

Agenda Item	A10
Application Number	23/01435/FUL
Proposal	Demolition of existing office building, canteen building, welfare building and greenhouse and erection of a new office building, canteen and welfare building
Application site	Lancaster City Council White Lund Depot White Lund Road Morecambe
Applicant	Mr Dan Wood
Agent	Mr Lee Donner
Case Officer	Mr Sam Robinson
Departure	No
Summary of Recommendation	Approval

(i) Procedural Matters

This form of development would normally be determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation. However, the site is under the ownership of Lancaster City Council, the application is referred to the Planning Regulatory Committee.

1.0 Application Site and Setting

- 1.1 The White Lund Depot is situated to the northeast of White Lund Road, near to the junction of White Lund Road and Westgate. The site comprises of numerous buildings that include office buildings, storerooms and the White Lund Plant Centre. The remainder of the site consists of parking for council vehicles and staff parking.
- 1.2 To the northwest of the site are six residential properties, with further residential properties to the west of White Lund Road. To the north, east and south of the application site are various commercial properties that include Home Bargains and Whitehouse Motors.
- 1.3 The site is situated within the White Lund Industrial Estate which is an identified employment area in the Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD. The northern and western edges of the site are partially within Flood Zone 2 whilst the northern and central areas of the site have the potential for groundwater flooding to occur at the surface (high risk).

2.0 Proposal

- 2.1 This application is seeking consent for the demolition of existing office building, canteen building, welfare building and greenhouse and erection of a new office building, canteen and welfare building

2.2 The canteen building and welfare building will occupy a similar position as their replacements whilst the office block will be located to adjacent to the existing greenhouses towards the southeast of the site. The buildings will have a modular design and limited to single storey height and will be finished in coated steel walls and roof with anthracite windows and doors.

2.3 Access to and from the site will remain as existing.

3.0 Site History

3.1 A number of relevant applications relating to this site have previously been received by the Local Planning Authority. These include:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
24/00437/VCN	Retrospective application for the temporary siting of 2 portable buildings to provide office space (pursuant to the variation of condition 1 on 23/01134/VCN to extend the time frame for removal)	Pending
23/01134/VCN	Retrospective application for the temporary siting of 2 portable buildings to provide office space (pursuant to the variation of condition 1 on 23/00649/FUL to extend the time frame for removal)	Permitted
23/00649/FUL	Retrospective application for the temporary siting of 2 portable buildings to provide office space	Permitted

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

Consultee	Response
Morecambe Town Council	No response (At the time of compiling report)
Environment Agency	No response (At the time of compiling report)
Fire Safety Officer	No response (At the time of compiling report)
Lancashire County Council Highways	No objection (Subject to condition for a CMP and restriction on construction deliveries)
Lancaster City Council Environmental Health	No response (At the time of compiling report)
Lancaster City Council Property Services	No response (At the time of compiling report)

4.2 No responses from members of the public at the time of compiling the report.

5.0 Analysis

5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design and visual impact
- Residential amenity
- Flood risk and drainage
- Highways and parking
- Biodiversity and landscaping

5.2 **Principle of development (NPPF Section 2 and 6; Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD policy EC1; and Development Management DPD policy DM14)**

- 5.2.1 As mentioned above, White Lund Depot is located within the White Lund Industrial Estate Policy which is an allocated employment site as identified in policy EC1 of the SPLA DPD. This policy seeks to support and encourage growth and new development within these allocated employment sites. Development proposals for office, general industrial and storage and distribution uses will be supported in principle.
- 5.2.2 White Lund Depot is operated by Lancaster City Council and the site currently accommodates the public realm and community teams which offers various services across the District. The existing buildings across the site have reached their end-of-life use and require replacing. The new buildings will effectively provide like for like replacements for and will provide improved facilities for the teams across the site helping to provide a continued service across the District.
- 5.2.3 Therefore, the provision of improved office facilities on an allocated employment site is supported in principle.
- 5.3 **Design and visual impact** (NPPF Section 12 and; Development Management DPD policy DM29)
- 5.3.1 Policy DM29 of the DM DPD requires a good standard of design and that proposals should demonstrate an understanding of the wider context so that they make a positive contribution to the local area.
- 5.3.2 The existing buildings are portable in nature and functional in their appearance which offer no architectural merit that is worthy of retention. As mentioned above, the buildings are largely in a poor state of repair and require replacing. Therefore, the principle of their removal raises no objection.
- 5.3.3 The proposed replacement buildings have a similar functional appearance with a modular design with two of the buildings sited in a similar position to their replacements. Whilst these buildings have a utilitarian appearance which may be difficult to blend into a standard residential area, the site is contained within the wider industrial estate where most buildings have a functional appearance. Therefore, the design of the buildings will largely be in keeping with those within both the site as well as the appearance of the wider industrial site. In addition, the buildings remain well contained within White Lund Depot and sited adjacent to the existing buildings. Views from the wider area will be distant and the buildings will remain partially screened by the existing buildings within the site as well as the established vegetation along the northern boundary.
- 5.3.4 Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would be in keeping with that of the immediate area and as such would not result in any adverse impacts on the visual amenity of the area.
- 5.4 **Residential amenity** (NPPF Section 12 and; Development Management DPD policy DM29)
- 5.4.1 Policy DM29 requires all new development to 'ensure there is no significant detrimental impact to amenity in relation to overshadowing, visual amenity, privacy, overlooking, massing and pollution.'
- 5.4.2 The proposal will not see any significant changes in terms of use or noise across the site given the proposal is largely seeking replacement buildings of a similar size and scale. The buildings will continue to provide support for the teams across the site and as such, the use should not result in any adverse effects impacting on the neighbouring properties.
- 5.4.3 All buildings are located away from neighbouring residential properties and as the buildings are limited to single storey in height there will not be any significant adverse effects in terms of appearing overbearing or resulting in a loss of light.
- 5.5 **Flood risk and drainage** (NPPF Sections 12 and 14 and; Development Management DPD policies DM33 and DM34)
- 5.5.1 Policy DM33 states that proposals will be required to minimise the risk of flooding to people and property by taking a sequential approach which directs development to the areas at the lowest risk of flooding. Consideration should be given to all sources of flood risk. New development will need to satisfy the requirements of the sequential test and exception test where necessary in accordance with the requirements of national planning policy and any other relevant guidance.

- 5.5.2 Both national and local policy aims to direct development to the areas at the lowest risk of flooding from any source. The wider White Lund Depot site is partially covered by Flood Zone 2 and a medium and high risk of surface water flooding as well as having the potential for groundwater flooding to occur at the surface. Whilst the proposed buildings would be located outside of Flood Zone 2 and the areas at medium and high risk of surface water flooding, they would be located within areas that have potential for groundwater flooding to occur at the surface. In any case the wider site is impacted by three different sources of flood risk and as such, triggers the need for a sequential test.
- 5.5.3 In terms of applying the scope of the sequential test, it is considered acceptable to limit this to the White Lund Depot site. As mentioned in the earlier paragraphs, White Lund Depot is the hub for the public realm and community teams for Lancaster City Council. This use is already established and is an important strategic site for providing essential services across the District. The proposed buildings will provide ancillary support to the use and delivery of these services across the site and further afield. Given the functional link between the proposed buildings and the existing operations across the site, there is no reasonable prospect of relocating the buildings off the site.
- 5.5.4 Considering the sequential approach across the site, the buildings would be located outside of Flood Zone 2 and the areas at a medium and high risk of surface water flooding. This is an improvement over the existing arrangement in which some of the existing buildings are located within Flood Zone 2. Most of the site has potential for groundwater flooding to occur at the surface with only a small area to the western edge of the site which is affected by this risk although some of this area is within Flood Zone 2. This only leaves a small parcel of land which is not at risk from flooding and the office building is located within this space. The rest of the land is occupied by car parking and existing buildings/structures and therefore would not be possible to relocate within these areas. Therefore, it is considered that the buildings are located in the most sequentially preferable areas and is considered to pass the test.
- 5.5.5 In terms of the vulnerability classification, the use of the buildings is considered to fall with the 'less vulnerable' use given it will be used for office/general industry. As the site is within Flood Zone 2 an Exception Test is not required.
- 5.5.6 As mentioned above, the buildings are located outside of Flood Zone 2 and should not be at risk from this source of flooding. Although the access to and from the site is through Flood Zone 2, this is already established, and the proposal does not seek to alter this nor should there be any significant changes in terms of volumes of people visiting the site that would see a significant change in risk. The two buildings (welfare building and canteen building) which are at risk of ground water flooding are replacing existing buildings which already are at the same risk. The proposed buildings will not increase this risk. In addition, the buildings are located on existing hardstanding and the site is not close to any identified watercourses and therefore would not have an adverse impact on a watercourse.
- 5.5.7 Due to the sources of flooding across the site, the provision of a soakaway is not a feasible option to deal with surface water whilst the lack of any watercourses in close proximity to the site rules this option out. The site is currently served by the mains sewer and surface water is currently directed towards this. This application will continue this arrangement and considering the similar scale of the replacement buildings, there should not be any significant changes to surface water run-off rates.
- 5.6 **Highways and parking** (NPPF Sections 9 and 12 and; Development Management DPD policies DM29 and DM62)
- 5.6.1 Policy DM29 states that the Council will expect development to incorporate suitable and safe access to the existing highway network whilst paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- 5.6.2 The proposal involves no changes to the access or parking provision within the site and as the scale and size of the buildings is similar to existing, there should not be any significant changes in terms of traffic volume visiting the site.

- 5.6.3 No objection has been raised by Lancashire County Council Highways but have suggested that two conditions relating to the submission of a construction management plan and the restriction of construction deliveries are included on any positive decision notice. Whilst this is acknowledged, these conditions are considered unnecessary when considering the scale and scope of the works. There is extensive hardstanding within the site which allows for ample manoeuvrability for any vehicles and due to the nature of the works, the proposal should not result in excessive amounts of dust and debris that would cause nuisance or disturbance on the surrounding highway network.
- 5.7 **Biodiversity and landscaping** (NPPF Sections 12 and 15 and; Development Management DPD policies DM29 and DM44)
- 5.7.1 Policy DM44 states that the Council will support proposals where the primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity and/or geodiversity or where development proposals provide better opportunities to secure management for the long-term biodiversity and geodiversity enhancement.
- 5.7.2 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for planning applications from 2 April 2024 as a way of creating and improving natural habitats by making sure development has a measurably positive impact ('net gain') on biodiversity. However, this is applicable for planning applications made after 2 April 2024 and as the application was submitted 7 December 2023, this is not applicable.
- 5.7.3 Given the nature and current use of the site, White Lund Depot does not currently offer any real habitats for biodiversity, but the application proposes two areas of landscaping adjacent to two of the proposed buildings in the form of planters. These will be in the form of raised planters providing small trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers which will help to provide small areas of biodiversity and soften the overall appearance of the site. Whilst the scale of the landscaping is relatively minor, it is still considered to weigh in favour of the scheme.

6.0 Conclusion and Planning Balance

- 6.1 The development will provide for improved facilities and office space for the community-based teams within this allocated employment site. The scale and size of the buildings are similar to existing and will not result in any adverse impacts on the visual amenity of the area, neighbouring residential amenity, flood risk or highways. The development will also incorporate a small biodiversity benefit through the placement of planters within the site. Consequently, the application is seen to comply with the development plan when read as a whole and is therefore recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission BE GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

Condition no.	Description	Type
1	Timescales	Standard
2	Development to accord with plans	Standard
3	Implementation of landscaping	Control

Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

Lancaster City Council has made the decision in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The recommendation has been taken having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

Background Papers

None