planting, wildflower grassland) and other associated works and infrastructure proposed within the northern part of the site, within the curtilage of Units 1-3.

Outline planning permission for the southern part of the site comprising a mix of Class E(g)(i) offices, B2 / E(g)(iii) light industrial / manufacturing and B8 warehousing uses, with all matters reserved including (access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale together with works and infrastructure associated with the southern part of the site.

The Parish Council has **no objection to the principle** of employment development on this site, given it forms a part of the Strategic Masterplan for Basford East.

Notwithstanding this, it is extremely concerned about the current proposal as submitted and urges the Local Planning Authority to enter negotiations with the applicant to reduce the intensity of the development and its impact on the surrounding land uses. In this context, traffic generation, layout, massing, height, design, and integration with the other uses (dominance, overlooking and, noise) approved for Basford East, are all critical factors which need, in our view, re-visiting and a rethink.

The application seems to be seeking to maximise the floorspace on this site at the expense of the immediate surrounding area (particularly the adjacent housing development)

In specific terms, the Parish Council is concerned about the following issues:

- The total development is for 1.3 million square feet and judging from the detailed drawings virtually the whole of this site will be used for B8 warehousing uses despite the description of the content of this application. The application states that the warehousing content will be 700,000 sq. ft. **The Cheshire East approved Local Plan specifically states that B8 uses are not considered suitable for this site due to highway constraints.** The proposals contain no improvements to the highway network to accommodate the scale of B8 uses now proposed. **The proposal does not therefore accord with the Local Plan.**
- The Parish Council cannot accept or understand the justification for the traffic generation to and from this site. The sole access is off the central roundabout on David Whitby Way which also serves approx. 800 dwellings (Wimpey and Onward/Lane End) in addition to a proposed new 2 F/E Primary School. The applicants state that this access will have sufficient capacity to accommodate the proposed traffic and the development will have a minimal impact on the other junctions which serve the site. The Parish Council cannot accept this. David Whitby Way regularly becomes gridlocked at peak times, with existing traffic volumes and this is without any of the proposed housing, warehousing and school development having taken place.

- The safe crossing of David Whitby Way in the vicinity of this central roundabout is fundamental to serving the two residential areas on either side, proposed new school and proposed community facilities. This is likely to result in a major conflict point for vehicles entering and leaving the proposed development, residents entering and leaving their homes, and pedestrians including school children and the disabled. In the Parish Council's view, the only solution here is some form of bridge or underpass, not an 'at grade' crossing. This needs to be factored into the equation as part of the consideration of this application.
- Frequent reference is made in the applicant's submission to Network Rail, who are providing part of the essential infrastructure within the site. Network Rail have a current application pending (22/3158N) to use this site access to serve their existing depot adjacent to the West Coast Main Line. Their application provides for the construction of a major part of the necessary highway infrastructure to serve the site. This will bring additional heavy traffic through this central roundabout and application site. This application cannot in reality be separated from the current proposal. HS2b also want a compound at the western end of this site abutting the railway line which would again be served from this central roundabout. The HS2b works are unlikely to be short term and again will generate considerable construction traffic which will inevitably use the David Whitby Way Roundabout. No allowance has been made for these in the traffic figures submitted with the application.
- Basford East has been heavily promoted as an opportunity to create a high-quality employment led, vibrant and mixed-use development providing high quality homes and employment opportunities to assist with the regeneration of Crewe. This proposal does not in the Parish Councils opinion fulfil this aspiration.
- Whilst accepting that this is a large site overall (about 97 acres), the buildings shown on the submitted plans are between 20 and 23 metres high (65 – 75.5 ft), and the sections show that they dwarf the adjoining Wimpey housing. As a comparison the buildings on Basford West are limited to a maximum height of 18 metres across the site (14/0378N) with a maximum height of 15 metres in the fringe locations – the latter forming a part of the reserved matters. The design of the buildings detailed in the current application is stark and of a standard type in grey sheet steel which can be seen anywhere in the country. This is not in any way imaginative. No account has been taken of the Government Guidance on building Better Beautiful nor indeed of the National Design Guidance.
- Whilst the applicants go to great lengths to justify the proposed landscaping and buffer zones, the Parish Council considers that this needs enhancing. For example, we question whether the 4-metre-high buffer to the rear of the Wimpey houses is sufficient. Any structure planting would need to take place well before any development commences to have any impact. Where is the bio-diversity net gain in this development?
- The Parish Council also consider that this application could go much further in demonstrating its green credentials and compliance with Cheshire East's climate change conditions. Where, for example, are the solar panels and electric charging points?

The Parish Council seeks an urgent meeting with your senior officers before the consideration of this application progresses much further to amplify and discuss these points and to ascertain whether a satisfactory solution can be reached.

WBPC/JGC March 2023