

**FORMER TESSENDERLO SITE, WIDNES
PROPOSED DISTRIBUTION CENTRE
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
AUGUST 2008**

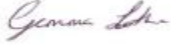


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C O N T E N T S

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT	
Chapter 1	Introduction
Chapter 2	The Design Process
Chapter 3	Use of the Site
Chapter 4	Layout of Development
Chapter 5	Appearance
Chapter 6	Scale of Development
Chapter 7	Drainage and Services
Chapter 8	Access Statement
Chapter 9	Conclusion

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION**Overview**

- 1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by W A Fairhurst and Partners (Fairhurst) on behalf of the Stobart Group. It supports the detailed planning application for a distribution centre at the former Tessengerlo site in Widnes.
- 1.2 The proposal offers the opportunity to remediate a redundant and contaminated former chemical works site, much in need of regeneration. It will contribute towards the regeneration of the area, supporting the Council's objectives to enhance the image of the area and increase its economic viability, through investment and the creation of further employment opportunities.

Proposal

- 1.3 The proposed development will consist of the Phase 1 construction of a modern, purpose built distribution centre and a recycling services unit, with associated service yards, car and vehicle parking, vehicle refuelling and washing facilities, landscaping and all associated engineering operations including the restoration of Marsh Brook. Phase 2 of construction will involve the extension of the distribution centre and the construction of a vehicle maintenance unit (VMU).
- 1.4 The nature and design of the buildings is appropriate. The development will compliment and accord with the surrounding land uses, improving the character and appearance of the area.

Vision

- 1.5 The vision is to provide a modern sustainable distribution centre that will help regenerate the site and the surrounding area. The main benefits of this proposal are:
- § Regeneration of the existing site, supporting the objectives of Halton Borough Council's Mersey Gateway Regeneration Project;
 - § Replacing a vacant and redundant former employment site with a modern sustainable distribution centre;
 - § Generating new employment opportunities through approximately 918 full time and an unspecified number of part time jobs during busy periods;
 - § Helping to support and revitalise the economy of Widnes and the surrounding area, by bringing new investment and employment opportunities to the area, and improving confidence in the local economy encouraging further investment;
 - § Regenerating a derelict, contaminated site to improve its design and appearance, which in turn will enhance the overall character and image of the area; and
 - § Locating employment opportunities in an area with good accessibility, existing infrastructure and public transport links.

2.0 THE DESIGN PROCESS

Physical Context

- 2.1 The site is formed by the redundant Tessengerlo chemicals works and situated approximately 1.5 km to the south west of Widnes Town Centre. The planning application is for the regeneration of the site, which extends to a total area of 21.88 hectares (54.07 acres), and its boundaries are shown on the Site Location Plan 08011_P01.
- 2.2 The site is located on the West Bank Industrial Estate and includes a former chemical works, which now lies derelict and vacant, underused industrial land, redundant open land, the Desoto Road West roundabout, adjoining private access roads and Marsh Brook. The buildings associated with the former chemical works have now been demolished and the site has been left contaminated, vacant and much in need of regeneration.
- 2.3 A distribution centre, as proposed, ensures a viable development that can remediate the land, be compatible with adjoining and similar employment land uses and is considered suitable for the site.
- 2.4 The Mersey Estuary flows along the southern edge of the site. The main routes in and out of Widnes, the A533 Queensway and the main west coast rail line, follow an arc along from the south-east corner to the north-west corner of the site.
- 2.5 Distribution centre development in this location has been permitted by Halton Borough Council since 2006, demonstrating the sites sustainability and suitability. Recently in March 2008, the Stobart Group secured planning permission for a similar development directly to the west of the proposed site, which reaffirms the company's and the Council's commitment to securing new employment development to regenerate the area.
- 2.6 Access to the site is currently taken from a roundabout from Desoto Road West found to the north west of the site. To enhance accessibility, vehicular access will be provided from three main points around the site. The first will be taken from the existing, but improved, roundabout with Desoto Road West to the north of the site. The vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) in Phase 2 will be accessed via this roundabout from Desoto Road. There will also be a new entrance road and junction from Macdermott Road to the south-east of the site, and there will be further access to the employee car park from Macdermott Road to the north east of the site.
- 2.7 The proposed car park will provide approximately 635 no. spaces plus approximately eight disabled parking spaces, for the estimated 918 permanent employees. Provision will also be made for satisfactory levels of motorcycle and cycle parking.

Planning Policy Context

- 2.8 The application site is located within the wider West Bank Industrial Estate. It is allocated as a "Primarily Employment Area" in Policy E3 of Halton's Unitary Development Plan (HUDP) 2005, where employment should be the predominant land use. The proposed development is suitable for this land

allocation which specifies B1 (business), B2 (general industry), B8 (storage and distribution) and Sui Generis industrial uses to be permitted.

- 2.9 The remediation of the site and construction of a distribution centre, is in accordance with the HUDP's objective to improve the environmental quality of these sites, whilst diversifying the economy away from an over dependence on heavy chemical industry.
- 2.10 The full planning policy justification is included in the accompanying Supporting Statement. This statement concludes that the site is suitable for the proposed distribution centre as it complies with national, regional and local policy regarding development of brownfield former industrial sites for employment generating uses.

Project Evolution

- 2.11 The project has evolved from ensuring a viable development that reflects the character of the area and accords with the HUDP. A distribution centre best fulfils this criteria and Stobarts have sought to design the most suitable and efficient distribution centre to take account of the brownfield and contaminated nature of the site, existing site constraints and the abnormal development costs.
- 2.12 The development of the proposal has been discussed with the Council in order to ensure that the uses proposed and design are appropriate, and the development would not be out of character with the surrounding area. Experience of developing the adjoining sites, and the precedent set through the design and favourable determination of these proposals, has been important in guiding this proposal.

3.0 USE OF THE SITE

- 3.1 The site was formerly occupied by the Tessengerlo Chemical Works, and is allocated as a "Primarily Employment Area", by HUDP Policy E3, for predominantly employment uses falling within use classes B1, B2, B8 and Sui Generis uses. The proposal will conform to policy E3, bring a redundant site back into beneficial employment use and will support Halton Borough Council's objectives to regenerate the area and diversify the economy away from the chemical industry.
- 3.2 The proposed development, which will take place in two phases, will have an approximate total floor area of 65,226 sq m (approximately 702,093 sq ft). It will predominantly comprise a distribution centre with surrounding service and storage yards as shown on the Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02 and Phase 2 Site Plan 08011_P03.
- 3.3 A recycling services unit (RSU) is proposed on site, to the south east of the distribution centre, for the recycling of associated paper, cardboard and plastic, and will provide a washing facility for reusable trays. This will be situated within a service yard which will also include vehicle refuelling and vehicle washing facilities. Car parking with 635 spaces, disabled car parking, motor cycle and cycle parking is proposed to the north east of the site.

- 3.4 Phase 2 will include an extension to the distribution centre and the construction of a vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) to be situated to the west of the site.

4.0 LAYOUT OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The aim of the scheme was to bring a redundant contaminated site in one of Halton's "primary employment areas" back into use to create a modern and sustainable distribution centre.
- 4.2 The proposed development supports Halton Borough Council's regeneration objectives for the area with a scheme that will revitalise the local economy and provide new jobs, as well as respecting the nature of the surrounding buildings and character of the area. The proposals will enhance the appearance and improve perceptions of the local area.

Layout

- 4.3 In Phase 1 the distribution centre will have a total floor area of 38,861 sq m with wagon parking to the north of the building. In Phase 2 the building will be extended replacing the wagon parking area to provide distribution centre floorspace of 52,819 sq m. It will be predominantly single storey and rectangular in shape. It will run from the north to the south of the site, with service areas to east and west and an asset storage area to the north as shown on Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02 and Phase 2 Site Plan 08011_P03.
- 4.4 The distribution centre, as shown on Drawings 08011_P04 (Phase 1) and 08011_P05 (Phase 2), has been built for modern day purposes and is designed to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- 4.5 A "goods out yard" will be located along the west side and a "goods in yard" along the east as shown on Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02. Each of these will have associated offices formed as part of the main building. The main reception and mezzanine level, which will provide employee welfare facilities such as locker rooms and toilets, are shown in Drawing 08011_P06 (Phase 1 and 2). These are proposed to the east of the building adjacent to the employee access and parking area.
- 4.6 A "plant room" is to be situated to the south east of the main building, providing technical services for the distribution centre, as shown on Drawings 08011_P04 (Phase 1) and 08011_P06 (Phase 1 and 2).
- 4.7 A service yard is proposed in the south east corner of the site, with access from Macdermott Road to the east. This will provide vehicle washing facilities and a fuel island as shown on Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02. A "recycling services unit" (RSU) will be situated within this yard, for the recycling of associated paper, cardboard and plastic, and will provide a washing facility for reusable trays, as detailed on Drawing 08011_P09.
- 4.8 In phase 2 a vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) will be developed to the west of Marsh Brook.
- 4.9 The proposed car park will provide approximately 635no spaces with approximately 8 disabled parking spaces located in close proximity to the east

of the distribution centre. To the west of the car park nearest the building there will be adequate levels of cycle and motor cycle parking.

- 4.10 Marsh Brook runs from north to south to the west of the distribution centre. Marsh Brook is currently blocked and the water supply will be re-established. Engineering works will restore the culverted channel with new lining and embankments, and new landscaping will enhance the brook as shown on Drawing pl00501. The existing outfall to the River Mersey has collapsed and the outfall pipe will be re-established to tie to the existing headwall at the bank of the River Mersey.

Access

- 4.11 The existing access is taken from a roundabout located at the north-west corner of the site from Desoto Road West. The roundabout also provides access to Desoto Road which accesses land to the west of the site. Desoto Road provides access on to Bush Road which runs diagonally across the site from the north-west corner to the south east. The roundabout provides access on to Macdermott Road which leads east along the eastern perimeter of the site. Macdermott Road joins to Vickers Road which forms the south boundary to the site. Desoto, Bush, and Macdermott Road are all private highways controlled by the Stobart Group.
- 4.12 The existing roundabout will be upgraded and improved to facilitate safe and efficient access/egress. As shown on Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02 and Phase 2 Site Plan 08011_P03, supplier vehicles will access and exit the site via the improved roundabout with Desoto Road West to the north of the site. Goods/clients vehicles will exit the site by this route however they will enter the site via a new entrance road and junction onto Macdermott Road to the south-east of the site. This will also provide access to the RSU and service yards with vehicle washing and refuelling facilities. Access and exit to the site to the employee parking will be from Macdermott Road at the north-east of the site. The Phase 2 VMU, situated in the west of the site, will be accessed from Desoto Road via the existing roundabout to the north west of the site.
- 4.13 A pedestrian walk way is located alongside Macdermott Road leading to the car park entrance which is found at the north east corner of the site. A bus lay-by/drop off point is situated to the north of the car park near the car park entrance with a pedestrian crossing to cross the road at this point. This will allow pedestrians to access the site and buildings safely.

Parking

- 4.14 Approximately 635 employee car parking spaces and approximately 8 disabled spaces will be provided to the north-east of the site with access taken from Macdermott Road in the north of the site. There will also be adequate provisions for motorcycle and cycle parking adjacent to the main car park as shown on Phase 2 Site Plan 08011_P03.

5.0 APPEARANCE**Visual and Architectural Appearance**

- 5.1 The appearance of the site will reflect the area's character and land allocation in the HUDP as a "primarily employment area". A previously redundant area of employment land will be transformed into a modern and sustainable employment-generating site. The buildings have been sympathetically designed so that they are in keeping with and enhance the surrounding character of the area through the regeneration of the site.
- 5.2 The buildings are purpose built with a modern appearance and will be constructed from Kingspan white wall cladding, with docking points along the east and west elevations of the main distribution centre. The distribution centre has a mezzanine level and main entrance to the east elevation.

Boundary Treatment and Landscaping

- 5.3 Marsh Brook forms the western boundary to the distribution centre. This watercourse is to be reconstructed and landscaped as part of the proposal as shown on Drawing pl00501. New planting will include trees, shrubs, wildflowers and amenity grass. This will have visual and environmental benefits for the site and effectively screen the site from the west. Existing planting will screen the site to the south and from the Trans Pennine Trail running adjacent to the River Mersey.
- 5.4 The boundary treatment has been considered as part of the design process. The site of the distribution centre has to be secured to prevent unauthorised access and ensure security and this is achieved through a 2.9m high galvanised steel palisade fence.
- 5.5 The existing and new planting will effectively screen the site and boundary treatment from the south and east. From the north and east the site is viewed in the context of the industrial estate and existing palisade fencing.

6.0 SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.0 The scale of the development has been heavily influenced by an international retailer's requirements for a large scale distribution centre, the surrounding context and the nature of development in the area. The current and former uses of the surrounding industrial area set a precedent within which the proposed development will fit comfortably. The site is considered to be an appropriate location for development on this scale, and it is believed the development will enhance the overall character of the area. The size and scale of the proposed development at the Tessengerlo site is in keeping with the surrounding built environment.

Quantum of Development

- 6.1 The proposed development will create a total floor space of 49,405 sq m in Phase 1, increasing to 65,226 sq m in Phase 2. The distribution centre or "fresh DC" will have a Phase 1 area of 38,861 sq m, which will be extended to 52,819 sq m in Phase 2 (80%). The recycling services unit (RSU) will have a

floor space area of 10,544 sq m (16%) and the Phase 2 vehicle maintenance unit (VMU) will have a floor space of 1,863 sq m (3%).

Size and Heights

- 6.2 The distribution centre is 8.15 metres high to the parapet with a total height of 10.4 metres to the ridge as shown on Drawings 08011_P06. On the east elevation, the technical services block (6.74m) and the goods in office pod (5.20m) are both lower. The first floor mezzanine facility has a height of 12.80m. On the west elevation the goods out office pod (5.175m) is lower than the distribution centre and the battery charging pod is higher at 8.55 metres.
- 6.3 The RSU, as shown on Drawing P10, has an east elevation height of 8.15 metres and a west elevation height of 9.04 metres. The height of the ridge is 10.36 metres which is the maximum height of the building.
- 6.4 The VMU is 8.65 metres high to the parapet with a total height of 10.25 metres high to the ridge as shown on Drawing 08011_P14.
- 6.5 The development has been designed so that the height of buildings are in keeping with surrounding buildings. The development will have no over bearing or negative impact on the surrounding landscape as the roof lines will reflect surrounding buildings and the character of the area.

7.0 DRAINAGE AND SERVICES

Drainage

- 7.1 Surface water from the development will discharge to the newly reconstructed Marsh Brook to provide clean dilution waters and help improve water quality. The brook will then discharge directly into the River Mersey by re-establishing the existing outfall which has collapsed. The surface water drainage system has been designed and tested, through hydraulic modelling, for combined fluvial and tidal scenarios and it is concluded that the site will not flood as the flood flows would be retained in the bank. There will be some rainwater harvesting for the distribution centre which can use such water for the refrigeration plant.
- 7.2 Foul effluent will discharge into the existing system on Macdermott Road and will not result in the discharges that previously arose from the past use of the land as a chemical works.

Services

- 7.3 The site will be provided with adequate water, gas, electricity and foul water drainage services all of which will be taken from existing systems.

8.0 ACCESS STATEMENT

- 8.1 The proposed development needs to be assessed having regard to proposed operations for the site. The proposal has been designed to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the distribution centre whilst ensuring safe

pedestrian and vehicle access to the site and existing highway safety. A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, which addresses these issues, accompany the application.

Movement To and Through the Site

- 8.2 Supplier vehicles will access and exit the site via the existing roundabout with Desoto Road West to the north of the site. These vehicles then enter the “goods in yard” on the east side of the distribution centre and leave via the same route. This yard provides approximately 93no goods in trailer parking spaces, as shown on Phase 1 Site Plan 08011_P02 and Phase 2 Site Plan 08011_P03. These arrangements will prevent vehicles waiting or queuing on the highway.
- 8.3 Goods/clients vehicles will enter the site via a new entrance road from Vickers Road, to the south of the site. These vehicles will then enter the “goods out yard”, situated to the west of the main building where approximately 62no goods out trailer parking spaces, 70no tractor parking spaces and 60no goods out dock pods are proposed. These vehicles will exit the site via the existing roundabout to the north of the site.
- 8.4 Access and exit to the site for employees will be from Macdermott Road to the north-east of the site, into the employee car park which provides approximately 635no spaces and approximately 8 disabled parking spaces. There will also be adequate cycle and motor cycle parking. Employees will access the distribution centre at this point via the goods in yard. In the north-of the car park there will be a drop off point with the potential for a bus lay by. A pedestrian crossing will be provided to allow safe crossing for pedestrians.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposal has successfully taken account of the requirements of the site’s intended use and the regeneration needs of the area, and created a layout that effectively addresses all these issues.
- 9.2 The site has been designed in order to achieve a satisfactory and viable development which maximises operational efficiency and visibility, and makes best use of the site through its remediation and re-use.
- 9.3 The design and layout provide a modern and sustainable distribution centre which will lead regeneration in the area by improving the appearance of a formerly redundant and derelict site, whilst creating a development in keeping with the areas industrial character and current land use allocation as set out in the HUDP.
- 9.4 It is considered that the proposed layout and buildings deliver a high standard of design appropriate to the location, are well related to the site and surroundings and do not adversely impact on nearby development. The proposal promotes good design and enhances the area’s environment by maximising the reuse of a redundant, previously developed site.
- 9.5 This statement justifies the development at the Tessengerlo site by explaining the rationale and actions behind the design. The design has been critically

assessed throughout which has secured a viable, achievable and acceptable development.

9.6 As a result, the redevelopment of the Tessengerlo site will result in significant benefits including:

- § Development of a previously developed, brownfield site which is currently a wasted resource;
- § A derelict and contaminated environment, through the legacy of the chemical industry, transformed into a safe, employment generating area;
- § Making the best use of existing infrastructure and facilities due to its close proximity to Widnes town centre and the main routes in and out of Widnes;
- § Supporting and revitalising the economy of Widnes by attracting inward investment into the area, therefore promoting the area for the location of further new businesses;
- § Provide significant new investment in the site and area, building further confidence in the local economy;
- § Bring back into use an important employment site for Widnes which will create approximately 918 permanent new jobs, plus an unspecified number of part time jobs during busy periods, as well as associated construction and other related work;
- § Be in keeping with the industrial and commercial character of the surrounding area and have no significant adverse impact on adjoining land or occupiers; and
- § Regenerate the site to improve the design and appearance of the site, which will in turn enhance the overall character and image of the area.

9.7 It is considered that the proposal is acceptable in all respects and accords with overriding planning policy emphasis at all levels. It is therefore requested that Halton Borough Council consider the information provided and recommend approval of the planning application.