

A planning application by Prologis UK Limited for a single rail served storage and distribution facility at **HBC Field, Halebank Road, Widnes**

Environmental Statement

Volume 1 | Reports and Figures

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background

- 1.1.1 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared by a specialist consultancy team on behalf of Prologis UK Ltd in support of a detailed planning application for the development of a single storage and distribution building on the HBC Field site, Widnes.
- 1.1.2 The proposed site is located within part of the wider development known as the 3MG Mersey Multimodal Gateway. The Gateway is a public and private sector partnership which, when complete, will provide up to 3.5 million square feet of warehousing, 5,000 new jobs and the reclamation of 200 acres of contaminated land. The master plan for 3MG was adopted by Halton Borough Council in 2004
- 1.1.3 The HBC Field site is located in the western sector of The Gateway Masterplan to the south of both the A562 Speke Road and West Coast Mainline (Liverpool spur). Rail access to the site forms part of this application. The location of the site is shown at Figure 1.1.
- 1.1.4 The application site currently comprises amenity grassland; grassland meadow; recent tree planting; two newly formed mounds providing visual impact mitigation; two newly formed ponds and a footpath/cycleway linking Hale Bank Road to the existing highway infrastructure. Much of this implemented work is the result of planning application 07/00336/HBCFUL approved on 30th July 2007 and is proposed to be retained and, where possible, enhanced as part of this application.
- 1.1.5 To the west of the site, as identified by the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), is an area of green belt and proposed green open space. To the east is the existing Hale Bank residential community. Land to the south includes areas of specific landscape value and further green belt.
- 1.1.6 The proposal is for the construction of a single storage and distribution unit of about 1 million sq ft floorspace, together with extensive landscaping and associated infrastructure. The full details of the proposal are set out in Chapter 2. The application relates to and will be integrated with existing planning permissions for rail sidings and a new link road which will serve the application site.

1.2 The Requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment

1.2.1 The ES has been prepared to comply with the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (“1999 Regulations”). The ES has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations and in particular Schedule 4, which sets out the information for inclusion within an ES.

1.2.2 The ES is required to include information referred to in Part II of Schedule 4:

1. A description of the development, comprising information on the site, design and size of the development.
2. A description of the measures envisaged in order to avoid, reduce and if possible remedy significant adverse effects.
3. The data required to identify and assess the main effects which the development is likely to have on the environment.
4. An outline of the main alternatives studied and an indication of the main reasons for the choice, taking into account the environmental effects.
5. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 4 of this Part.

1.2.3 In addition, the ES includes information referred to in Part I of Schedule 4 as is reasonably required to assess the environmental effects of the development and which the applicant can, having regard in particular to current knowledge and methods of assessment, reasonably be required to compile. Schedule 4 Part I states that the ES must include:

- 1) Description of the development, including in particular –
 - (a) a description of the physical characteristics of the whole development and the land-use requirements during the construction and operational phases;
 - (b) a description of the main characteristics of the production processes, for instance, nature and quantity of the materials used;
 - (c) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (water, air and soil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation, etc.) resulting from the operation of the proposed development.
- 2) An outline of the main alternatives studied by the applicant or appellant and an indication of the main reasons for his choice, taking into account the environmental effects.

- 3) A description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the development, including in particular, population, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, including the architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the inter-relationship between the above factors.
- 4) A description of the likely significant effects of the development on the environment, which should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the development, resulting from:
 - (d) the existence of the development;
 - (e) the use of natural resources;
 - (f) the emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste,
 and the description by the applicant of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects on the environment.
- 5) A description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment.
- 6) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the paragraphs 1 to 5 of this Part.
- 7) An indication of any difficulties (technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered by the applicant in compiling the required information.

1.2.4 Each environmental issue has been considered in the following broad way:

- A description of baseline conditions.
- A description of the Project design proposals.
- A description of the likely significant effects of the Project resulting from:
 - (g) the existence of the Project;
 - (h) the use of natural resources;
 - (i) the emission of pollutants, the creation of nuisances and the elimination of waste.
- A description of cumulative effects.
- Mitigation envisaged to address any significant adverse effects is listed.

1.3 Scope and Content of the ES

1.3.1 A scoping application was made to Halton Borough Council and detailed responses were received from a range of consultees. The Borough agreed that subject to the comments of consultees, the scope of the ES was appropriate. The agreed topic areas to be covered in the ES are:

- Development proposal
- Planning policy
- Socio-economic effects
- Landscape and visual effects
- Ecology and nature conservation
- Contaminated land
- Land use and soils
- Flood risk
- Water resources and drainage
- Noise and vibration
- Air quality
- Historic environment
- Lighting
- Transportation
- Cumulative effects

1.4 Consultation and baseline information

1.4.1 A wide range of organisations have been consulted during the application preparation. Because of the long standing planning policy framework for the 3MG area and the application process for the three related extant planning permissions, the environmental issues associated with the area have been investigated and discussed with all appropriate bodies.

1.4.2 The process of establishing a planning framework for the 3MG area began in 1999 and has included a range of policy documents, studies and masterplans. These have been through extensive public consultation and have been adopted and adjusted accordingly.

1.4.3 Public consultation on this planning application has been undertaken via extensive leaflet drop to all households in the area together with a formal public exhibition which took place on the 27th June 2011. The consultation provided members of the public with the opportunity to comment on the proposals. The application is accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement which explains the details of the work undertaken and the comments received.

1.4.4 The baseline studies have evolved over a long period of time as a result of the masterplan work at the site and more recently the preparation and submission of the related application for the access, sidings and landscape. The results of the studies which are given in each ES chapter and where appropriate copied in the relevant Appendices, have been used to inform the design process.

1.5 Predicted effects

1.5.1 Baseline studies were conducted and the results used to inform the design process. Details of these studies are given in subsequent ES Chapters, and where appropriate, copies of the surveys are included within the appendices accompanying this ES.

1.5.2 Significant environmental effects are assessed by accepted methods as applicable. In cases such as visual resources, where the effects cannot be scientifically measured, specific criteria and thresholds have been used in accordance with published guidance. The potential effects of the proposed development are predicted by an assessment of the interaction of the proposals with the baseline conditions. In general the likely significant environmental effects of the proposed development are considered in terms of whether they are:

- beneficial or adverse;
- direct;
- short, medium or long term;
- temporary or permanent;
- primary or secondary, and
- cumulative.

1.5.3 Cumulative effects may be broadly defined as the effects of the proposed development when assessed cumulatively in the context of other future projects. They may result from:

- temporary or permanent effects;
- the interaction of different effects over time;
- a number of effects at different locations, not necessarily significant individually, but which collectively may constitute a significant effect;