

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

For

PROPOSED VEHICLE MAINTENANCE UNIT (VMU) & ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL WORKS

At

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PLANNING APPLICATION ISSUE

Site observation and analysis

Location

The Fowler Welch headquarters site is located approximately 1850m north-northeast of the Market Place in Spalding. It forms part of the industrial zone of the town and within the zone it is towards the end of the peninsula bounded to the west by the Vernatt's Drain and to the east by the River Welland. The actual location for the proposal within the site is towards the north corner. A location plan at recognized scale is provided within the application pack to enable it to be located and the extent to be identified.

Site description

The site is an industrial depot which forms the headquarters for local company Fowler Welch Ltd. The site comprises buildings and external areas used for haulage and food storage (Fig. 01, 02, 03 & 04). The bulk of the site is roughly rectangular in shape with its main axis measuring approximately 550m running roughly perpendicular between West Marsh Road to the east-southeast and the bank of the Vernatt's Drain to the west-northwest. There is a further, connected section of the site to the south-west which accommodates storage sheds and associated circulation areas. Access to the site is via an approach road from the north-east.

Within the site there are a number of buildings that provide for either storage or administration. The storage buildings tend to be relatively high-bay single storey units with eaves at 6-9m above ground level (i.e. equivalent in height to a traditional building of 3 storeys). These are generally medium span, light-weight industrial buildings with coloured steel claddings to the exterior. There are a number of loading docks with associated doors, dock-levellers etc. but few windows (as would be expected). These buildings dominate the central area of the site as well as that area to the south-west adjacent the Vernatt's Drain. Supporting the storage facilities are the main administration offices the primary block of which stands towards the north of the central warehouse block. This block provides administrative support for the Spalding site and also for the wider Fowler Welch network of depots throughout the UK. The main office block is of modular construction and comprises 2 storeys of offices with associated mess facilities. This block has a colour-coated flat steel panel wall cladding beneath a modular flat roof. Immediately to the north of the main office block stands the recently constructed Staff Welfare Facilities Block planning approval for which was granted on 19th December 2017 under SHDC reference H16-1054-17 (figs. 05 & 06).



Fig. 01 – Office administration block.



Fig. 02 – Main central warehouse block.



Fig. 03 – Central warehouse block.



Fig. 04 – 24 West blocks (warehouse 2).



Fig. 05 – Recently erected staff welfare block.



Fig. 06 – Recently erected staff welfare block

To the north of the central administration block stands an area of undeveloped ground elevated some 3-4m above the general yard area (Fig. 07 & 08). The site for the proposed vehicle maintenance unit is within the south corner of the vehicle trailer park that was the focus of application reference H16-0569-17 (Fig. 09). A path and stairs are proposed to link the VMU to the existing yard adjacent the offices. The proposed stairs and path run roughly between the VMU and the main offices (Fig. 10 & 11).



Fig. 07 – Elevated land



Fig. 08 – Elevated ground from, north-west.



Fig. 09 – Site for vehicle maintenance unit.



Fig. 10 – Site for proposed footpath and stairs



Fig. 11 – Site for proposed stairs and path

Vehicular access to the site generally for both lorries and visitors' cars is via the barrier-controlled entrance to the north-east off West Marsh Road (Fig. 12). Vehicular access for staff cars is from a second entrance off West Marsh Road to the south; again this is barrier-controlled (Fig. 13). Access for people on foot or bicycles is via the same routes. Access to the specific facilities that are the focus of these proposals would be via internal site roads or on foot.



Fig. 12 – Main lorry access on West Marsh Road.



Fig. 13 – Secondary staff access on West Marsh Road.

Site boundaries

The Fowler Welch depot is of significant area totalling approximately 13 hectares. The area now proposed for development is however limited to the footprint of the proposed building

together with a footpath, external staircase and vehicle hard-standing. The total area for development therefore extends to 1851m² though the building occupies just 591m² of this. The proposed building is set a considerable distance from all site boundaries, however for completeness the following information is provided.

The north-east boundary is formed by a simple post and wire fence immediately inside of which is a raised bund and then a small drainage ditch (Fig. 14). Immediately outside of the boundary line is an area of undeveloped land that stretches for a considerable distance to the north-east. The nearest buildings are in excess of 250m away and appear industrial in nature. This boundary is located approximately 70 – 85m north-east of the proposed site for the vehicle maintenance unit.

The south-east boundary is again formed by fencing inside of which is the vehicular access road for the site (Fig. 15). Immediately outside of the boundary line is an abutting site that accommodates a further food-related industrial facility (XPO Logistics). The nearest buildings are within 5m of the boundary and are industrial in nature. This boundary is located approximately 220m south-east of the proposed site for the proposed vehicle maintenance unit.

The south-west boundary is formed by industrial fencing and separates Fowler Welch from the neighbouring industrial site - Bakkavor (Fig. 14). Immediately inside the boundary is a private vehicular access road. Immediately outside of the boundary line is a car park and circulation area associated with the neighbouring use. The nearest buildings are within 25m of the boundary and are industrial in nature but this is largely irrelevant for the current proposal as the main buildings on the Fowler Welch site sit between the proposed development and the south-west boundary. This boundary is located approximately 140m south-west of the proposed site for the proposed vehicle maintenance unit.

The north-west boundary is formed by a chain-link fence to the south-east bank of the Vernatt's Drain (Fig. 15). Immediately inside the boundary is an undeveloped grassed area and then the vehicular access ramp to the trailer park. Immediately outside of the boundary line is the drain. The nearest buildings on the north-west side of the drain are estimated to be approximately 50m from the Fowler Welch site boundary. These are again assumed to be in industrial / commercial use. This boundary is located approximately 160 - 170m north-west of the proposed site for the vehicle maintenance unit.



Fig. 14 – Boundary on north-east side of site.



Fig. 15 – Boundary on south-east side of site.



Fig. 16 – Boundary on south-west side of site.



Fig. 17 – Boundary on north-west side of site.

Neighbouring Development

The site sits in a relatively highly developed part of the town where virtually all use is industrial in nature. The area immediately to the north is generally undeveloped until the site of the Spalding Energy Facility (power station) is reached. Other uses locally (to the north) are the District Recycling Centre and the Water Treatment Plant. Development height locally is as would be expected of industrial storage units with the exception of the chimney flues of the power station which are some of the tallest structures in the district.

Existing access arrangements

Access to the vehicle maintenance unit for vehicles will be from the north side through the existing trailer park. Pedestrian access for staff will be via a new footpath along the bank descending to yard level adjacent the office block.

No new access to the site is required and there will be no changes to the existing access arrangements.

Streetscape / planting

The site sits within an industrial zone which features few trees. There are a small number along the main site access road to the east though these are not of particular significance. The banks of the Vernatt's Drain are soft landscaped and provide a habitat for various animal, bird and plant species. To the south of the proposed site the context is largely building dominated.

Amenities

The site sits close to the town centre and therefore within 2 miles of all amenities.

Views into, through and out of the site

In general, all views from the north (available mostly from private land only) are across the open fields south of the power station and look at the north elevation of the storage warehouses and administration offices on this site (Fig. 18). The buildings on site block all views further south. Views from the site to the north are simply across open fields toward the power station (Fig. 19).



Fig. 18 – View across site from north.



Fig. 19 – View from site looking north.

All views of the site from the south are obscured by the warehouse buildings on this site. All views to the south are likewise obscured. There are no views through the site from the south.

All views of the site from public land to the east are obscured by the warehouse buildings on the adjacent site. Likewise all views from the site to the east are blocked by the warehouses on the adjacent site. There are no views through the site from public land to the east.

Views from the site looking west are across the Vernatt's Drain to the industrial buildings on the opposite side (Figs. 20 & 21). These views are however at least partly obscured by the presence of earth bunds / banks at ground level. Views from the west are available from the riverbank across the site though again these are limited in distance by the buildings on the adjacent site to the east. There are no significant views through the site from public land to the west.



Fig. 20 – View from site looking west.



Fig. 21 – View from site looking west.

Context - Physical

The site is occupied by Fowler Welch and is utilized in connection with their haulage and temperature-controlled food storage business. This site stands within an industrial estate where the majority of sites are in food-related use. The buildings on site are medium-span, light-weight structures typical of those used within the food storage and transportation industry. All development locally generally dates from the latter part of the 20th Century.

Context - Social

The site accommodates warehouse and office facilities together with external circulation and parking areas. As such it therefore contributes to the employment core of the town.

Context – Economic

The site employs a significant number of people on both a full and part-time basis and is a business of significant size operating on a national scale.

History - General

Neither the site nor the buildings on it are of any architectural or historic value. All structures date from the mid to late 20th Century and are, in architectural terms, standard grade industrial buildings, utilitarian in nature and appearance.

History - Planning

Over the years a number of planning applications have been submitted relating to various aspects of the broader site though few specifically for the area now proposed for development. The most recent applications related to the undeveloped land area to the north and east of the current proposal which was to be developed as a vehicle parking area. This was approved on 07.02.11 under SHDC application reference H16-0930-10. A later application referenced H16-0418-14 to discharge conditions was approved on 15.07.14. This approval was implemented though the applicant submitted a further application relating to revised proposals in respect of lighting, drainage and layout during June 2017.

A separate application was approved in December 2017 for a Staff Welfare Facilities Block immediately to the south-east of the current proposal site, this has since been implemented. There appear to be no further events of significance relative to the planning history of this site.

Site Evaluation

Details of the site and general context have been recorded and analysed within the site observation and analysis above. From those findings the following key statements are identified.

1. The land area available within the site is easily large enough to accommodate a vehicle maintenance unit without causing any detrimental impact on either the site or the wider context.
2. The introduction of a vehicle maintenance unit on site would enable the applicant to improve business performance in respect of the general repair and upkeep of its fleet of heavy goods vehicles.
3. The creation of a VMU facility on site would improve the ability to maintain vehicles locally and would reduce the need to send vehicles off site; this bringing with it an environmental benefit.
4. The site proposed for the vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) is logical in that it would allow direct access from the trailer park. This would also separate vehicle maintenance functions from the general staff circulation areas. This is considered to be a safety benefit.
5. The introduction of connecting paths and associated lighting would assist in separating vehicle and pedestrian routes which has a significant safety benefit for operations on site. This would have an insignificant impact upon the environment but a major benefit for health and safety generally.
6. Redevelopment of the site on this scale would appear wholly appropriate in support of the business of a major local employer.
7. The proposals would require no demolition and would have no detrimental impact upon the existing facility.
8. The introduction of a new building of modest size on this site would not impact upon views to or from the site.
9. With regard to materials the site already features a mixed palette across the range of building stock though steel claddings would appear the appropriate choice for a vehicle maintenance unit.

Design Statement

The following section demonstrates how the conceptual approach has taken account of the identified physical, social and economic context set against development plan policies for design.

Use

The site provides warehousing and logistics facilities for temperature-controlled food storage and distribution, this includes administration areas for both the Spalding Depot and the wider Fowler Welch network. The development here proposed is entirely ancillary to that which exists and is therefore wholly appropriate for the site.

Amount

The proposal seeks approval for a new vehicle maintenance building. The vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) will have a footprint of approximately 27m x 21.6m and will comprise 4 bays, 3 of which will be for vehicle servicing and repair and the fourth will be a test bay. The building dimensions and height are appropriate for the size of vehicles being attended to. The proposed building is of modest size given the overall site area and are considerably smaller than the major blocks within the wider complex.

Layout

The proposal for the VMU seeks to position it adjacent the trailer park to ensure that the cross-over of vehicular and pedestrian circulation is minimized. In this location it will be away from the main loading areas and ideally suited for vehicle maintenance. The plan design of the building is specific for the process of repair and maintenance.

Scale

As previously stated, the site features a number of large buildings that are typical of the type of facility found within a food storage and haulage depot. The building here proposed provide support facilities and will be much smaller than the main blocks. This is however logical and appropriate for the facilities now required.

Landscaping

Given that the site is industrial in use there is no real requirement to, or benefit in, providing a significant planting scheme. The area to the north-east of the proposed development site will remain soft surfaced and will therefore continue to provide some ecological benefit, as will the nearby river bank.

Appearance

Elevation proposals are included as part of the application drawings pack. These demonstrate that the proposed block is appropriate in scale and general appearance for an industrial site.

Access Statement:

The VMU will be accessed by vehicles and staff. The people frequenting this building will be either drivers or mechanics / fitters all of whom will need to be relatively mobile and fit to perform their employment role. Non-staff will generally not visit this building but should there be a need for visitors then these would be accompanied and access would be restricted to relevant areas. That said, the detailed design of the building will avoid steps at personnel door thresholds and in general openings will be sufficiently wide to permit access by people in wheelchairs. The detailed design of the building will, where practicable, be progressed in accordance with Approved Document M of the Building Regulations together with BS 8300.

Demolition Statement:

The proposal does not require any demolition.

Flood Risk Assessment:

Whilst it is acknowledged that this site lies within a Flood Zone 3 area as identified within the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Maps, the proposal is one that would not be particularly sensitive to flooding.

The proposed location for the VMU stands on an elevated plateau of land and has a proposed finished floor level of just over 8.00m AOD whereas the general ground level for the site stands at circa 4.10m AOD immediately to the south of the development area. It therefore appears reasonable to assume that with the appropriate surface water drainage for the trailer park implemented there is unlikely to be any localized flooding that would impact upon the fabric or use of the VMU.

On this basis the applicant considers an in-depth, formal Flood Risk Assessment unnecessary.

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