



PLANNING APPLICATION REFERENCE: PP-11462270v1

R&B Switchgear Design & Access Statement

ABOUT R&B SWITCHGEAR GROUP:

R&B Switchgear Group specialises in the maintenance, design, and manufacture of bespoke low & medium voltage switchgear.

Recognised as a leading provider of power engineering solutions for the marine, oil & gas, healthcare, education, rail, renewables, and energy sectors, R&B Switchgear supports some of the world's largest household names including TESCO, Shell, London Underground, the NHS and P&O Cruises.

Founded by the company's Managing Director, Mark Beswick, in 1985, the company has more than 37 years' experience delivering specialist power distribution projects. This also includes supporting global clients' with their heritage Whipp & Bourne equipment.

This specialist division has provided new opportunities to former Whipp & Bourne employees, some of whom are still with the business today.

During its 37-year history, R&B Switchgear has continued to provide local jobs, skills training and apprenticeships for people in the local area and beyond. As the group has expanded, it now has offices located across the UK, USA & Singapore, with its head office and manufacturing department firmly rooted in Heywood.

The company has been located at Switchgear House in Heywood for 24 years, and as the business is evolving and the service offer is expanding, we need to create more space to facilitate production. Since the pandemic, the business has experienced an accelerated growth rate, increasing its revenue by 119% year on year, and increasing its workforce by almost 70%. This growth rate is predicted to continue, with the company diversifying its client base and winning landmark projects of upwards of £1million with the UK Atomic Energy Authority, the Light Rail Transit Authority in Philippines and Carnival UK.

The team have considered a relocation and carried out extensive research into other premises, however it has been unanimously decided by the senior management team that the prime location of Switchgear House is a key factor in our high employee and client retention levels. We have therefore submitted a planning application to increase our footprint and expand our operations.

INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE:

We are currently in the process of investing in the future of R&B Switchgear Group and its head office facilities. Our primary objective is to increase productivity by upgrading our facilities and creating an inspiring workplace environment.

We currently have 50 team members who regularly commute to our head office in Heywood, and we have reached the point where we are at capacity within our current structure.

Due to the nature of our business, and the specialist skills we need to deliver for our clients, it is imperative that we have a local workforce who can continue to work across our manufacturing and service divisions. This is not the type of role which can be completed remotely, and the skills of our engineers take many years to acquire.

We have therefore developed a five-phase programme to increase our manufacturing and servicing factory footprint by +32% and increase our projects and office space by +37%.

As part of this investment in our future, we will seek to combine all office staff into an open plan setting to foster a culture of collaboration between teams and departments and introduce green technology and systems to reduce our carbon footprint.

We will endeavor to promote initiatives that reduce reliance on private cars, ie car sharing, bikes, public transport and walking to work. We already have a number of team members who currently use public transport routes, use car share schemes, and walk / cycle to work. As part of our overall benefits scheme, we are currently exploring the Cyclescheme and looking at investing in shower facilities within the building to support this.

As a small business, we know that the war for talent is fiercer than ever, and we must make ourselves an attractive employment prospect for the next generations if we are to continue to grow and attract top talent. This includes investing in our facilities, our office space and our equipment, so that we can comfortably compete with global names such as Siemens, ABB and Schneider Electric.

We predict that this extension will enable us to hire up to 20 office-based recruits and increase production by a further 25%.

INVESTING IN OUR TEAM:

We have an Apprenticeship Academy and currently hire 5% of employees as apprentice engineers; we are in the process of expanding the programme to other business areas and anticipate that we will move towards 10% of our workforce. This is a 4-year programme, and upon successful completion they are appointed as Junior Field Service engineers as they continue to build upon their technical knowledge and expertise.

We have recently launched a Graduate programme to welcome entry level candidates into the team. We provide a rotation scheme across various departments (Engineering, Project Management & estimating, CAD & Electrical Design) to provide a working induction into our business, as well as our core product and service offering.

We also offer work placements for engineering students working towards an engineering qualification. Typically, this is a 6–8-week placement whilst they are undertaking their studies, and which may lead to an offer of a place on our apprenticeship programme. We also support schoolwork placements, for up to a 2-week duration, to provide an experience of how the engineering sector works and the career opportunities within it.

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE:

Earlier this month, R&B Switchgear Group announced the launch of a new company in the group. R&B Cabling and Systems Integration Ltd (RBCSI) is a specialist cabling, systems, & integration division which has been set up in response to growing client demand. The new business venture will build on our existing cabling and switchgear expertise, providing a full turnkey solution for electrical installations and mechanical services.

R&B Switchgear Group has also recently been recognised for its best-in-class health & safety and environmental management systems with two international accreditations.

The company achieved the coveted ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems and ISO 45001 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems certification following a meticulous and comprehensive on-site assessment with NQA.

This new environmental standard (ISO 14001) recognises the steps the company has made in reducing its overall environmental impact in order to advance environmental conservation.

Alongside a commitment to preserving our future, the company has also focused on the health, safety, and wellbeing of its workforce, taking crucial steps to maintain its HSEQ record and further improve injury prevention measures.

The business is already accredited to ISO 9001, Achilles FPAL, UVDB, Safe Contractor and Cyber Essentials standards. We are currently working towards Cyber Essentials Plus and have an audit date scheduled for 5th September 2022.

INVESTING IN OUR PLANET:

As a business, we are looking to set our commitments and ambitious targets to reduce our impact on the environment. To help us in this mission, we have set out our net zero ambitions as part of our wider business strategy, and we have appointed Positive Planet, a consultant company.

We are working with Positive Planet to accurately measure our total carbon emissions so that we can implement informed carbon reduction strategies and business change programmes. This involves a full audit process into all of our travel (including air), logistics, waste and utilities requirements over the past two years to assess current usage trends.



Continuation

This will be a continued focus as we work through our facilities upgrades and modifications, implementing greener technologies and solutions in order to take steps which better protect our planet.

IN CONCLUSION:

As a local business, we recognise our role in providing employment opportunities which support our local community and beyond. We are a small to medium sized company, but we have big ambitions, and it is this tenacity, determination and commitment which has paved the way for the business we are today.

As we turn our attention ahead to the next chapter for R&B, we are excited about the pipeline of work we are building and the clients we are winning. But it's not just about the work, we want to create more training opportunities, invest in our people, upgrade our work environments and above all, foster a culture of collaboration, co-operation, and coaching.

We hope you will look favorably upon our planning application and see the potential we can unlock and the opportunities we will create by expanding our much-loved premises.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Beswick', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Kind Regards,

Mark Beswick

Managing Director R&B Switchgear Services