

Dear Members

Special Planning Committee (Large Scale Major Application)

A special meeting of the Planning Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Suite, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Tuesday 15 October 2024** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

The Committee will meet at the rear of the Civic Centre and depart at **9:30am** to visit the site(s) as set out in the agenda and re-convene at the Civic Centre at approximately **12:30pm** to determine the application(s).

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Governance

**SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE
(LARGE SCALE MAJOR APPLICATION)
15 OCTOBER 2024**

**Chairman - Councillor B McKeown
Vice-Chairman - Councillor A Nixon**

AGENDA

1	Apologies	
2	Declaration of Member's Interests/Lobbying	
3	Planning Applications	Page Nos 3 - 46

MEMBERSHIP

Chairman - Councillor B McKeown

B M Cross	A R McNaughton
I D Fordham	A Nixon
A D Hobbs	M Phillips
E G R Jones	A J Sandiford
P W Jones	S N Spencer
B McKeown	

SPECIAL PLANNING COMMITTEE - 15 OCTOBER 2024

Ward Interest - Nil

Planning Applications

Report of Head of Economic Development and Planning

Purpose of Report

To consider the following planning applications, the reports for which are set out in the attached **APPENDIX**:-

		Page Nos
24/39369/FUL	Guildhall Shopping Centre, Market Square Stafford	4 - 29
	<p>This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because it constitutes a large-scale major application, and because the application is submitted by or on behalf of the Council for its own development.</p> <p>Officer Contact - Richard Wood, Development Lead Telephone 01785 619324</p>	
23/38005/FUL	Land North East Of Land At Former Meaford Power Station, Meaford Road	30 - 46
	<p>This is a large-scale major development which is excluded from the Council's Scheme of Delegation and therefore must be determined by Planning Committee.</p> <p>Officer Contact - Richard Wood, Development Lead Telephone 01785 619324</p>	

Previous Consideration

Nil

Background Papers

Planning application files are available for Members to inspect, by prior arrangement, in the Development Management Section. The applications including the background papers, information and correspondence received during the consideration of the application, consultation replies, neighbour representations are scanned and are available to view on the Council website.

Application:	24/39369/FUL
Case Officer:	Ed Handley
Date Registered:	25 July 2024
Target Decision Date:	24 October 2024
Extended To:	-
Address:	Guildhall Shopping Centre, Market Square, Stafford
Ward:	Forebridge
Parish:	-
Proposal:	Partial demolition of the Guildhall Shopping Centre and multi-storey car park and associated works
Applicant:	Stafford Borough Council
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to conditions

REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application has been referred to the Planning Committee because it constitutes a large-scale major application, and because the application is submitted by or on behalf of the Council for its own development. For both reasons the Council's Constitution specifies the application is determined by the Planning Committee.

CONTEXT

1.0 Site and surroundings

- 1.1 The application site covers an area of 1.26ha and comprises the majority of the Guildhall Shopping Centre, St Johns Indoor Market, and the multi-storey car park. The site also includes a small surface car park adjacent to St Marys churchyard and the service yard to the rear of the market. The car park is closed, as is a significant proportion of the shopping centre.
- 1.2 The Guildhall Shopping Centre was constructed in the 1980s following the demolition of the old market hall, Wesleyan Chapel, and numerous other historic buildings. The 1930s stone frontage Guildhall building does however remain on Market Square, as do the 19th Century market entrances on Crabbery Street, and the tower of the Wesleyan Chapel.
- 1.3 The shopping centre is within Stafford Town Conservation Area (except for the multi-storey car park and indoor market) and is within the setting of numerous heritage assets, including the grade I listed Church of St Mary.

1.4 The application site is also within 15km of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a green risk zone for great crested newts and the buffer zone of a landfill site.

2.0 The proposed development

2.1 The application seeks permission for the demolition of buildings within the application site covering a footprint of 10,555sqm.

2.2 The Wesleyan Chapel clock tower and the Market Square façade and front section of the mall, up to and including The Fragrance Shop and the vacant former Polker Dot Travel shop units, are omitted from the application site and would be retained together with the historic St Johns Market entrances. The buildings fronting Crabberly Street and St Marys Grove do not form part of the application site and are also to be retained.

2.3 The demolition programme is expected to last for 7-8 months during which, and afterwards, the site would be surrounded with 2.4m high timber kentledge hoarding.

2.4 The demolition strategy includes the following main elements, and which may be further informed by what is revealed during the demolition works:

- Isolation of services
- General site clearance (external furnishings, etc.)
- Removal of any asbestos-containing materials or other hazardous materials
- Internal soft strip
- Demolition of buildings
- Removal of ground floor slabs and hardstanding areas to a depth of 1.5m below ground level.

2.5 A draft phasing plan has been provided which indicates that works are likely to commence from the service yard to the rear of the market, progress south, and finally towards the east of the site. However, it is recommended that a final phasing plan be included within a demolition method statement to be secured by a pre-commencement condition to ensure that the contractor can accommodate any potential implications when they come to carry out the proposed demolition.

2.6 No detailed site restoration is proposed because the demolition works are stated to be the first phase in the wholesale redevelopment of the site to provide a residential-led mixed-use scheme. A further application for redevelopment is anticipated within the next 12 months.

2.7 The application is accompanied by the following supporting reports:

- Design and Access Statement
- Demolition Method Statement

- Demolition Phase Construction Environmental Management Plan
- Project Works Information Statement
- Desk Study (Stage 2) Land Contamination Report
- Geo-Environmental Desk Study Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Heritage Statement
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Bat Roost Survey Report
- Bat Hibernation Suitability Inspection

OFFICER ASSESSMENT – KEY CONSIDERATIONS

3.0 Planning policy framework

- 3.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out that the determination of applications must be made in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2 The development plan for the purposes of this application comprises The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011-2031 Parts 1 and 2.

4.0 Principle of development

- 4.1 The demolition of the Guildhall Shopping Centre, multi-storey car park, and market hall require planning permission due to the location within the Stafford Town Conservation Area.
- 4.2 Spatial principle (SP) 1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough states that the Council will take a positive approach which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF and where there are no policies relevant to the application the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account whether:
- Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or
 - Specific policies in the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.
- 4.3 There are no policies relevant to demolition in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or The Plan for Stafford Borough.

- 4.4 Notwithstanding this, SP7 states that development or activities of a scale and nature appropriate to secure the sustainability of a settlement will be supported.
- 4.5 The covering letter which accompanies the application states that the demolition of the vacant buildings, which are not usable in their current state, is proposed to facilitate the redevelopment of the site for a residential-led mixed-use scheme in the future. It is considered that such a scheme has the potential to significantly improve the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.
- 4.6 Therefore, subject to other material considerations, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 7, 8, 10, 11

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: SP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development; SP2 Stafford Borough housing and employment requirements; SP3 Stafford Borough sustainable settlement hierarchy; SP4 Stafford Borough housing growth distribution; SP5 Stafford Borough employment growth distribution; SP7 Supporting the location of new development

The Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2

Policies: SB1 Settlement boundaries

5.0 Heritage conservation, character, and appearance

- 5.1 The application site is within the Stafford Town Conservation Area and lies in the setting of numerous heritage assets including the grade I listed St Marys Church. The 1980s redevelopment of the site included the retention of historic buildings including the 1930s frontage building on Market Square, the St Johns Market entrances on Crabbery Street, and the tower of the Wesleyan Chapel all of which would be retained and protected throughout the proposed demolition works.
- 5.2 In considering whether to grant planning permission, the local planning authority is required by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their settings, and to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 5.3 Section 12 and paragraphs 203 and 208 of the NPPF are clear that new development should make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and should conserve, enhance, and better reveal the significance of designated heritage assets.

- 5.4 Section 16 of the NPPF further highlights the need to fully understand the significance of a heritage asset in order to assess the impact, and potential harm, of new development including by development in their settings.
- 5.5 Paragraph 200 also states that local authorities should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by their proposals, including any contribution made by their setting, in a level of detail sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposals on their significance.
- 5.6 Paragraph 201 then requires local authorities themselves to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, taking into account any necessary expertise, in order to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 5.7 The Council's appraisal of the Stafford Town Conservation Area, which is on the heritage at risk register, identifies the shopping centre as negative infill development which has compromised the historic character of the county town.
- 5.8 The application is supported by a Heritage Statement which refers to direct intervisibility with a number of heritage assets, including the grade I listed St Marys Church; and direct impacts upon assets which are physically attached to the buildings to be demolished. The report therefore recommends a programme of mitigation measures to reduce the effects of demolition. The principal mitigation measures include:
- Protect and support attached historic structures through scaffolding
 - Demolition in close proximity to historic structures to be carried out by hand
 - Archaeological watching brief during demolition works
 - Noise and dust protection measures
 - Community engagement on site hoardings.
- 5.9 The Heritage Statement states that the proposed demolition would likely result in the following impacts:
- The demolition would result in a slight negative impact on the character and appearance of the Stafford Town Conservation Area and the setting of various listed buildings in the immediate vicinity due to the absence of a detailed proposal for redevelopment and likelihood that the site will remain as a vacant brownfield site in the short-term.
 - The demolition would, however, facilitate long-term improvements to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of various listed buildings in the immediate vicinity due to the removal of an unsympathetic infill development and the potential for sympathetic redevelopment.
 - Temporary adverse impacts (noise, dust, etc.) would arise from the demolition works.

- The removal of the dominating unsympathetic infill development will result in positive impacts upon the setting of the listed buildings in the vicinity; the magnitude of these impacts varies depending on the proximity and context of the listed buildings.
- 5.10 Further mitigation is also proposed to protect historic buildings (5 St Marys Grove, 18 Market Square, Former Noah's Ark inn, Wesleyan Chapel Tower) attached to those to be demolished. The buildings would be protected and supported by scaffolding and sections close to these buildings would be demolished by hand. The Heritage Statement concludes that an appropriate mitigation strategy should be discussed and agreed with the Council's Conservation Officer prior to the commencement of works.
- 5.11 Historic England raise no objection to the proposed demolition works, in principle, advising that appropriate mitigation is proposed regarding the protection of relevant heritage assets which directly abut the Guildhall building. Also, where demolition is to be undertaken using hand tools this needs to be secured by condition in accordance with the Demolition Method Statement (DMS). Furthermore, the retention of the historic elements of earlier development of the site, despite their structural issues, is welcomed in order to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings.
- 5.12 The Council's Conservation Officer raises no objection in principle to the proposed demolition, acknowledging that the shopping centre is identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a negative infill development which has compromised the historic character of the county town and accepts that the application only seeks permission for the demolition of the buildings rather than for a scheme of redevelopment. Furthermore, it is noted that the recent closure of the majority of the shopping centre has resulted in significant connectivity issues within the historic core of the town centre.
- 5.13 The Conservation Officer also acknowledges that the demolition works would result in the potential for the enhancement of the town centre and go some way to facilitate the removal of the conservation area from Historic England's at risk register, despite some short-term harm to the conservation area and the setting of surrounding heritage assets. Consequently, it is considered that the potential public benefits of the scheme are significant and would outweigh the temporary harm caused by the demolition works.
- 5.14 It is recommended that a detailed mitigation strategy for the protection of adjacent historic buildings should be secured by pre-commencement conditions and should include, but not be limited to, the provision of temporary scaffolding and demolition in the vicinity of historic buildings being carried out with hand tools only.

- 5.15 Furthermore, it is recommended that any approval be subject to conditions to ensure public engagement via a scheme of heritage interpretation as detailed in the supporting Heritage Statement. The scheme could include images and text relating to the historic context of the site and potential findings on the site hoarding rather than standalone heritage boards in order not to constrain future redevelopment. Any long-term heritage interpretation found to be necessary could also be secured during the consideration of a redevelopment scheme. Such an approach is also recommended by the County Archaeologist.
- 5.16 The Conservation Officer also confirms support for the recommendations made by the County Archaeologist.

Archaeology

- 5.17 The application is supported by an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment which the County Archaeologist confirms is suitably comprehensive, has had the benefit of a full search of the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record, and has been produced in line with the relevant industry standard guidance.
- 5.18 The assessment provides an understanding of the historic development of the application site and archaeological potential (moderate for prehistoric, low from Romano British, high for Anglo-Saxon onwards), and the likely impact (substantial negative) of the proposed demolition on any archaeological resource which survives within the application site.
- 5.19 Notwithstanding that the earlier redevelopment of the site may have impacted upon its archaeological value there is evidence from similar sites elsewhere that there is a residual potential for the survival of below ground archaeological features/deposits with the potential to further inform on the development of Stafford.
- 5.20 The assessment also indicates the potential for specific features such as burials associated with the adjacent St Marys Churchyard and lock up cells associated with the police station which formed part of the original Guildhall built in 1853. Furthermore, there is potential for demolition works to reveal historic fabric at the junctions of historic buildings to be retained and the buildings to be demolished.
- 5.21 The County Archaeologist raises no objection to the proposed demolition, subject to conditions, advising that the recommendations within the desk-based assessment are generally supported in order to mitigate the potential negative impact of the proposed demolition.
- 5.22 It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during any works such as the removal of the ground slab and grubbing out of foundations which have the potential to reveal below ground archaeological features. Also, for other demolition works, such as those undertaken adjacent to adjoining heritage assets which have the potential to reveal historic fabric in order to inform our understanding of the impact of the extant buildings and their foundations on any archaeological features which may have been present, allowing decisions to be made with regard to any further archaeological mitigation in this area (if any) during subsequent phases of work.

Site restoration

- 5.23 Concerns are raised regarding the potential ongoing vacancy of the site although Historic England note the opportunities to be provided for the delivery of future redevelopment and that the site is part of a proposed wider transformation of Stafford town centre to be facilitated through Government funding. Therefore, whilst any long-term vacancy of the site is likely to result in a detrimental impact upon the significance of St Marys Church and its setting, as well as the character and appearance of the conservation area, this harm is expected to be short-term in nature. The demolition and future redevelopment of the site also offers the potential for enhancement of the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of adjacent heritage assets. The potential benefits of redevelopment of this site are therefore supported by Historic England.
- 5.24 It is noted that paragraph 210 of the NPPF states that the loss of the whole or part of a heritage asset should not be permitted without taking all reasonable steps to ensure that new development will proceed after the loss has occurred. However, as the existing development does not provide any positive contribution to the conservation area or the setting of listed buildings, Historic England advise that this does not apply in this instance. Strong encouragement is, however, given to the planning and design of the site's redevelopment, which should be carried out as expediently as possible.
- 5.25 It is acknowledged that, at this stage, there is no detailed proposal for site restoration. The site would be enclosed with timber hoarding and be left in a tidy state with stockpiles of materials.
- 5.26 Whilst it is noted that there is some risk that the site would not be redeveloped, it is considered that redevelopment is likely and would clearly be in the interests of Stafford Borough Council as the applicant.
- 5.27 An application for the redevelopment of the site is expected within the next 12 months following funding being secured from the Future High Street Fund. The proposed demolition therefore comprises an early phase of a larger scheme of redevelopment in the future as part of the ongoing improvements and transformation of Stafford town centre. Therefore, subject to conditions to limit the height of any stockpiles of crushed clean brickwork, in the interests of visual amenity, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable with regard to the likely impacts upon the character and appearance of the area.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 131, 135, 137, 139 and 210

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N1 Design; N8 Landscape character; N9 Historic environment

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Design

6.0 Residential amenity and public safety

- 6.1 The application is supported by a Demolition Method Statement (DMS) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which set out the methodology of the proposed works and mitigation measures in detail. These documents cover general working arrangements and site welfare, traffic management, demolition methodology, public safety, control of pollution and noise, impact on heritage assets, and various other matters. A Project Works Information (PWI) statement is also provided which covers the process as a whole, to include general site details, pre-contract works, enabling works and site set-up, removal of hazardous materials, demolition specification, demolition works, and post demolition requirements.
- 6.2 Conditions are recommended to ensure that the demolition is carried out in accordance with the DMS, CEMP and PWI.
- 6.3 The proposed demolition works would commence once any asbestos-containing material and other hazardous materials are fully removed from the site.
- 6.4 Post-demolition, it is proposed that all demolition arisings will be processed and separated; all hard materials to a depth of 1.5m below ground will be broken up and removed; made ground to 1.5m below ground level will be turned over and remediated in accordance with the recommendations of the remediation strategy to remove below ground contaminants; all clean brick will be crushed and stored on site in stockpiles; and all remaining demolition arisings shall be removed and disposed of appropriately.
- 6.5 A Desk-Based Geo-Environmental Assessment concludes that an asbestos survey is required prior to demolition and that ground investigation is undertaken post-demolition to check for the potential presence of salt mine workings. Furthermore, chemical and geotechnical testing is to be undertaken across the site, as well as ground gas monitoring.
- 6.6 The Council's Environmental Health Officer raises no objection to the proposed method of demolition, subject to conditions to ensure that dust control water suppression dust canons or rotary atomisers are used continuously during any dust-generating demolition activities. Also, that noise-generating equipment such as disc-cutting tools are used with acoustic enclosures such as noise-absorbent blankets; and that any high-intensity site lighting or security flood lighting is directed downwards and into the site. Such conditions are considered to be reasonable in order to protect the amenities of the area with regard to residents, businesses, and visitors to the town centre. Further to such conditions, it is considered appropriate to attach a condition to ensure that the demolition works are carried out in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations set out in the Geo-Environmental Desk Study Assessment.
- 6.7 Reference is made, by the Environmental Health Officer to piling works, however, this application is for the demolition of the buildings within the site and therefore no piling will be necessary. The impacts of any potential piling would be a material consideration when a scheme of redevelopment comes forward.

- 6.8 Notwithstanding the detail in the supporting documentation, it is considered appropriate to restrict any stockpiles on the site to a maximum height of 3.0m.
- 6.9 The application is supported by an assessment of unexploded ordnance (UXO) which concludes that there is no evidence that UXO presents a risk to intrusive activity on this site.
- 6.10 Staffordshire Police raise no objection but note the need to temporarily relocate the adjacent bus stop due to the health and safety implications from dust arising from the proposed demolition. However, it is not considered that this reason would justify a condition to ensure relocation because the approved working methods would be sufficient to avoid and mitigate dust arising from the proposed works. This may also be secured as part of a Traffic Management Plan due to visibility concerns as detailed within paragraph 7.6 of this report.
- 6.11 It is noted that Cadent advise that the application site is in close proximity to medium and low-pressure assets. In order to avoid potential damage to assets or interference with any rights, it is considered that an informative should be attached to any approval to bring the representation made by Cadent to the attention of the applicant.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 135

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N1 Design

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Design

7.0 Access and parking

- 7.1 Vehicular traffic can access the west and northwest sides of the site along Broad Street and Earl Street (one-way) and there are on-street parking restrictions on surrounding roads.
- 7.2 Vehicular access to the site is from Earl Street which provides 3 access points, separately into: the multi-storey car park, servicing area, and small surface car park. It is proposed that Earl Street continues to be used for contractors' access during demolition.
- 7.3 The site compound is to be along the Earl Street frontage of the building at either the ground level service yard or the small surface-level car park at the southern end of the site. With respect to either option, vehicles leaving the site would have to turn left onto Earl Street and travel along the one-way system along Earl Street and exit via Water Street/Tenterbanks.

- 7.4 The submitted Transport Statement anticipates 3 HGV movements per day over the demolition programme, as well as 20 staff-related vehicle trips for the first three months reducing to 10 per day for the remaining period. Movements are likely to be greater during the earlier (asbestos removal and soft-strip) works due to greater workforce numbers. It is noted that this level of trip generation is lower than the site operating at full capacity.
- 7.5 The retained units would continue to be serviced in accordance with their existing arrangements with HGV's loading and unloading from Market Square between 4pm and 10am Monday to Saturday and all day on Sunday.
- 7.6 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is submitted in support of the application which, amongst other things, outlines proposed site access and traffic management arrangements with reference to the use of a banksman. It is proposed that the bus stop would be temporarily relocated during demolition and construction as visibility from the small car park access is restricted by the bus shelter and waiting buses.
- 7.7 The local Highway Authority raise no objection to the proposed demolition.
- 7.8 As HGV's would have to negotiate traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossings the Highway Authority recommend that permission is granted subject to a condition that any damage to road infrastructure would be made good by the contractor. This could be secured via the submission of dilapidation surveys prior to the commencement and post-completion of the proposed demolition works.
- 7.9 The local Highway Authority also recommend conditions to ensure that the demolition is carried out in accordance with the CEMP submitted in support of the application and with a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) which the CEMP advises is to be drawn up by the demolition contractor on appointment.
- 7.10 An informative is also recommended to advise the applicant of the need for highway works agreements for any off site works within the adopted highway.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 111 and 112

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: T1 Transport; T2 Parking and manoeuvring facilities

8.0 Ecology

Biodiversity net gain

- 8.1 The application is exempt from national Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements on the basis that the application site is below the threshold, comprising less than 25sqm of on-site habitat and less than 5m of linear habitat such as hedgerows. The Council's Biodiversity Officer concurs with this assessment.

Habitats sites

- 8.2 The site is within 15km of the Cannock Chase Special Area of Conservation, however, due to the nature of the proposal it is not considered that the development would result in any impact on the reasons for the designation of the SAC. The Council is, therefore, not required to carry out an appropriate assessment. The proposed demolition works would not impact visitor numbers to Cannock Chase and the vehicular trips generated during the demolition works would be less than those generated by the Guildhall Shopping Centre in occupation.

Protected species

- 8.3 The application was initially supported by a preliminary ecological appraisal which concluded that the site has the potential to support roosting bats and nesting birds and that further surveys were required. Furthermore, it recommends that should demolition and site clearance be undertaken within the bird nesting season, checks should be carried out for nests 24 hours prior to clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- 8.4 Further bat roost surveys and inspections have subsequently been undertaken which found three common pipistrelle day roosts for a low number of bats and bat foraging and commuting was recorded on site. It was also found that the clock tower is not suitable for hibernating bats and that no mitigation measures are required in this regard. The bat survey report concludes that a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence would be required from Natural England and mitigation in the form of bat boxes will be required as part of that licence. Furthermore, new lighting in the site should follow a sensitive design and planting be included in a final design to provide resources for invertebrates and bats.
- 8.5 The Council's Biodiversity Officer raises no objection to the proposed demolition, subject to conditions to ensure that the demolition works are carried out in accordance with the mitigation measures set out in section 4.2 of the bat roost survey report (v2), to include the provision of bat boxes in order to provide alternative roosting opportunities. The preference for integrated bat boxes due to longevity is noted, however as this application is for demolition works and integrated bat boxes would be more appropriately located in new buildings it is considered that such provision should be secured within the long-term redevelopment of the site and that standard bat boxes would be sufficient in this instance.
- 8.6 Following the submission of the bat hibernation report which confirmed the unsuitability of bat hibernation features within the clock tower, the Council's Biodiversity Officer advises that this does not alter the findings of previous surveys which found small roosts in the main buildings and therefore it remains appropriate that demolition is carried out in accordance with the mitigation recommendations set out in section 4.2 of the bat roost survey report.

Trees

- 8.7 There are eight trees in the vicinity of the application site, within St Marys churchyard. These are semi-mature to mature and most are category A trees with one being a category B and one a category C. The trees are considered to be established and of high quality. The Council's Tree Officer initially recognised that these trees are strong boundary features to the churchyard and significant contributors to the conservation area. Following recognition that these trees could present a potential obstruction during demolition, albeit that the proposed demolition could be undertaken without causing harm, if carried out appropriately, the applicant has provided a tree survey and tree protection plan in support of the application.
- 8.8 Upon consideration of the additional supporting documents, the Council's Tree Officer advises that the tree protection plan is acceptable in that it would provide adequate protection for the trees during development. It is recommended that any approval be subject to a condition to ensure that the demolition is carried out in accordance with the tree protection plan.

Policies and Guidance:-

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraphs: 8, 124, 158, 159, 165, 167, 169, 170, 173, 174, 180, 185, 186, 187 and 188, 189

The Plan for Stafford Borough

Policies: N2 Climate change; N4 The natural environment and green infrastructure; N5 Sites of European, national and local nature conservation importance; N6 Cannock Chase special area of conservation; I1 Infrastructure delivery policy

9.0 Conclusion and planning balance

- 9.1 With regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development, planning permission should be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise, taking into account a balance of adverse impacts and benefits and any specific policies contained in the NPPF which indicate that development should be restricted.
- 9.2 It is acknowledged that the proposed demolition would result in harm to the character and appearance of the Stafford Town Conservation Area and to the setting of various adjacent listed buildings by virtue of the proposed site restoration and the presence of a vacant brownfield site. However, it is also acknowledged that this harm would be temporary and that the proposed demolition would both remove unsympathetic infill development which compromises the character of the historic town centre and facilitate the future redevelopment of the site in a manner which would enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and better respect the significance of the adjacent listed buildings. Such benefits would be secured during consideration of any application for the redevelopment of the site.

- 9.3 It is considered that any harm to adjacent heritage assets and other historic buildings could be avoided via appropriate mitigation measures to be secured by condition and, furthermore, short-term harm regarding amenity resulting from the demolition works themselves could be avoided and/or mitigated through appropriate working practices to be secured by condition.
- 9.4 It is not considered that, subject to conditions, the proposed demolition would result in any harm with regard to highways, ecology, and arboricultural matters.
- 9.5 It is recommended that the proposed demolition works be approved, subject to conditions.

CONSULTATIONS

Highway Authority:

No objection.

- The application site is bound be pedestrianised streets to the north and east whilst vehicles can access the west and northwest sides along Broad Street and Earl Street. There are on-street parking restrictions on all surrounding roads.
- The site compound is to be along the Earl Street frontage of the building at the ground level service yard or the small surface-level car park at the southern end of the site. Vehicles would have to use the one-way system along Earl Street and exit via Water Street/Tenterbanks.
- Demolition is expected to generate 3 HGV trips per day over the 7-8 month programme; and 20 staff related vehicle trips per day for the first 3 months, reducing to 10 vehicle trips per day for the remaining 3-4 months. These figures are indicative at this stage and would be confirmed in a Transport Management Plan to be provided by the contractor.
- Vehicles emerging from the site must turn left onto Earl Street. Visibility from the small car park access is restricted by the bus shelter and waiting buses. It is proposed that the bus stop would be temporarily relocated during demolition and construction for safety reasons. Due to the level of traffic on Early Street and the volume of HGV movements likely to be generated a banksman is proposed.
- It is noted that vehicular traffic would be less than the existing site use which generates a large number of vehicle trips.
- HGVs will have to negotiate traffic calming measures and pedestrian crossings. Any damage to road infrastructure would need to be made good by the contractor.
- The retained units would still need to be serviced during and after demolition. It is proposed that the existing servicing arrangements remain in place – load and unloading from HGVs parked on Market Square between 4pm and 10am Monday to Saturday and all day on Sunday.

- The application is supported by a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) outlining the works to be carried out; however, a Traffic Management Plan (TMP) is required.
- Conditions are recommended to secure the following:
 - Development to be carried out in accordance with a TMP to first be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.
 - Development to be carried out in accordance with the CEMP.
 - Any damage to the public highway to be repaired in accordance with dilapidation surveys to be carried out and approved prior to the commencement of development.
- An informative is recommended to bring to the attention of the applicant the need for highway works agreement for any off-site work within the adopted highway.

Historic England:

No objection.

- The application site is in the heart of the historic county town of Stafford and the Stafford Town Conservation Area. It lies adjacent to the grade I listed St Marys Church. It is noted that the conservation area is on the heritage at risk register.
- The multi-storey car park lies outside of the conservation area. Other designated heritage assets lie along the periphery of the site, including the former Noah's Ark Inn and St Marys Grove (both grade II listed).
- The benefits that the proposed scheme of redevelopment could potentially bring to the town centre are supported.
- Should the site remain vacant, this may have a detrimental impact upon the significance of St Marys Church and its setting, as well as the character and appearance of the conservation area. Consideration of such potential impacts should take into account the guidance of your authority's specialist conservation and archaeological advisors.
- The adjacent churchyard provides some green tranquillity and is a popular open space linking Gaolgate Street to parkland adjacent the River Sow. It lies adjacent to a well-used thoroughfare along St Marys Place, connecting Gaolgate Street (including the grade II* listed Ancient High House) and the historic street of Church Lane. These areas make a strong and enduring contribution to the existing historic townscape.
- The Stafford Town Conservation Area Appraisal mentions St Marys Grove (south elevation of the Guildhall buildings); the existing building, whilst not a positive contributor, may be considered neutral at best and sits reasonably quietly within the streetscape. The Guildhall market building is noted as a key negative feature. The existing building consists of a post-modernist design containing some more traditional revival elements such as dormers and gables.

- The 1934 frontage onto Market Square obscures views onto the building, through it is visible along Crabbery Street and Chapel Street, dominated by its blue framed glazing and gables which were very much of its period (1984). The tower and former Noah's Ark Inn are dominant features in this immediate setting.
- The 1930s element is the sole remaining feature of the first iteration of redevelopment of the site.
- The proposal seeks to retain the key historic and decorative features which were retained as part of the 1984 redevelopment. The heritage statement notes that some of these structures have structural issues but generally it is welcomed that these shall be retained to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the listed buildings.
- Part of the site fronts Church Street and the proposal will impact and has the potential to harm the significance of the Grade II* listed church and its setting and the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- It is understood that the proposal is part of a wider scheme of regeneration as part of the Government's Future High Streets Fund to address concerns over market failure within the town centre retail offer.
- The proposals shall have the potential to impact the significance of St Marys Church and its setting. The demolition and redevelopment has the potential to enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, as well as the setting of adjacent heritage assets. There shall be some short-term harm whilst the site remains vacant.
- Whilst there is no objection in principle to the proposed demolition there are concerns regarding the ongoing vacancy of the site. However, it is noted that the applicant shall provide some opportunities for the delivery of future redevelopment moving forward. Paragraph 210 of the NPPF states that new development should proceed following demolition, but as the existing development does not provide any positive contribution this does not apply in this instance, though strong encouragement is given to the planning and design of the site's redevelopment, which should be carried out as expediently as possible.
- There shall be appropriate mitigation with the protection of relevant heritage assets which directly abut the Guildhall building, where demolition should be undertaken using hand tools. This should be undertaken in accordance with the DMS and conditioned accordingly.

Conservation Officer:

No objection.

- The Guildhall shopping centre was constructed in the 1980s following the demolition of the old market hall, Wesleyan Chapel, and numerous other historic buildings. The 1930s stone frontage Guildhall building remains on Market Square, as do the 19th Century market entrances on Crabbery Street, and the tower of the Wesleyan Chapel.

- The shopping centre is within Stafford Town Conservation Area (except for the multi-storey car park and indoor market) and is in the setting of numerous heritage assets, including the grade I listed Church of St Mary.
- The shopping centre is identified in the conservation area appraisal as negative infill development which has compromised the historic character of the county town.
- The site has been purchased by Stafford Borough Council with funding secured from the Future High Street Fund as part of plans to regenerate the town centre.
- The application seeks permission for wholesale demolition of the 1980s parts of the shopping centre, including the car park, comprising 10,555sqm. The demolition would be the first phase of a larger scheme of works for development in the future as part of the ongoing improvements and transformation of Stafford town centre.
- Future redevelopment of the site would be subject to a separate application; likely to be submitted within the next 12 months.
- The Stafford Town Conservation Area is currently on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register due to unsympathetic 20th Century infill development (the Guildhall Shopping Centre included), poorly designed signage and shopfronts, and general lack of enforcement against unauthorised development.
- With a large portion of the shopping centre currently closed off to members of the public, this has created significant connectivity issues between the historic core of the town centre and the likes of St Marys Memorial Garden, Victoria Park, and Stafford College; the latter of which once provided a significant amount of footfall to the town centre. The lack of connectivity is a contributing factor to the town centre's decline.
- It is unfortunate that the application does not include plans for the redevelopment of the site as it will lie as a vacant brownfield site which would have an initially harmful impact upon the conservation area and the settings of surrounding heritage assets. However, due to the size of the site and its location in the centre of the town, future development has the potential to enhance the town centre and support the removal of the conservation area from Historic England's at risk register.
- It is agreed that public engagement is essential due to the disruptive (physical and visual) impact that the proposed demolition and future redevelopment would have on the local community, including both traders and shoppers.
- It is agreed that ongoing engagement with heritage specialists and design stakeholders is imperative to the success of the future redevelopment.
- The potential public benefits of the scheme are significant and the demolition is the first phase of the redevelopment of the site which currently negatively impacts the character and appearance of the Stafford Town Conservation Area and the setting of numerous heritage assets.
- Provided the recommendations of the heritage statement are followed through with robust public and stakeholder engagement over the next 12 months whilst a scheme of redevelopment is prepared, then the public benefits are likely to outweigh the

temporary harm in this instance. A scheme of public engagement should be secured by condition.

- The demolition of buildings adjacent to the site boundary are to be undertaken by hand tools only, unless otherwise agreed in writing. This is imperative with regard to adjoining heritage assets to protect the structures during demolition.
- Securing the Wesleyan Chapel tower and market entrance façades with temporary scaffolding and hoardings is welcomed.
- A detailed mitigation strategy for the protection of adjacent historic buildings should be secured by pre-commencement condition.
- It is agreed that demolition should be subject to an archaeological watching brief and a historic building record pertaining to adjoining heritage assets in line with the County Archaeologists recommendations.

County Archaeologist:

No objection.

- The archaeological desk-based assessment is suitably comprehensive, has had the benefit of a full search of the Staffordshire Historic Environment Record, and has been produced in line with the relevant industry standard guidance. It provides a useful understanding of the historic development of the application site, its archaeological potential (moderate for prehistoric, low from Romano British, high for Anglo-Saxon onwards), and the likely impact (substantial negative) of the proposals on any archaeological resource which survives within the application site.
- The assessment highlights that it is possible that previous development of the site (e.g. construction of the existing shopping centre) may have impacted upon the archaeological resource, but cautions that evidence from similar sites elsewhere has demonstrated that even in such circumstances there is a residual potential for the survival of below ground archaeological features/deposits with the potential to enhance and inform information on the development of the historic core and flags the potential for specific features such as burials associated with the adjacent St Marys Churchyard and lock up cells associated with the police station which formed part of the original Guildhall built in 1853.
- There is potential for demolition works at the junction of the structures proposed to be demolished and historic buildings to be retained to reveal historic fabric.
- Mitigation recommendations are made which are generally supported and there is potential for groundworks within the application site to impact upon below ground archaeology that may contribute to understanding of the development of the town from at least the Anglo-Saxon period onwards.

- It is recommended that an archaeological watching brief is carried out during any works, such as the removal of the ground slab and grubbing out of foundations which have the potential to reveal below ground archaeological features. The watching brief shall inform our understanding of the impact of the extant buildings and their foundations on any archaeological features which may have been present, allowing decisions to be made with regard to any further archaeological mitigation in this area (if any) during subsequent phases of work.
- The proposal to carry out paleoenvironmental sampling, where appropriate, is supported.
- The archaeological watching brief should be extended to monitor additional demolition works, such as those undertaken adjacent to adjoining heritage assets which have the potential to reveal historic fabric. Such historic fabric should be recorded to a suitable level as per Historic England's 'Understanding Historic Buildings' guidance (2016).
- The suggestion for public engagement through heritage interpretation is supported and it is recommended that how this could be secured is considered.

Biodiversity Officer:

Comments dated 23 September 2024:

No objection.

- The additional information from the Bat Hibernation Suitability Inspection 12th September, confirms the unsuitability of bat hibernation features within the clock tower; it does not alter the findings of previous surveys that found small roosts in the main buildings and the mitigation recommendations
- No further comment is required.

Comments dated 4 September 2024:

No objection.

- The mitigation measures set out in the bat roost survey report (v2 addendum) are satisfactory.
- Integrated bat boxes should be included within the final redevelopment so that the roosts remain in perpetuity. Bat boxes have a shelf-life which would not provide the same continuity.

Comments dated 16 August 2024:

No objection.

- A condition is recommended to ensure that the proposed demolition is carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the bat report.

Comments dated 8 August 2024:

Objection.

- LSH undertook a preliminary ecological appraisal during May 2024; further work is required on bat surveys and biodiversity net gain. There is currently insufficient information with the application.
- Further bat emergence surveys are required in accordance with the recommendations of the report.
- There needs to be a BNG assessment of the site.
- Final designs should incorporate four swift nesting boxes in suitable locations.

Tree Officer:

(Comments dated 30 September 2024):

No objection.

- The applicant has submitted a tree protection plan (TPP) and associated schedule which is well produced and clear to follow. There is hoarding proposed for the edge of the demolition area which, once installed, would protect the tree crowns from damage.
- There are conditions on the TPP which prevent any branch pruning unless the project arboriculturalist is consulted. Only very minor pruning from the extremities of any tree crown to enable demolition of the buildings would be permitted, otherwise formal consultation with the local planning authority must be made.
- The proposed demolition is acceptable provided it is carried out in accordance with the tree protection plan.

(Comments dated 22 August 2024):

No objection.

- There are numerous trees on the adjacent churchyard to the south; notably three trees overhang St Marys Grove, a paved highway area to the south of the application site. These trees are important within Stafford Conservation Area and are protected; furthermore, they are strong boundary features to the churchyard.
- There is no reference to these trees in the application documents, however, it is likely that the three crowns would be a potential obstruction during demolition.
- It is recognised that the proposed demolition can be undertaken without causing harm to the tree bases and areas within the churchyard, however the tree roots and crowns growing over/into St Marys Grove are vulnerable to impact damage from machinery and equipment, or if any excavation is proposed.
- There should be protective measures, including hoarding to protect the crowns. Such detail should be submitted as part of a tree protection plan prior to the commencement of demolition.

Environmental Health Officer:

No objection.

- Dust control water suppression dust cannons or rotary atomisers should be used continuously during dust generating demolition activities.
- Disc cutting tools and other similar noise generating tools should be used with acoustic enclosures such as noise absorbent blankets.
- Any high intensity lighting or security flood lighting should be directed downwards and into the site.
- If piling work is proposed, there must be sufficient justification for the use of driven piles over other piling methods. Details of piling methods, equipment, measures to prevent disturbance, and the nature and extent of the ground and construction work should be agreed with the local planning authority.
- Businesses and domestic premises likely to be affected by piling work should be notified and contact details provided should an occupier wish to complain or ask for information/advice.

Staffordshire Police:

No objection.

- Nearby bus stops should be temporarily relocated due to the health and safety implications of dust arising from demolition.

Cadent:

No objection.

- The proposed development is in close proximity to medium and low pressure assets.
- To prevent damage to assets or interference with rights an informative should be attached to any approval to bring these to the attention of the applicant.

Neighbours:

Two representations received in support, raising the following points:

- The proposed works will benefit the town.

Four representations received in objection, raising the following points:

- The demolition should comprise part of a full scheme of redevelopment.
- The site should not be left undeveloped.
- The site should be screened and left in a reasonable state.
- Smaller businesses need footfall.

- There are no anchor stores in the town centre.
- There is no space for small businesses to establish in the town.
- The Council is required to provide a market.

One representation received neither in support nor objection, raising the following points:

- It is unclear how the proposed works will affect business in Crabbery street:
 - Will there be road closures or diverted pedestrian traffic?
 - How long will it take?
 - Which elements will be demolished?

PUBLICITY

Site notice expiry date: 30 August 2024

Newsletter advert expiry date: 4 September 2024

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

84/16156/REM – Approval of reserved matters market area/guildhall redevelopment – Approved 14 August 1984

87/20419/FUL – New market hall retail development and associated car park and service areas and associated highways works – Approved 4 November 1987

01/41244/FUL – Alterations and extensions to retail provision within existing shopping centre – Approved 7 January 2003

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
2. This permission relates to the following drawings, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence:-

B065888-UD-01 B (Red line boundary)

B065888-UD-02 B (Demolition plan)

AP-002 A (Existing site plan)

AP-003 A (Existing ground floor plan)

AP-004 A (Existing first floor plan)

AP-005 A (Existing second floor plan)

AP-006 A (Existing roof plan)

AP-007 A (Existing elevations)

AP-050 A (Proposed site plan)

AP-100 B (Proposed ground floor plan)

AP-101 A (Proposed first floor plan)

AP-102 A (Proposed second floor plan)

AP-103 A (Proposed roof plan)

AP-200 A (proposed elevations)

3. No development shall commence unless and until a detailed mitigation strategy for the protection of adjacent historic buildings has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The mitigation strategy shall include, but not be limited to, the provision of temporary scaffolding and demolition in the vicinity of historic buildings being carried out with hand tools only. The development hereby approved shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved mitigation strategy.
4. No development shall commence, unless and until a project design has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The project design shall provide details of the programme of archaeological works to be carried out within the site, including post-fieldwork reporting and the provision of post-demolition analysis, publication, and dissemination of the results and archive deposition. The archaeological site work shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved project design and timeframes contained therein.
5. No development shall commence unless and until a detailed programme of highway repair works to include details of pre and post-demolition dilapidation surveys to the road network between Chell Road (A5187) and the application site has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The highway network shall thereafter be repaired in accordance with the recommendations of the dilapidation surveys and the timeframes set out within the programme.
6. No development shall commence unless and until a revised Demolition Management Statement (DMS) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The DMS shall include the following listed elements:
 - Traffic management plan (TMP) broadly in accordance with section 2.5 of the Demolition Method Statement v3, dated 29 August 2024.
 - Details of appropriate dust avoidance/suppression measures.
 - Details of appropriate acoustic mitigation measures.

- Details of site lighting to be used during demolition works.
- Stockpiles of clean brickwork to be restricted to no more than 3.0m in height.
- A demolition phasing plan to outline the order in which the building(s) would be demolished

The demolition works shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved DMS.

7. The demolition works shall be carried out in accordance with the following documents, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence:
 - Project Works Information (version 2 dated July 2024)
 - Demolition phase Construction Environmental Management Plan (revision 002 dated September 2024)
 - Geo-Environmental Desk Study Assessment (issue 2 dated June 2024)
8. The demolition works shall be carried out in accordance with the mitigation recommendations set out in section 4.2 of the bat roost survey report v2, dated 3 September 2024.
9. Within nine calendar months of the commencement of demolition works a scheme of heritage interpretation shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval. The approved scheme shall be informed by the archaeological findings at the site and presented on the site hoardings until their removal from the site.
10. All measures set out in the Tree Protection Plan (B065888-V1-001 P01) shall be implemented before the demolition works hereby permitted are commenced and shall thereafter be retained for the duration of the demolition works.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. To define the permission.
3. In order to safeguard the character of this part of the Stafford Town Conservation Area of which these buildings form important constituent parts. (Policy N9 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
4. In order to ensure that an appropriate record is kept of a heritage asset in accordance with paragraph 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
5. In the interests of the safety and convenience of users of the highway. (Policy T1c of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

6. In the interests of the safety and convenience of users of the highway. (Policy T1c of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
7. To safeguard the amenities of the area (Policy N1e of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
8. In order to ensure that the development does not result in damage or harm to legally protected species or their habitat/roost. (Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
9. In order to advance public understanding of the significance of any heritage asset(s) which may be impacted by the demolition works hereby permitted. (Paragraph 211 of the National Planning Policy Framework).
10. To enable the Local Planning Authority to consider the scheme of development and the landscaping proposals in relation to the existing trees and hedges. (Policy N4 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

- 1 Unless an exception or a transitional arrangement applies, the effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:
 - (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
 - (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan in respect of this permission would be Stafford Borough Council.

This development has been considered as an exempt development in accordance with the submissions and the requirements set out in Paragraph 003 Reference ID: 74-003-20240214 of the Planning Practice Guidance, which can be found at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain

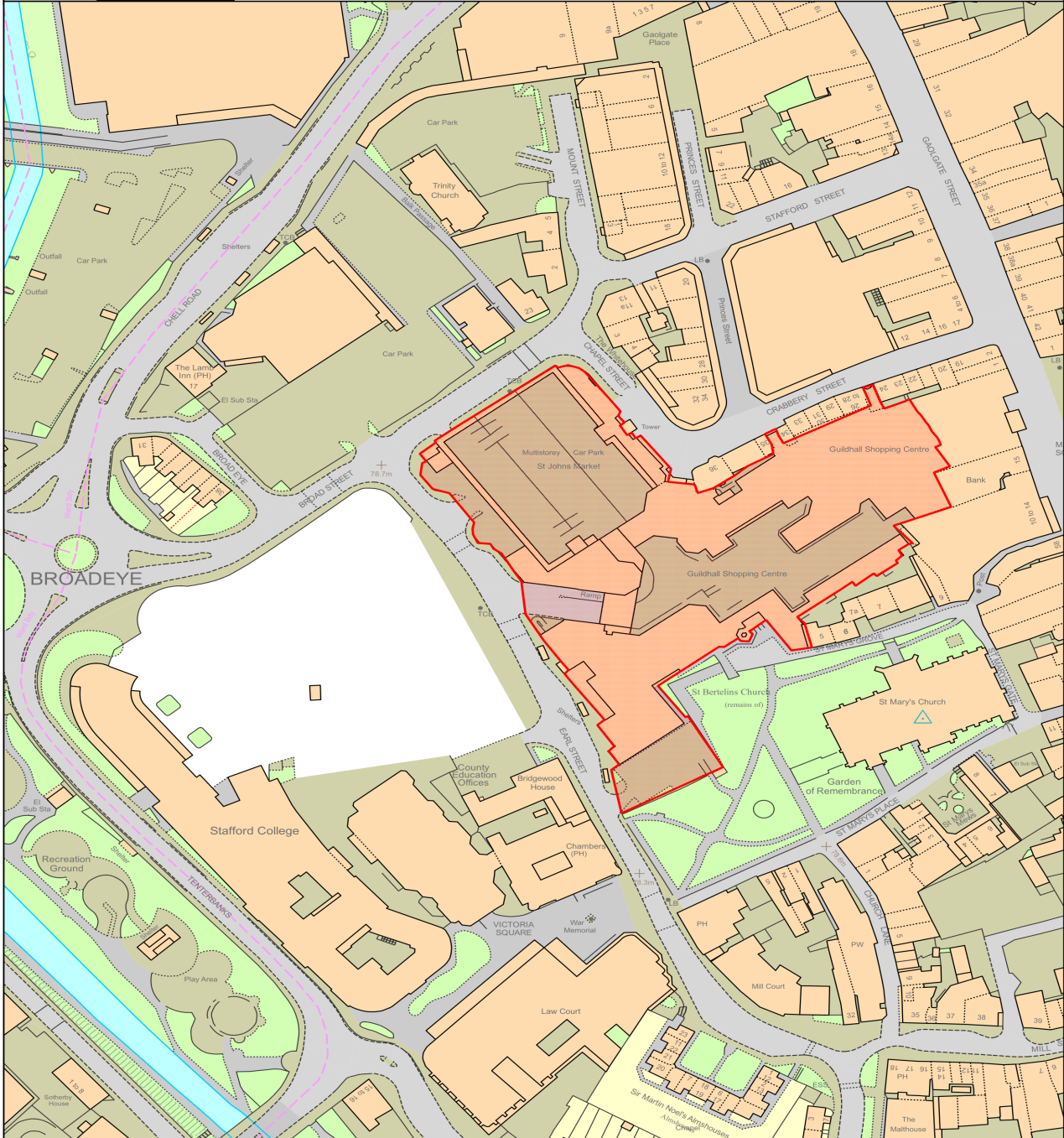
Informatives

- 1 In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2015, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.
- 2 The applicant's attention is drawn to the comments of Cadent and the local highway authority. All comments can be viewed online through the planning public access pages of the Council's website (www.staffordbc.gov.uk).

24/39369/FUL
Guildhall Shopping Centre
Market Square
Stafford

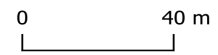
Scale	1:1613
Grid Ref	SJ9123,SJ9223

Economic Development & Planning
 24/39369/FUL



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Date Created:
 06-10-2024



Application:	23/38005/FUL
Case Officer:	Gillian Morrell
Date Registered:	27 October 2023
Target Decision Date:	26 January 2024
Extended To:	2 August 2024
Address:	Land Northeast of the former Meaford Power Station, Meaford Road, Meaford, Stone, Staffordshire.
Ward:	Swynnerton and Oulton
Parish:	Stone Rural
Proposal:	Delivery of off-site Ecological Enhancement Area.
Applicant:	St Modwen Developments Ltd
Recommendation:	Approve, subject to conditions.

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:

This is a large-scale major development which is excluded from the Council's Scheme of Delegation and therefore must be determined by Planning Committee.

CONTEXT

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Outline planning permission was originally granted in 2007 for the redevelopment of the former Meaford Power Station site to create a business park (98/35897/OUT). This consent was subsequently extended in 2010 (10/13609/EXT) and 2015 (14/21379/EXTO). The extension to the outline consent was approved on 7 May 2015 with a time limit of 7 years for submission of the reserved matters and a condition requiring the development to be begun before the expiration of two years from the approval of the last reserved matters application.
- 1.2 A new outline planning permission was granted in November 2023 (reference 21/35159/OUT). Ecological surveys submitted as part of the extant consents (14/21379/EXTO and 21/35159/OUT) identified the potential for the presence of Great Crested Newts (CGN) across part of the Meaford development site.
- 1.3 As part of outline planning application 21/35159/OUT an ecological mitigation strategy was agreed, including a District Level Licence for GCNs. This strategy includes a commitment from the applicant to deliver ecological enhancements on adjacent areas of land outside that permitted under 21/35159/OUT within the control of the applicant.

- 1.4 One of these ecological areas is identified through permission 21/35159/OUT as Blue Line 1 (BL1). This land is located at the northern end of the wider Meaford Power Station site with the Trent and Mersey Canal to the west and railway line to the east. This area of land is the subject of this current planning application.
- 1.5 In addition to the new outline planning permission, two reserved matters applications, pursuant to outline permission 14/21379/EXTO, were approved in October 2023 (22/35950/REM and 22/35956/REM). The provision of BL1 enhancements is proposed to facilitate the delivery of the employment floorspace approved under these consents, construction of Units M35 and M76 has commenced as part of Phase 1a of permission 22/35950/REM.

2.0 The application site

- 2.1 The application site comprises approximately 4.95Ha of open grassland, scrub and trees located at the northern end of the wider Meaford Power Station site. The Trent and Mersey Canal, a designated Conservation Area, is located to the west with the site and the railway line to the east. The site includes access over Meaford Hall Farm Bridge (Bridge 102) which is Grade II listed, along which is the route of public right of way, Barlaston 1.
- 2.2 The site is within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.
- 2.3 The land within the application site currently comprises modified grassland, scrub, a pond and mature and semi-mature trees. No protected species have been recorded within the site.

3.0 The proposal

- 3.1 The application seeks to deliver an area of ecological enhancement. The habitats proposed within the BL1 site are summarised as follows:
- Creation of ten new ponds (designed for GCN) of which the two northern most ponds are 'spare' as required by NatureSpace to mitigate against the failure of any of the other eight ponds.
 - Five oversized hibernacula
 - An area of Open Mosaic Previously Developed Land
 - Provision of scrub/tall ruderal habitat
 - Enhancement of areas of modified grassland to more species rich cover (seeding and management)
 - Retention, protection and enhancement of existing trees and scrub area.
- 3.2 The proposed access for construction traffic will be directly from Meaford Road and onto an existing established track. The track comprises compact stone and is used as a general farm access along with access to a substation and rail infrastructure. Public footpath (Barlaston 1) runs along the track and to the farmland beyond the railway.

- 3.3 The work is intended to take approximately four weeks to complete and will be carried out during the hours of 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday with no work proposed at the weekend.
- 3.4 No materials are to be removed from the site. All excavated soils are to be used within the site boundaries.

OFFICER ASSESSMENT – KEY CONSIDERATIONS

4.0 Legislative framework

- 4.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) sets out that the determination of applications must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The development plan for the purposes of this application comprises of The Plan for Stafford Borough 2011- 2031, Parts 1 and 2.

5.0 Principle of development

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), December 2023, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how they should be applied. It advises that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Achieving sustainable development means the planning system has three overarching objectives; an economic objective, a social objective, and an environmental objective, which are interdependent and should be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 5.2 The Framework advises, in paragraph 180, planning decisions should contribute to enhance the local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity. The Framework further states at Paragraph 186(d), development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported.
- 5.3 Spatial Principle (SP) 7 states that development in the countryside will only be supported where it is consistent with national and local Green Belt policies, SP6 and E2 and does not conflict with environmental protection and nature conservation policies and provides suitable mitigation or compensatory measures to address any harm.
- 5.4 Policy E5 identifies the former Meaford Power Station as a previously developed site in the Green Belt where limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment will be supported for employment purposes consistent with SP7 and which would not have a greater impact on the openness and purposes of the Green Belt.
- 5.5 Ecological enhancement works are required to mitigate the impact of and facilitate the delivery of employment floorspace permitted under extant consents on the former Meaford Power Station site. There is consequently no objection in principle to the proposal subject to the consideration of all other material factors which are assessed in the sections below.

6.0 Green belt

- 6.1 The application site is located within the North Staffordshire Green Belt. Consideration therefore needs to be given as to whether the proposal would constitute inappropriate development including the effect of the development on openness.
- 6.2 The former Meaford Power Station site is identified under Policy E5 of The Plan for Stafford Borough as a 'Major Developed Site' in the Green Belt. However, the application site is located beyond the extent of the site identified under Policy E5 and therefore an assessment needs to be made on whether the development is inappropriate in the Green Belt.
- 6.3 The Framework advises, in paragraph 152, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Further stating, at paragraph 153, when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. "Very special circumstances" will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 6.4 Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that certain forms of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, these include at 155(b) *engineering operations*.
- 6.5 The application seeks the creation of ponds which can reasonably be considered engineering operations and in this regard the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.6 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The openness of the Green Belt has a spatial aspect as well as a visual aspect which means that the absence of visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on the openness of the Green Belt as a result. In addition, the effect on openness might not be confined solely to permanent physical works.
- 6.7 The proposal seeks the creation of ten ponds, several hibernacula along with the provision of scrub habitat and enhancement of areas of modified grassland. Given the natural habitat that will be created along with the absence of built form and hardstanding the development is considered to have a neutral effect on both the visual and spatial aspect of openness.

Polices and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 142, 152-155

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

E5 - Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt

7.0 Heritage assets

- 7.1 The Trent and Mersey Canal Conservation Area is located to the west of the site and the proposed access is over Meaford Hall Farm Bridge, which is Grade II listed.
- 7.2 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention is paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.
- 7.3 Policy N9: 'Historic Environment' requires development proposals to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets, including their setting, and that any potential harm to the significance of a heritage asset will require clear justification.
- 7.4 Paragraph 205 of the Framework states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 206 then goes on to advise that significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting and that this should have clear and convincing justification.
- 7.5 Given the proposal involves no built form through the creation of buildings or hard surfacing along with the retention of existing trees, scrub and grassland the development is considered to safeguard the setting and wider character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 205-209

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

N1 – Design

N8 Landscape character

N9 Historic environment.

Trent and Mersey Conservation Area Appraisal – August 2014

8.0 Impact on the character and appearance of the area

- 8.1 Policy N8 of The Plan for Stafford Borough advises that development proposals must be informed by, and be sympathetic to, landscape character and quality, demonstrated through local site-specific assessments. Development should demonstrate that proposals with landscape and visual implications, should protect, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance:

- a) The elements of the landscape that contribute to the local distinctiveness of the area (including heritage assets, cultural character and biodiversity);
 - b) Historic elements of the present-day landscape that contribute significantly to landscape character.
 - c) The setting and views of or from heritage assets
 - d) The locally distinctive pattern of landscape elements such as woodland, streams, hedgerows, trees, and field boundaries.
- 8.2 The Framework advises, in paragraph 131, the creation of high quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the design process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 8.3 The site is visible from public footpath, Barlaston 1, and there will be a degree of intrusion during the construction phase. However, given this is limited to four weeks, along with the ecological enhancements that will arise from the proposal, it is considered that the scheme will serve to positively enhance the visual amenity of the immediate area.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 12

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

N1 – Design

N8 - Landscape character

(Landscape Character) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) – Design

9.0 Residential amenity

- 9.1 The Framework advises, at paragraph 135(f), that planning decisions should ensure that developments create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 9.2 Policy N1 requires the design and layout of development to take account of noise and light implications and amenity of adjacent residential areas.
- 9.3 There are no residential properties in the vicinity of the site that would be adversely affected by the proposal in terms of noise and disturbance. Given also that the proposed works will take place over a period of four weeks, the level of amenity afforded to surrounding residential properties and land uses will not be detrimentally affected.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 12

The Plan for Stafford Borough

N1 - Design

10.0 Access and parking

- 10.1 Policy T2 states that all new development must have a safe and adequate means of access and internal circulation; not have unacceptable highway safety impacts and provide sufficient parking provision.
- 10.2 The Highway Authority initially requested further information relating to the number and size of vehicles accessing the site, the visibility splays at the junction of the access road with Meaford Road, and whether passing places are required to prevent vehicles waiting or reversing onto the highway.
- 10.3 In response the applicant submitted a Technical Note. This advises the proposed access for construction traffic will be directly off Meaford Road and onto an existing well-established track, suitable for vehicles. A public footpath runs along the track and to the farmland beyond the railway. The track is between 3-4 metres wide, access to the works area itself is via an existing gated field access. A drawing has also been submitted showing the required visibility splays of 2.4 metres by 215 metres at the junction of the access road with Meaford Road can be achieved. The size of vehicles will be limited by the width of the canal bridge to a maximum of approximately 3 metres. The number of estimated HGV's accessing the site will be below ten.
- 10.4 The Technical Note also states that deliveries involving trucks will be at pre-arranged times with the gated access fully opened to allow direct access onto the track and avoiding any waiting of vehicles on Meaford Road. All work equipment, material storage, cabins and vehicles will be located and parked wholly within the works site boundary.
- 10.5 On the basis of the submitted Technical Note the Highway Authority is satisfied that no modification to the access or trackway is required, or that there will be any detriment caused to highway users as a consequence of the development. The Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal subject to recommended conditions.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 9

The Plan for Stafford Borough

T1 - Transport

T2 - Parking and Manoeuvring Facilities

Appendix B – Car Parking Standards

11.0 Biodiversity

Ecology

- 11.1 Policy N5 - Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance requires development to protect nature conservation sites and mitigate against any impacts on protected sites.
- 11.2 The Framework advises, in paragraph 180(d), planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by '*minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*'
- 11.3 The proposed habitat creation is required as part of deliverable mitigation for Great Crested Newts (GCNs) under a District Licence Agreement for Meaford Business Park under extant planning permissions. The newly created habitats will also aim to mitigate the loss of open mosaic on previously developed land from the former Meaford Power Station site and the invertebrate species it supports.
- 11.4 The habitat proposals include the creation of ten new ponds (designed for GCNs), five oversized hibernacula, an area of open mosaic, additional scrub/tall ruderal habitat and an enhancement of areas of modified grassland to a more species rich sward through over seeding and long-term management. The existing trees will be retained and protected during the habitat creation works. The existing scrub areas will also be retained and protected. Detailed landscape design specifications have been provided on the submitted landscaping plans.
- 11.5 The Council's Biodiversity Officer has no objection to the proposal.
- 11.6 The Newt Officer advises that NatureSpace is satisfied with the plans and ecological report submitted as part of the application. However, the proposal is linked to the extant outline consent (21/35159/OUT) which has authorisation under a District Licence scheme in a phased process. As such, application 23/38005/FUL will need a separate authorisation. The Newt Officer advises if this licencing route is not followed it would conflict with the agreed authorisation of the wider Meaford outline planning permission 21/25159/OUT. The ecological enhancement delivered within this application and the coverage of such works under the District Licence is essential for the authorisation of the phasing of development on the former Meaford Power Station site.
- 11.7 Following further discussions between the applicant and NatureSpace the Newt Officer advises they are satisfied that the applicant has provided evidence of entry into the Council's District Licensing Scheme via provision of a report and certificate from the delivery partner, NatureSpace.

- 11.8 Provided the works proceed in accordance with the assessed development proposals the development can be covered under Stafford Borough Council's District Licence. Conditions are recommended.

Trees

- 11.9 Policy N4 states that the natural environment will be protected and that new development where damage to the natural environment is unavoidable must provide appropriate mitigation. Policy N1 requires development to retain significant biodiversity and landscaping features and create new biodiversity areas. To comply with the guidance contained within the Framework and the Council's biodiversity duty new development must demonstrate that it will not result in the loss of any biodiversity value of the site.
- 11.10 Paragraph 136 of the Framework advises that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of the environment and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 11.11 The Council's Tree Officer initially raised concerns at the scheme. It was advised that whilst the proposals overall will have potentially low impact to the tree cover, due to the lack of relevant tree information on the landscape plans it is not possible to cross reference the relevant damage. Amendments were therefore required to avoid causing any impact, particularly to the veteran tree on site. Additionally, assessment of any harm to the retained trees needs to be made and protection measures shown where appropriate.
- 11.12 In response, the applicant submitted an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), Tree Protection Plan (TPP) and Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) Report.
- 11.13 The Council's Tree Officer advised this document assesses the impact of the proposed mitigation measures on the trees. The Tree Protection Plan clearly shows the areas to be protected and the specifications to be followed, which should avoid damage to the retained trees. The Arboricultural Officer states the submitted AIA, TPP and AMS take account of all trees on site and will ensure the trees are adequately protected during construction works. There is consequently no objection to the proposal subject to a recommended condition.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraphs 136,180

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

N1 - Design

N4 - The Natural Environment and Green Infrastructure

N5 - Sites of European, National and Local Nature Conservation Importance

12.0 Land contamination

- 12.1 A Ground Investigation Report has been submitted which states that imported crushed concrete from the wider Meaford development site, when available, is to form proposed hibernacula around the ponds and proposed open mosaic habitat. The imported material may be subject to testing to confirm suitability for its proposed location and end use.
- 12.2 The Environmental Health Officer is satisfied with the content of the report and recommends a condition that any material derived from the larger site area (such as crushed concrete) is tested for suitability which is to be approved in writing by the local planning authority before being used at the proposed location.

Policies and Guidance: -

National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 12

The Plan for Stafford Borough:

Policy N1 - Design

13.0 Other matters

- 13.1 The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) raise several concerns relating to vehicle damage of the bridge, protecting the canal from silting runoff and risks posed by the construction process to the stream and culvert.
- 13.2 Suggested pre-commencement conditions by the CRT to secure a method statement for excavation / construction works and the long term maintenance and management of the ponds are considered reasonable. Such conditions would prevent any detrimental impacts on the canal embankment from construction / tree felling works, potential siltation of the canal from runoff during construction works and the protection of culvert 49. The long term maintenance and management regime would also secure the adequate provision of surface water management arrangements within the development.
- 13.3 The inclusion of measures to protect the structural integrity of Bridge 102 which is owned by the CRT are not considered reasonable however given the number and type of construction vehicles and the anticipated short duration period of the construction works. The access track over the bridge also serves a National Grid substation and forms a public right of way.
- 13.4 An informative can also be attached to any planning permission granted advising the applicant/developer to contact the Canal and Rivers Trust to ensure all necessary consents are obtained.
- 13.5 Whilst the site is within the buffer zones of two high pressure gas pipelines the Health and Safety Executive do not advise against development.

13.6 Equally, the site also contains two electricity pylons with cables straddling the site but National Grid have confirmed that no existing transmission assets are affected in this area.

14.0 Planning balance and conclusion

14.1 Ecological enhancement works are required to mitigate the impact of and facilitate the delivery of employment floorspace permitted under extant planning permissions, which weigh in favour of the development.

14.2 The proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt and will have a neutral impact on both the visual and spatial aspects of openness.

14.3 The setting of the Trent and Mersey Conservation Area will be preserved and there will be visual enhancement to the appearance of the area on completion of the works.

14.4 Highway and land contamination matters are addressed through appropriately worded conditions.

14.5 There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan.

CONSULTATIONS (summarised)

SCC Highway Authority:

31 May 2024:

No objection subject to recommended conditions.

17 January 2024

Requests further information.

SBC Tree Officer:

27 March 2024

No objection subject to a recommended condition.

22 November 2023

Amendments required to avoid damage to trees during construction.

National Grid

There are no existing National Grid Electricity Transmission assets affected in this area.

Cadent:

No objection.

Health and Safety Executive

Do not advise against development

SBC Environmental Health Officer:

No objection subject to a condition.

SBC Biodiversity Officer:

No objection.

Canal and Rivers Trust:

Make comments and recommend conditions and informative.

District Newt Officer:

13 February 2024:

No objection subject to Stafford Borough Council's District Licence conditions.

23 November 2023:

Authorisation under a District Licence scheme is required.

Parish Council:

No response received.

Neighbours

97 Notified - two representations received.

One letter of objection which questions the nature of the development.

One representation which has no adverse comments to make and welcomes the development opportunities.

PUBLICITY

Site notice: expiry date 8 August 2024

Advert: expiry date 29 November 2023

Network Rail notification – No objection

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

14/21379/EXTO: Extension of time on Outline Planning permission number 98/35897/OUT as previously extended by planning approval number 10/13609/EXT (Change of use to B1, B2 and B8 buildings, roadways, and new roundabout) – Approved 7 May 2015.

- 21/35159/OUT: Outline planning application for the creation of development platforms and phased development comprising up to 96,932sqm of employment floorspace (Use Classes E(g)(iii)/B2/B8) including up to 2 hectares of battery storage (Use Class Sui Generis), ancillary office space, new internal site roads and the use of existing accesses (including western access onto Meaford Road for emergency access), parking, ecology and biodiversity enhancements, landscaping, drainage, ancillary works and associated infrastructure, involving demolition, site clearance and remediation (All Matters Reserved except access, in part). Approved 2 November 2023.
- 22/35950/REM: All reserved matters for no.7 units (Use Classes E(g)(iii)B2/B8) open storage and associated infrastructure including road, attenuation, ecological mitigation and landscaping (pursuant to outline 14/21379/EXTO) Approved 6 October 2023.
- 22/35956/REM: All reserved matters for three units (Use Classes E(g)(iii)B2/B8) and associated infrastructure including attenuation, ecological mitigation and landscaping (pursuant to outline 14/21379/EXTO). Approved 6 October 2023.
- 23/38552/AMN: Non-material amendments to reserved matters permission 22/35950/REM. Approved 22 February 2024.
- 23/37889/FUL Variation of conditions 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25 on application 14/21379/EXTO - Pending decision

Recommendation

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which this permission is granted.
2. This permission relates to the submitted details and specification and to the following drawings, except where indicated otherwise by a condition attached to this consent, in which case the condition shall take precedence.
 - Site Location Plan: AAA5604-RPS-XX-XX-DR-A-0124-Rev P01
 - Ground Investigation Report: TE 1684-TE-00-XX-RP-GE-001-V01
 - Blue Line Ponds Option 3: 05535-B-1303-PG Blue Line P06
 - Arboricultural Information Baseline Tree Survey CC41-1020: FLAC-41-1020
Planning Submission (Arboricultural) Meaford BL1 February 2024
 - Technical Note Blue Line 1- Ecology Enhancement Works Construction
Access Statement: 05535A-TN-0012 Version 2:0 Date April 2024

- Works Access Statement: 05535A- TN-0012 Meaford BL1 Ecology Works Access Statement V1.0
 - Meaford Blue Line 1: 215m Visibility Splay
 - Landscape Management Plan: 702510-RPS-XX-EX-RP-L-9109-P01
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail GA: 702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9102 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 01
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9103 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 02
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9104 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 03
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9105 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 04
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9106 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 05
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9107 P04
 - Meaford Blue Line Landscaping Detail 06
702510-RPS-XX-EX-DR-L-9108 P04
3. During the working hours of the development hereby permitted, the gate on the access road, adjacent to Meaford Road, shall remain open to vehicular traffic.
 4. The development hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until the visibility spays shown on the approved plan have been provided. The visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility over a height of 600mm above the adjacent carriageway level.
 5. No development hereby permitted shall take place except in accordance with the terms of conditions of the Council's organisational licence (WML-0R148, or a 'Further Licence') and with the proposals detailed on plan 'Meaford Business Park BL1 Enhancement Area: Impact Plan for great crested newts District Licencing (Version 2) dated 8th February 2024, in Report 'Meaford District Licence HMMP-Red Line and Blue Line (Version 7)' dated 8th February 2024; on plan 'Meaford Business Park BL1 Enhancement Area: HMMP Map for great crested newts District Licencing (Version 2) dated 8 February 2024.

6. All measures within the approved Tree Protection Plans and Arboricultural Method Statements shall be implemented and maintained throughout the development hereby permitted until completion of all construction related activity.
7. Imported materials and those won from the larger Meaford site (such as crushed concrete) shall only be re-deposited at the application site when accompanied by a laboratory analysis and interpretation to demonstrate the suitability for re-use, which shall first be subject to the prior written approval of the local planning authority.
8. No development shall commence unless and until a Method Statement to demonstrate that any construction operations will not adversely affect the stability of the infrastructure of the adjacent Trent and Mersey Canal, or its water quality has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The statement shall include:
 - Detailed plans for the protection of the canal side trees during the proposed works and for the protection of the navigation should any felling works be needed.
 - Means to protect the canal from silty runoff during the construction phase.
 - Details of how Culvert 49, and the upstream culvert beneath the access, will be protected from blockage/obstruction during the construction works.
 - Arrangements for undertaking any monitoring regimes or mitigation measures as may be necessary to ensure that the risk of damage to the canal infrastructure is adequately minimised.

The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

9. No development shall take place unless and until a detailed scheme for the long-term maintenance and management of the ponds, including arrangements to prevent storm run-off to the canal that could cause erosion of the offside bank and siltation within the navigation has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

The reasons for the Council's decision to approve the development subject to the above conditions are:

1. To comply with the requirements of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. To define the permission.
3. To avoid any waiting of vehicles and impediments to traffic movements along Meaford Road in the interests of the safety of users of the highway. (Policy T1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
4. To ensure the access arrangements are satisfactory to serve the development in the interests of the safety of users of the highway (Policy T1 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

5. In order to ensure that adverse impacts on great crested newts are adequately mitigated and to ensure that site works are delivered in full compliance with the Organisational Licence (WML-OR148, or a 'Further Licence'), paragraphs 179 and 185 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Circular June 2005 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
6. To protect existing trees to be retained in the interests of local biodiversity and to safeguard the character and appearance of the area (Policies N1 and N4 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
7. To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property, and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours, and other offsite receptors. (Policies N1, N2 and N4 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
8. In the interests of minimising the risk of creating land instability or pollution arising from earthmoving, excavations or other construction works which would adversely affect the stability of the adjacent Trent and Mersey Canal infrastructure. (Policy N2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).
9. To ensure that the surface water management arrangements within the proposal do not have a detrimental impact on the adjacent Trent and Mersey Canal. (Policy N2 of The Plan for Stafford Borough).

Informatives

- 1 The following information has been received from NatureSpace:

It is essential to note that any works or activities whatsoever undertaken on site (including ground investigations, site preparatory works or ground clearance) prior to receipt of the written authorisation from the planning authority (which permits the development to proceed under the District Licence WMLOR148, or a 'Further Licence') are not licensed under the great crested newt District Licence. Any such works or activities have no legal protection under the great crested newt District Licence and if offences against great crested newt are thereby committed then criminal investigation and prosecution by the police may follow.
- 2 The applicant/developer is advised to contact the Canal and Rivers Trust in order to ensure that any necessary consents are obtained, and the works are compliant with the Trust's current 'Code of Practice for Works Affecting the Canal and Rivers Trust.' For further advice please contact Susan Higton, Works Engineer on Susan.Higton@canalrivertrust.org.uk or by telephone 0303 040 4040.
- 3 The applicant/developer's attention are drawn to the comments of Network Rail on this application which can be viewed on the Council's public access website.
- 4 In accordance with the requirements of Article 35 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Order) 2015, as amended, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, the Council has worked in a positive and proactive way in determining the application and has granted planning permission.

23/38005/FUL

Land North East Of Land At Former Meaford Power Station

Meaford Road

Meaford

