

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)
Regulations 2017

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SCREENING OPINION

APPLICATION REFERENCE: 22/01341/SO

Name and address for correspondence:	Applicant name:
James Gibbs Gerald Eve LLP 1 Marsden Street Manchester M2 1HW	

Part 1 - Particulars of Application

Date of Application: 8 June 2022

Proposal:	Request for Screening Opinion in respect of redevelopment of the site comprising the demolition of all existing units and erection of new storage and distribution units (Use Class B8) with ancillary office space, vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access, external yards, parking, landscaping and associated works
Location:	Heywood Stores, Manchester Road, Heywood, OL10 2QR,

Part II - Particulars of decision

The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 of the above regulations.

The proposed development falls within the description of paragraph 10(a) of Schedule 2 of the above regulations.

The proposed development would not be located in a sensitive area and having taken into account the criteria in Schedule 3 of the regulations, would not be likely to have significant effect on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size and location.

The proposed development for which planning permission is sought is not EIA development and an Environmental Statement would not be required for the proposed development.

Date Decision Issued **14 October 2022**

Daniela Ripa
Interim Head of Planning Services

INFORMATIVE

This decision should be read in conjunction with the attached statement of reasons which clarify the Council's decision in this particular case.

Statement of Reasons

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017 (as amended) allows scope for an applicant to request a formal opinion from the Local Planning Authority about whether a proposed development is development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Gerald Eve LLP has requested a Screening Opinion to enable consideration of the above proposal.

The application site is located in the south Heywood / Hopwood area off Manchester Road. The site comprises an existing industrial estate in use for B8 Storage and Distribution, having originally been constructed primarily for RAF hangar facilities. The site is within the defined urban area but does not have a specific policy designation within the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan. Whilst there are small areas to the periphery of the site which have remained unbuilt, the site is predominantly previously developed land.

Under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Regulations) as amended, "EIA development" is development which is either Schedule 1 development or Schedule 2 development that is likely to have significant effects on the environment by reason of factors such as its nature, size or location.

The proposed development does not fall under Schedule 1 development. However, Part 10 'Infrastructure Projects' of Schedule 2 of the Regulations includes:

- a) Industrial estate development projects [where] the area of the development exceeds 5 hectare*

If a proposed project is listed in the first column in Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations and exceeds the relevant thresholds or criteria set out in the second column the proposal needs to be screened by the local planning authority to determine whether significant effects on the environment are likely and hence whether an Environmental Impact Assessment is required. Projects listed in Schedule 2 which are located in, or partly in, a sensitive area also need to be screened, even if they are below the thresholds or do not meet the criteria.

In this case, the site area measures circa 11.1ha hectares and therefore screening is required. However, the site is not located within a 'sensitive area' as defined by the Regulations.

It should be noted that the NPPG states that it should not be presumed that developments above the indicative thresholds should always be subject to assessment, or those falling below these thresholds could never give rise to significant effects, especially where the development is in an environmentally sensitive location. Each development will need to be considered on its merits.

This Screening Opinion has been undertaken in accordance with the selection criteria set out in Schedule 3 to the Regulations and with reference to the applicant's letter dated 8 June 2022. Consideration has been given to NPPG guidance, including the Indicative screening thresholds set out therein.

Characteristics of development

(a) The size and design of the whole development.

The overall site area for the proposed development measures approximately 11.1ha. The proposals comprise the demolition of 9 existing units totalling 31,900sqm and their replacement with 3 modern units totalling 44,566sqm for an increased floorspace on site of 12,666sqm.

Whilst reducing the overall number of buildings the proposals would follow the general shape of the existing layout. Two smaller units would be situated within the southern/south-eastern part of the site whilst the larger third unit would sit across the western part of the site (running north-south).

The proposals also seek to increase the height of the buildings on site with the current units comprising low rise industrial units of up to 10m. The proposed development seeks buildings with heights of up to circa 21m.

Viewed in isolation the proposed development, comprising 12,666sqm uplift in B8 units of greater heights, would not be considered a particularly large or significant development. The indicative screening thresholds set out in NPPG for Schedule 2 developments highlights

developments of more than 20ha in site area. These proposals would be roughly half this scale and on an existing industrial estate. This suggests that the proposals would be unlikely to require EIA due to its scale alone.

Nonetheless scale is not the only determining factor and it is necessary to consider the likely impacts arising and the context in which they sit.

(b) Cumulation with other existing development and/or approved development.

The site's wider surroundings include the South Heywood Masterplan which comprises, up to 1,000 new homes, 135,460sqm of employment floorspace and 2,500sqm of commercial uses, a primary school and a new link road from Junction 19 of the M62. This was granted outline planning permission in March 2020 (ref. 16/01399/HYBR) since which time, several reserved matters permissions have been approved for residential and industrial development. Furthermore, the new link road to J19 of the M62 is due for completion in October 2022.

The South Heywood Masterplan proposal was subject to a full EIA covering the following technical matters: socioeconomics; landscape and visual; ecology; archaeology and heritage; ground conditions; drainage and flood risk; highways; air quality; and noise and vibration. The supporting Environmental Statement for this proposal confirmed that no significant adverse environmental impacts were identified and that all impacts would be at acceptable levels or could be made acceptable through mitigation.

Given the scale of this proposal as assessed in section (a) above, it is not considered that the proposals would see a significant addition in the area beyond the already approved cumulative schemes. There are a number of factors from the cumulative developments which are of relevance to the proposals in this report. Firstly, the South Heywood Masterplan is bringing forward a new link road which will provide extra capacity within the local highway network. Secondly, the Masterplan will include uses that generate traffic movements of cars and HGVs, using some of the generated capacity, whilst giving rise to some impacts on air quality and noise. Thirdly the Masterplan will introduce residential development at the border of these EIA screening proposals.

A key consideration of cumulative impacts relates specifically to the site access and its relationship with the new signalised junction being created on Manchester Road. In particular, vehicles turning right out of the site towards the new link road will need to cross Manchester Road traffic and queue at the new junction before moving east or west towards main motorway junctions. Detailed modelling will be required on the operation of this junction in support of any application

(c) The use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity

It is not envisaged that there would be a significant use of natural resources in either the construction or operation of the proposed development. As a relatively level and previously developed site, there would not be actions which caused any significant topographical changes in the local area, nor would there be a need for disproportionate use of above or below ground materials/minerals which are in short supply. Furthermore, the site is not considered to be an important natural asset for forestry, agriculture, or minerals.

(d) The production of waste.

Waste arising from the demolition and construction stage will be dealt with in accordance with details submitted with the planning application. A suitable planning condition would ensure that opportunities for waste minimisation, segregation and the transfer to appropriate processing facilities could take place.

Operational waste will be produced by end users, however, this would be typical of such a warehousing unit of this scale and it is therefore not considered that waste and waste management is a matter that is required to be assessed through an EIA.

(e) Pollution and nuisances.

Contamination

As a previously developed site, there is potential risk of ground contamination. The historic uses on the site have not however been of any kinds known to be particularly harmful to ground conditions and with exception of some additional developments over the sites history,

the built development remains largely as it has been for decades since its original construction.

As such it is not considered likely that the site would give rise to ground contamination levels beyond other typical comparable sites. Any planning application would be expected to be supported by a comprehensive geo-environmental assessment. The extent of this assessment would be informed through an initial Phase 1 assessment, with recommendations for any further intrusive investigations to follow.

Through the submission of standard validation requirement documentation and the use of planning conditions, it is considered that any risk from ground contamination could be readily managed.

Air Quality

During the construction phases there is the potential for air quality impacts resulting from dust generation. Such an impact can generally be controlled through the imposition of a planning condition requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan. It is not considered the proposals would give rise to any air quality impacts beyond what is typical of this type of development.

The main operational impacts would be through an increase in traffic movements brought about by the development proposals. As noted elsewhere the proposals lie in a location that has strong highways infrastructure including the soon to be new South Heywood Link Road to J19 of the M62 lying directly to the south of the site. Whilst it is considered that there may be technical constraints to overcome with relation to accessing this infrastructure safely and ensuring junctions operate efficiently, there is not considered to be any issues with lack of capacity to accommodate the proposals. Furthermore, the site is not within an AQMA and so is not considered a more sensitive area in relation to the likely impacts.

Any planning application would still be expected to provide an Air Quality Impact Assessment.

Noise

During the construction phase there is the potential for typical impacts on the noise environment surrounding the site, particularly for residents who live closest. As such a Construction Method Statement would be expected as part of any planning conditions in order to ensure best practice for construction workers and control hours of work and deliveries.

Once operational the proposals are likely to give rise to noise impacts through traffic movements, particularly HGVs, and through any plant equipment on the proposed units. It is noted that the site at present has no acoustic attenuation measures and as such affords no protection to surrounding residents. Whilst the proposals involve an uplift in activity and traffic movements on site, they would also offer opportunities for appropriately designed acoustic mitigation measures to be incorporated throughout.

The design of these acoustic mitigation measures could be controlled through any application, with installation and maintenance further controlled by planning condition.

Lighting

The proposals would require typical levels of lighting for security and operation during both the construction and operational stages. It is not considered that these would be more than what is typical of their use and which can be controlled through a well-designed lighting scheme to ensure impacts are not be harmful to local residents or sensitive ecological receptors.

(f) The risk of major accidents and or disasters relevant to the development concerned; and

(g) The risk to human health

Risk of accidents during the construction phases can be controlled through standard health and safety measures incorporated within a Construction Management Plan as mentioned previously. It is not considered that the proposed end-use is likely to result in any significant risk of accident, however if a future end user wished to use the site for storage and distribution of controlled substances for example, this would be subject to other legislating regimes and consent requirements.

The nature of the development will not cause a significant risk to human health once completed and occupied. Best working practices are required to be carried out during construction to limit any risks to human health during the construction stage.

These factors, in addition to the reasons provided in the pollution and noise section of this report are considered to ensure that there would be no more than a low risk of major accidents, disasters or to human health.

Location of development

- (a) The existing land use

The existing and approved use of the site is B8. The site will remain in the existing use.

- (b) The relative abundance, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area.

There are no known natural resources on the site that can be extracted. The site contains a number of areas with existing established planting, particularly towards the site boundaries, however there are no protected features and the proposals could seek to accommodate protection and enhancement of some of the onsite planting. As such the proposals are not considered to raise any significant adverse effects on the abundance, availability, quality and regenerative capacity of natural resources in the area.

- (c) The absorption capacity of the natural environment.

The site does not contain, nor does it lie in close proximity to wetlands, coastal zones, mountain and forest areas, areas where environmental standards have been exceeded (e.g. Air Quality Management Areas), densely populated areas or landscapes and sites of known historical, cultural or archaeological significance.

Ecologically, the site is not closely connected to any features which would be considered sensitive with regards to EIA development. The Rochdale Canal SAC is located circa 2.4 km east of site. The SAC is not hydrologically connected to site and is geographically separated from the proposal site. Therefore, it is considered unlikely there would be a direct loss or degradation of habitats that support the qualifying features of the SAC. Hopwood Woods Local Nature Reserve lies approximately 1.1km from the site but is again severed in any connection with the site by major infrastructure and a lack of continuous linking features. Three Sites of Biological Importance are located within 2km of the site, although the closest is 1.5km and these are again physically separated from the site and unlikely to experience any significant impacts by nature of the development proposals.

The impacts of the proposals are considered likely to be highly localised and unlikely to impact on any ecologically sensitive areas. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any detrimental impact on the absorption capacity of the natural environment. Any application would also be expected to contain full proposals for ecological mitigation and enhancements, including proposals for achieving biodiversity net gain.

Types and characteristics of the potential impact

- (a) The magnitude and spatial extent of the impact

Given the scale of the proposals, and the respective uplift compared with the existing use on site, it is considered that the impact of the proposals would be localised. Nonetheless, the impact locally could be substantial, subject to finalised design, specifically for residential properties directly bordering the site. As highlighted previously in this report, it is therefore considered essential that the proposals are supported by assessments on Landscape and Visual Impact as well as daylight/sunlight, with particular regard to local residents. Furthermore, the localised impact on the junction at Manchester Road will require detailed modelling to ensure safe and efficient operation of this signalised junction.

The wider context of the site is not of great sensitivity and so it is not considered that the spatial extent of any impacts will be significant.

- (b) The nature of the impact

The nature of the impacts are considered to mainly relate to landscape and visual impact, transport, air quality, ecology, ground conditions, noise, and socio economics.

Nonetheless, these are not considered to be unusual impacts for a proposal of this nature and could be controlled through a well-designed scheme, full suite of planning documents, and where necessary, planning conditions or obligations to demonstrate that any potential harm can be effectively reduced and mitigated.

(c) The transboundary nature of the impact

Given the location of the site no significant transboundary impact is expected.

(d) The intensity and complexity of the impact

It is not considered that any of the impacts are likely to be of significant complexity. The only impacts considered to have potential for significant intensity are in relation to landscape and visual impact, specifically for residents directly bordering the site, and transport and highways. Specifically related to the junction at Manchester Road. These are not considered complex matters beyond what is typical of a development of this type but will require detailed modelling, design and landscaping. Furthermore, the highly specific and localised nature of the impact is not considered to warrant an EIA.

(e) The probability of the impact

The identified impacts would be highly probable by their nature, however these would be proactively mitigated as set out in this report.

(f) The expected onset, duration, frequency and reversibility of the impact

The impacts will be realised as the proposed development commences on site and would be temporary for those impacts associated with construction activities and permanent for those impacts associated with the end-use. No impacts have been identified that would not be reversible.

(g) The cumulation of the impact with the impact of other existing and/or approved development.

As previously covered in this report, it is considered there will be notable interaction between the proposals and cumulative developments, but that these would not give rise to significant environmental impacts.

(h) The possibility of effectively reducing the impact.

As set out within the relevant sections of this report, it is considered that all impacts associated with the proposals are capable of mitigation through standard practices in the design, planning, construction, and operation stages.

Conclusion

The proposed development has been screened in accordance with Schedule 3 and considered in cumulation with existing development and the proposed development on the adjacent land. The assessment concludes that the proposal, whether alone or in cumulation with the existing and proposed development, would be unlikely to give rise to significant effects on the environment. Therefore, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council concludes that the proposed development is not EIA development within the meaning of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.