



Report Reference Number: P/18/1

Agenda Item No: 7

To: Planning Committee
Date: 6 June 2018
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Lead Officer: Martin Grainger, Head of Planning

Title: Gascoigne Wood Rail Freight Interchange

Summary:

This report is part of an ongoing pre-application process for a potentially significant development at the former Gascoigne Wood Colliery site off New Lennerton Lane, Sherburn in Elmet. The proposals are still evolving, but have reached a point where public consultation has commenced and a dialogue with Members and their preliminary, without prejudice, thoughts on the underlying principles to be presented by the potential applicants are now sought.

Recommendation:

That Members consider the contents of this report and the applicant's further presentation on 6 June 2018, and offer preliminary thoughts on the draft proposals as part of an ongoing pre-application process.

Reasons for recommendation

The National Planning Policy Framework identifies that pre-application engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community.

A Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) is in place between this Council and the potential applicants – Harworth Estates Investments Ltd. Its purpose is to assure all Partners that they are in agreement as to the manner in which the Project is being taken forward and to enable pre-application and application determination costs to be identified.

1.0 Background

1.1 The applicants' planning consultants will provide further background to this project as part of their presentation.

1.2 By way of introduction the PPA defines the Project Vision as:

“The Gascoigne Rail Freight Interchange Development Site is a significant asset within Selby District and represents an excellent opportunity for the delivery of strategically important employment development of regional significance. Such development would make a significant contribution to the Council’s future employment needs and serve the needs of the wider region. By utilising a mix of the green field and brownfield site, 2,000,000 square feet of new development can be provided.

The varied nature of the site provides the opportunity to develop a mix of employment uses and sizes with associated storage areas. The proposed site wide strategy has the potential to deliver an outline planning permission for 2,000,000 square feet of new B2/B8 development with ancillary B1 floorspace, together with associated marshalling/container storage area, ancillary storage areas and quasi employment uses. The precise number of units and specific sizes as well as any phasing will be determined through detailed planning applications, however it is intended to be a manufacturing led facility making use of the existing unique rail infrastructure opportunity.

A draft concept masterplan has been developed for the site as an early indication of how the site may be developed...”

- 1.3 All parties to the PPA are agreed that the objective is to encourage and deliver a manufacturing activity on the site which will take advantage of, actively use and retain the rare, significant rail infrastructure which is a local, regional and national asset. Selby is one of three Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges in the North and there are aspirations to link such parks to maximise efficiencies on the road and rail networks and the opportunity presented through maximising the use of the exiting rail access. This will help to reduce the volume of HGV movements on the network and add to the sustainability of the location.
- 1.4 The scheme also recognises that utilising the existing access to the rail network also has the potential for wider opportunities for distribution from that network (subject to capacity on the network), including excellent access to local and national ports and the opportunities for importing and exporting that they provide.

2.0 Site context

- 2.1 The development site area extends to approximately 102ha (252 acres) and includes land which was the former Gascoigne Wood Selby Coalfield reception, preparation and despatch site - using the Selby to Leeds railway line which dissects the southern part of the site east to west. This former Gascoigne Wood site extends to approximately 59ha. The part of the site to the north of the former mine site is open agricultural land, effectively between the mine site and the Sherburn aerodrome and Sherburn Enterprise Parks. The site is approximately 2 miles south of Sherburn in Elmet and 5 miles west of Selby.
- 2.2 The Sherburn Aero Club is the immediate neighbour to the north and west, there having been an airfield here since the early 1900’s. Beyond is the Sherburn Enterprise Park and the consented outline site for ‘S2’ to its east (for 1.25m sq ft of B1/B2 and B8 floorspace). The nearest residence is Lennerton Farm to the north and there are several scattered houses to the south along Common Lane and to the north along Bishopdyke Road.

- 2.3 Planning permission was granted by the Secretary of State in August 2007 for the retention and reuse of suitable buildings on the site and the continued use of the rail sidings – following the decision in 2001 by the former UK Coal to close the whole of the Selby Mines Complex. Today, parts of the site and retained buildings are in use in accordance with that consent for wholly or mainly rail related uses and are thus brownfield. The remainder of the site is currently in agricultural use and almost abuts the S2 site to the north. It will be important to explore opportunities to link both sites to develop a sense of ‘place’ and to maximise opportunities for cycle and pedestrian movement between the two sites and beyond to Sherburn in Elmet.
- 2.4 Members will also be aware of the other major development consents or proposals in the area. These are the S2 consent where there has been a commencement on the outline scheme most recently approved in June 2016 for 1.25 m sq ft of B1/B2/B8 floor space. The first reserved matters application is expected to be submitted in the near future. Furthermore members considered earlier this year a pre application presentation about the potential for the creation of a commercial film making hub and creative studios (up to 700,000 sq ft (70,000 sq m) total floor space at Church Fenton. An application for this development is expected shortly. Appendix A showing all of these locations is attached.

3.0 Joint working

- 3.1 There has been pre-application engagement since October 2017 and the Steering Group and Project Groups set up with applicants and the County Council (as part of *Better Together*) has provided a common understanding of the scheme and enabled the likely impacts of the development to be scoped in broad terms. Additional meetings are now proposed to refine the scope of the various technical issues further. The PPA reinforces this collaborative working.
- 3.2 A Visioning Document to identify Questions and Expectations in respect of the vision for the site and place-making is in place which will act as a background document so that any planning application will demonstrate how these topics have been addressed and considered (Appendix D). In addition, a Planning Position Statement has been prepared to set out the relevant history of the site and the extent to which the Minister’s 2007 consent has been implemented.

4.0 Application

- 4.1 Although there is an implemented rail related consent for part of the site, overall the scheme is an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) application and will be contrary to the development plan. The need for EIA was determined through a publically available Screening Request issued in March 2018. Any application will thus be accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES) to seek to address potential traffic, noise and landscape impacts; such applications have particular publicity and determination periods. However, the PPA takes the determination period outside of prescribed targets; presently an outline application is anticipated to be submitted at the end of June and latest Planning Committee target would be the October cycle.
- 4.2 On a clear without prejudice basis, detailed discussions are about to start to identify the detail of any application and the nature of any draft planning conditions on any approval, informed by that detail, and the requirement or otherwise for planning obligations under s.106 of the Act to be sought.

- 4.3 The present draft schedule of accommodation anticipates up to 192,000sq m (~ 2,100,000 sq ft) of principally industrial (B2 and B8) floorspace with a smaller percentage of office and other ancillary uses. Although the details sufficient to accompany an outline application are still being put together, the location of the site and its interrelationships and opportunities for connections with its neighbours and other uses will be key concepts to embrace and the Visioning document attached as Appendix D recognises that the site can have that role. Amongst the particular areas to address are the connectivity of the site in order to provide and facilitate alternative forms of transport and give priority to public transport. The Visioning document, for example, recognises that the physical linkages with the existing Enterprise Park and S2 will be explored and the layout must not preclude their future evolution.
- 4.4 In addition, the application will seek to address the facilities on the site for existing and future employees and through public access to the managed and reclaimed woodland. Existing and proposed green corridors where parts of the latter can have dual functions as swales and amenity space will seek to assist assimilation of any development into the area to act as both a wildlife/ biodiversity location but also recreation and access to land within the applicant's control.
- 4.5 The approach of the likely submission of an outline application supported by a robust Masterplan which may then form part of any approval is being sought and is supported by officers. This will seek to ensure that the wider context of the site in terms of factors such as design, strategic landscaping, landscape impacts from wider view points and locations (including views into the site from the rail line), access and infrastructure requirements will be considered. In this way the opportunities for any necessary highways and infrastructure improvements can be addressed by the approach of working together and in encouraging this front loaded pre-application process. A draft indicative Site Layout is included as Appendix C.

5.0 Issues

- 5.1 In considering this pre application presentation, members may wish to comment on the following issues;
- Is the principle of development for employment purposes at Gascoigne Wood as a rail based Interchange supported?
 - Should opportunities to maximise the use of the rail network be sought?
 - What links should be created to S2 and Sherburn in Elmet?(for example, footpaths/cycle ways)
 - Should wider reasonable opportunities be taken to maximise public transport links for all three sites in this area of the District via bus and rail?
 - What opportunities could be taken to generate employment and training opportunities for local people perhaps involving local institutions such as Selby College?
 - Opportunities for green and amenity space with investigation of wider public access and other necessary infrastructure enhancements

6.0 Legal Issues

- 6.1 Any requirements for a planning obligation that has the ability to address a variety of issues including the potential for offsite highway works, cycle / footpath links, support for public transport and training opportunities are already being discussed on a without prejudice basis.

Financial Issues

- 6.2 Pre-application engagement costs are addressed in the PPA in line with normal practice and the County Council's costs over and above statutory consultee responsibilities can be provided for.

Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The process of pre-application engagement although necessary and good practice is in the spirit of cooperation and to seek solutions on a without prejudice basis. The 2005 application which led to the call-in and determination by the Secretary of State as a result of third party involvement suggests that this proposal, although now in the public domain as a result of the Screening Opinion is likely to attract significant public interest.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Members' preliminary thoughts are sought following the presentation.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Site Context Plan

Appendix B – Site Location Plan

Appendix C - Early Draft Site Layout

Appendix D – Agreed Visioning Document