

PLANNING APPLICATION NUMBER:P06/0363

Type of approval sought	Full Planning Permission
Ward	Halesowen North
Applicant	St Modwen Properties Plc
Location:	PLOT F2, COOMBSWOOD, HALESOWEN
Proposal	ERECTION OF 4 NO. TWO STOREY OFFICE UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND ACCESS
Recommendation Summary:	APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

1. The application site is on the corner of Coombs Road and Steel Park Road – Steel Park Road is one of the estate roads which lead into a large industrial estate, the former site of the British Steel works. The character of the area is formed by the predominance of industrial and office uses, including existing office blocks on the opposite of Steelpark Road.
2. The site area is 6933 square metres. There is a difference in levels of approximately 10 metres from the Coombs Road frontage to the eastern boundary of the site (an estate road running parallel to Steelpark Road). The site has recently been regarded to form a central plateau section. There is an

electricity sub station within the site near to the Coombs Road frontage, and a gas monitoring station near the centre of the site. There is a densely vegetated area adjacent to that station and landscaping on the Coombs Road frontage.

PROPOSAL

- 3 The proposal is a full application for 4 no. 2 storey office blocks arranged around a proposed access road off Steelpark Road, with parking areas adjoining each block.
- 4 The two monitoring stations are shown as being retained, as is the densely vegetated area in the central/eastern part of the site. Landscaping is shown illustratively around the edges of the site.
- 5 Three of the office blocks are shown split into two office units, with one block (Unit 1) shown as a single office. The blocks are of a similar design – 2 storey (approximately 9 metres to ridge height), with a pitched roof and of brick construction (contrasting bricks) with slate grey roof tiles. The paired offices are shown with a projecting subsidiary gable at the entrance. The single office block is shown with a projecting element with a side entrance under a roof overhang.
- 6 The layout plans shows proposed retaining walls around Unit 4 in the northern part of the site and between the parking area to Unit 2 and the gas monitoring station. Slopes throughout the

site are shown to be regarded and reinforced. Cross Sections have been produced to show the effect of this.

- 7 The applicants have submitted a supporting statement. This states that the development is so arranged to create an integral area of activity around the central core of the development and that landscaping will provide areas of recreational activity for the users of the building and enhance the surrounding environment.
- 8 The layout plans have been amended to address comments originally made by the Head of Traffic and Road Safety on the scheme.

HISTORY

- 9 The relevant planning history is set out in the table below

APPLICATION No.	PROPOSAL	DECISION	DATE
96/50087	Outline – demolition of existing buildings and development of land for Class B1 (to include office use not exceeding 10 % of gross floorspace), B2 and B8 Employment uses and a public house/restaurant.	Approved	7/02/1997
P05/0027	Earthworks to create a plateau for the future development of the site	Approved	10/03/05

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

10 No representations received.

OTHER CONSULTATION

- 11 **Head of Traffic and Road Safety (HTRS):** on the plans as originally submitted, had concerns about the access and parking layout, and also the lack of sections (to show levels across the site). The applicants have sought to address those concerns by providing sections and an amended layout plan. In addition, HTRS recommended that a Travel Plan be submitted for approval.
- 12 **Head of Environmental Protection (HEP)** – contaminated land - recommend conditions on contaminated land and soil gases. No adverse comments on the potential for the generation of noise and disturbance.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 13 The site is within a Key Industrial Area. On this, and other relevant material considerations, the following Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies are relevant:-
 - DD1 (Urban Design)
 - DD5 (development in industrial areas)
 - DD6 (access and transport infrastructure)
 - AM11 (cycling)
 - AM14 (parking)
 - AM16 (travel plans)

EE1 (Key Industrial Areas and sites)

EE4 (office development)

ASSESSMENT

14 *Principle of an office use*

Policy EE4 states that office uses should be encouraged within existing town centres. Policy EE1 excludes B1 office uses from the list of uses considered appropriate on Key Industrial sites.

15 Notwithstanding this, although this is not a Reserved Matters application on the back of the 1998 Outline permission, that previous permission is still considered relevant. This is particularly with respect to the proportion of office floorspace which was considered acceptable at that time across the wider site (10 %). Subsequent, detailed applications for incremental office development have used this figure as a benchmark.

16 On this, the information offered by the applicants, is that the total (existing and proposed) office floorspace across the whole site is just below 10 % (9.93%).

17 Given the above, whereas ordinarily from a planning policy perspective, B1 (a) office development as a primary land use within Key Industrial areas/ sites would usually be resisted,

special circumstances have been shown to exist whereby the Council should reasonably be more flexible in this regard.

18 Access and parking

I consider that the amended layout plan has satisfactorily addressed the initial concern raised by the HTRS. This has involved the re-positioning of parking bays, including siting the disabled bays closer to the entrances of the units, repositioning the cycle bays to enable them to be more overlooked and linked to the buildings by pathways, providing visibility splays and road gradients, and the provision of a parking space for powered two wheelers.

19 The applicants have also investigated the possibility of providing a separate vehicular access off Coombs Road to Unit 4, but have dismissed this option due to the difference in levels – HTRS concur with this view.

20 The recommendation of HTRS to require a Travel Plan has also been taken forward. This is given the out of centre location and that the Local Planning Authority has been consistent in requiring such plans for development at this location.

21 Design and layout

Policy DD5 of the UDP, inter alia, states that industrial development proposals should seek to maintain or enhance the character and environmental quality of the area in terms of scale, design and intensity of use.

- 22 It is considered that the proposed units are similar in design, helping to unify the development. The materials and scale of development is also similar to the recently constructed offices elsewhere on the wider site, including on the opposite side of Steelpark Road.
- 23 It is considered that the revised layout in providing enhanced pedestrian circulation and conceptualised landscaping helps to integrate the development and provides for a green setting bolstering the existing landscaping around the fringes of the site.
- 24 I therefore consider that, with the revisions, the proposed layout and design to be broadly acceptable pending the submission of further details, for instance on landscaping and materials, to be submitted for approval.

CONCLUSION

25 Although the proposal is for office development in an out of centre Key Industrial Area, extenuating circumstances exist, which, coupled with recommended conditions, inter alia, to promote sustainability, enable the proposal to be looked on positively.

RECOMMENDATION

26 It is recommended that permission be **granted** subject to the conditions as set out below.

Reason for approval

Although the proposal is for office development in an out of centre Key Industrial Area, extenuating circumstances exist, which, coupled with recommended conditions, inter alia, to promote sustainability, enable the proposal to be looked on positively. There is therefore compliance with the development plan, in particular policies DD5 and EE1 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Conditions and/or reasons:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

2. Unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, this permission relates to the plans reference:- AL(0)021; AP(0)007 – Q; AP(0)008 – A; AP(0)009 – A; AP(0)010; AP(0)011 - D; AP(0)012 – D; AP(0)013 – A; AP(0)014; AS(0)052.
3. Development shall not begin until details of the type, texture and colour of materials to be used in external elevations have been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be constructed using the approved materials.
4. Development shall not begin until a comprehensive written site investigation strategy (in a form to be agreed by the local planning authority), has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Such a strategy shall facilitate the identification of contaminants and permit the risk based assessment of the development site. Where the investigations identify the presence of contamination, development shall not begin until a scheme to protect the development from the effects of such contamination has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Such a scheme shall: include provisions for validation monitoring & sampling; be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is first occupied; and be retained throughout the lifetime of the development.
5. Development shall not begin until a comprehensive written site investigation strategy (in a form to be agreed by the local planning authority), has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Such a strategy shall facilitate the identification of methane & carbon dioxide. Where the investigations identify the presence of methane and/or carbon dioxide the development shall not begin until a scheme to protect the development from the effects of such gases has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Such a scheme shall: include provisions for validation monitoring & sampling; be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development

is first occupied; and be retained throughout the lifetime of the development.

6. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced until a scheme for the provision of foul and surface water drainage works has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage works shall be completed in accordance with the details and timetable agreed.
7. No part of the development shall be occupied until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. That Plan shall include details of a Travel Plan Co-ordinator, a staff travel survey, walking and cycling initiatives, public transport initiative, publicity and marketing, set targets and monitoring, and to join Company Travel wise in Dudley, together with a timetable for the implementation of each element.
8. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until the areas shown for car parking on the approved plans have been graded, levelled, surfaced, drained, with drainage details to be approved under the terms of Condition 7 attached to this permission, and marked out, and that area shall not thereafter be used for any purpose other than the parking of vehicles.
9. No development shall commence until a landscape scheme, including boundary treatment, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The landscaping shall be implemented in accordance with a timetable to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority.
10. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the details of landscaping approved in accordance with Condition 10 shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development whichever is the sooner, and any tree, hedgerows or plants contained in the approved planting scheme which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting

season with others of similar size and species, unless the local planning authority gives consent to any variation.

11. Development shall not begin until details of the existing and proposed levels of the site, which should be related to those of adjoining land and highways, have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.
12. Details of the proposed retaining walls adjacent to the site boundary shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before development is commenced and the development shall not be occupied until the retaining walls have been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.
13. Details of the proposed retaining walls within the site shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before development is commenced and the development shall not be occupied until the retaining walls have been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

