

Proposed Distribution Park, Ditton

Consultation Statement

Westlink Group Ltd

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Consultation Statement discusses the engagement programme undertaken to inform the preparation of the planning application for a Regional Distribution Centre and additional warehousing at Ditton, Widnes.
- 1.2 Wide ranging consultation has been undertaken by a variety of bodies seeking to engage statutory consultees, local and institutional stakeholders, local businesses and landowners, and the wider community.
- 1.3 This report outlines the range of consultation undertaken; identifies relevant stakeholders consulted as part of the programme; and reports consultation undertaken by the Council on the adopted Halton UDP and Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP) Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The structure of the report is outlined below:
- Section 2 - outlines the approach and methodology of the consultation engagement work undertaken; and
 - Section 3 – summarises the consultation exercises.

2. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 This statement of consultation seeks to explain the consultation undertaken and be as inclusive and transparent as possible.
- 2.2 The consultation for the planning application built upon consultation undertaken as part of a previous planning application on the site for similar proposals (ref: 05/00212/FULEIA) granted on 24 March 2006. That application related to the proposed INNOVIS rail freight park. Westlink Group Limited has since that time purchased the site and has designed an alternative scheme that occupies the same area of land. On the whole the data that was gathered and assessed for the previous INNOVIS application is still valid and relevant for this application. The consultation undertaken to inform those proposals also provides a sound basis for the revised proposals now submitted.
- 2.3 In addition to this scheme specific consultation, the Council has undertaken extensive consultation regarding the principle of the use of the site for rail related freight use. The site was allocated in the Halton Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as part of the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park and underwent the significant and statutory stages of consultation involved in the adoption of the UDP.
- 2.4 Most recently the Council undertook public consultation on the Ditton Rail Strategic Rail Freight Park (DSRFP) Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which supplements the allocation of the site (and wider area) as a Strategic Rail Freight Park in the Halton UDP.
- 2.5 We set out below the approach to consultation undertaken as part of the scheme developed and the Council's SPD consultation by way of indication of the level of public and stakeholder consultation that has been involved.

1 – Stakeholders Consultation

- 2.6 Consultations were undertaken by the relevant consultants as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process to establish the acceptability of the proposals and seek guidance from various statutory and non-statutory consultees. This includes the consultation that was undertaken on the now permitted INNOVIS Ditton planning application and for the revised proposals on the site to provide a Regional Distribution Centre. The format of the consultations included both face-to-face meetings and written scoping exercises.

2.7 Those that have been consulted during this process are identified below:

- Officers from Halton Borough Council including planning, highways, environmental health, emergency response unit, wildlife & conservation,
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Cheshire Fire Brigade
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Cheshire Bat Group
- United Utilities

2.8 This list includes those who were consulted for the Environmental Impact Assessment.

2 – DSRFP SPD Public Consultation

2.9 Prior to the publication and consultation of the Draft Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Park Supplementary Planning Document (DSRFP SPD) the Council consulted a range of statutory and other stakeholders. Those who commented on the draft prior to its publication are listed below:

- Halton Friends of the Earth
- Environment Agency
- English Heritage
- M Wright
- North West Development Agency
- United Utilities
- Halton Borough Council – Highways
- Tessengerlo Group
- Highways Agency

2.10 The comments and the Council's response are contained within the Draft Supplementary Planning Document Statement of Consultation (September 2005) available on the Halton Borough Council website.

2.11 The local public consultation was carried between Thursday 3rd November and Thursday 15th December 2005, for a six week period. Local residents and other stakeholders were invited to comment on the DSRFP SPD.

2.12 The approach undertaken included:

- Notice of SPD Matters and Public Participation
- SPD and associated documents available on the Council's website
- SPD and associated documents available at the following locations:
 - Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes
 - Runcorn Information Centre, Church Street
 - Runcorn Town Hall, Heath Road, Runcorn
 - Halton Direct Link, Rutland House, Halton Lea, Runcorn
 - Widnes Library, Victoria Road, Widnes
 - Halton Lea Library, Runcorn
 - Halton Direct Link, Brook Street, Widnes
 - Ditton Library, Widnes
- Comment sheets were made available to provide opportunity for people to comment on the proposals.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1 This report has demonstrated the consultation that was previously undertaken for the permitted INNOVIS Ditton development and built upon for the proposed Regional Distribution Centre and additional warehousing. It has also been demonstrated that the Council has undertaken extensive consultation establishing the use of the site for rail related freight through both the allocation of the site in the adopted Halton UDP and the consultation exercise on the DSRFP SPD.
- 3.2 The various consultation carried out in order to engage with members of the public, Halton Borough Council, statutory and non-statutory stakeholders has positively shaped the proposals.
- 3.3 The development team and the designers have sought to incorporate consultation feedback into the proposed application throughout the pre-planning process wherever possible and appropriate. Given the scale of the proposals these changes have been numerous and incorporated within the design response.
- 3.4 In conclusion Halton Borough Council can be satisfied that the development team has taken an inclusive and transparent approach to the pre-submission consultation for the proposals, which has had a positive influence in shaping the final planning application.