



Royal Mail Group

UNIT 1, SKETCHLEY MEADOWS, HINCKLEY

Planning Statement





Royal Mail Group

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Planning Statement

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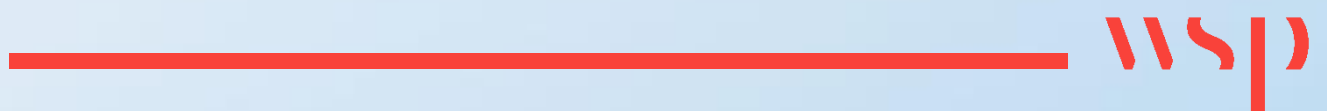
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1

INTRODUCTION



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Royal Mail Group (the applicant) in support of a planning application submitted to Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council at Sketchley Meadows Industrial Estate, to facilitate the relocation of the existing Royal Mail Delivery Office (DO), currently located in Hinkley Town Centre.

1.1.2. The application is seeking full planning permission for the:

“Change of use of existing building from general industrial building to B8 warehouse/storage and distribution use, minor external alterations, erection of perimeter fencing and reconfiguration of existing vehicle parking areas.”

1.1.3. The purpose of this statement is to demonstrate that the development complies with the relevant policies in the Development Plan, having regard to other material planning considerations.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

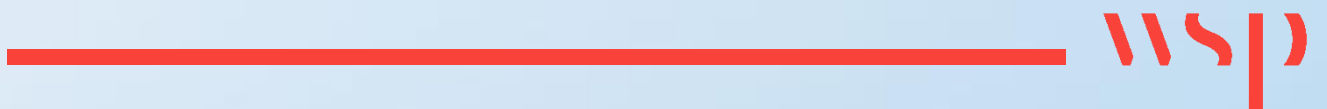
1.1.4. This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 sets out the site context and its surroundings;
Section 3 details the relevant planning history associated with the application site;
- Section 4 outlines the proposed development;
- Section 5 sets out the relevant planning policies at a local and national level;
- Section 6 provides the case for development and explains why the principle of development is acceptable; and
- Section 7 sets out the planning balance and conclusions.

1.1.5. This Planning Statement concludes that planning permission should be granted as the application complies with all relevant aspects of the Development Plan, the NPPF, and all other material considerations.

2

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS



2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1.1. Sketchley Meadows Industrial Estate, Burbage, Hinckley, LE10 3EN, is situated 3 miles south of Hinckley Town Centre and is adjacent to the A5 trunk road, providing direct access to Junction 2 of the M69. This estate constitutes part of a wider industrial area that also includes Logix Park and the Hinckley Park development at the M69 / A5 Interchange. Hinckley itself, is an important industrial location within the Golden Triangle, equidistant between Leicester and Coventry.
- 2.1.2. As seen in Figure 1 below, the application site itself is an existing warehouse building, located within the western part of the Sketchley Meadows Industrial Estate and forms part of a larger warehouse unit. There is a roller shutter door on the northern elevation, with staff/visitor entrance doors and windows on the southern elevation.

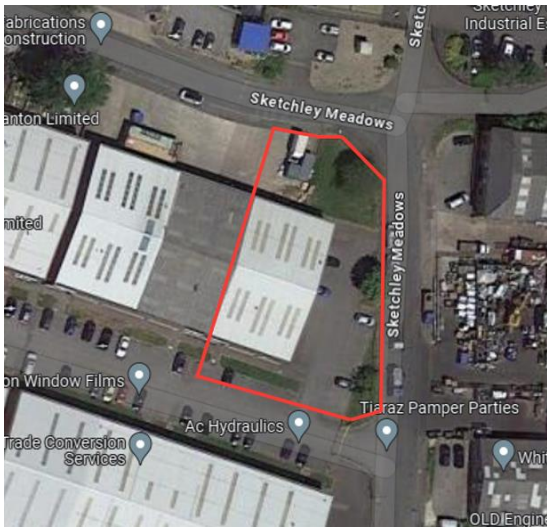
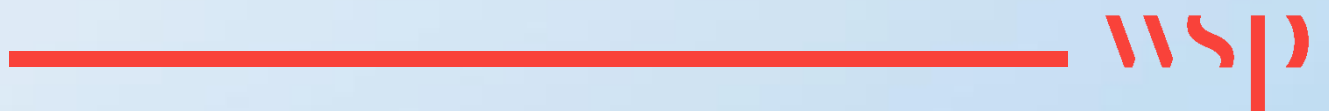


Figure 1 – Site Location (Source: Google Maps)

- 2.1.3. The service yard is located to the north, with car parking located to the east and south of the warehouse. There is a grass verge which provides the perimeter to the site along the eastern boundary which includes five trees. There is a knee-high rail running along the eastern boundary and a height restriction barrier over the entrance to the car park, which is a shared parking area with the adjoining and adjacent units.
- 2.1.4. The site is largely rectangular in shape and has an area of approximately 0.16 hectares. The main access is taken from the western boundary of the site, off Sketchley Meadows.

3

PLANNING HISTORY



3 PLANNING HISTORY

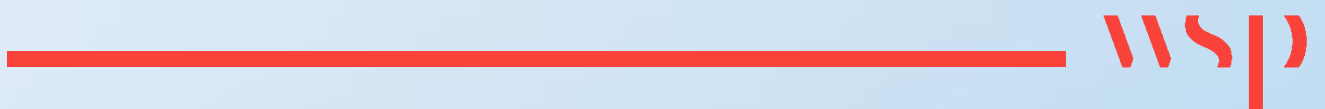
- 3.1.1. This section outlines the planning history pertaining to the application site and surrounding area.
- 3.1.2. The applications of relevance that were identified via the online search using the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council public access service website, are listed in the table below.

Reference	Location	Description	Date
94/00488/FUL	Unit 1 Europlas Coatings Ltd	Erection of ventilation stacks	Approved (July 1994)
94/00292/COU	Unit 1 Europlas Coatings Ltd, Sketchley Meadows	Change of use to Class B6 involving paint spraying of components	Approved (May 1994)
93/00699/4	Industrial Estate Unit 1 Sketchley Lane Burbage	Change of use from warehousing class B8 to industrial class B1	Approved (Sept 1993)
79/01275/4A	Unit 1 Sketchley Meadows, Burbage	Erection of name sign	Approved (July 1979)



4

DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL



4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

4.1 EXISTING OPERATIONS

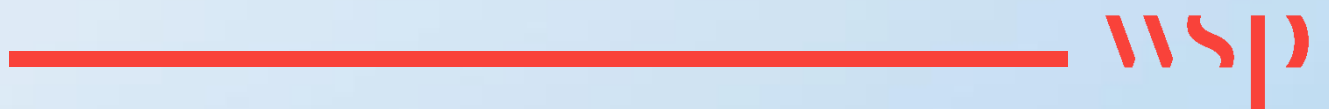
- 4.1.1. The current Hinckley DO is located in Hinckley Town Centre, within a Conservation Area, and the Primary Shopping Area; the Station Road elevation is identified as a Secondary Shopping Frontage. There are limited opportunities for any expansion or improvement works to the current DO due to its location on the High Street. The location also compromises the suitability of the current site due to the need for the business to run 24-hour operations and provide access to a number of associated larger vehicles.
- 4.1.2. As a result, Royal Mail is seeking to relocate to a more suitable site in order to continue being able to serve the local community effectively and efficiently.

4.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.2.1. The application site is currently in industrial use, and given the size of the building is over 500sqm, requires a change of use to be used for B8 warehouse/storage and distribution purposes.
- 4.2.2. Alongside this change of use, Royal Mail require some external alterations to the building and site to be able to operate securely from this site.
- 4.2.3. Therefore, this application seeks full planning permission for the:
“Change of use of existing building from general industrial building to B8 warehouse/storage and distribution use, minor external alterations, erection of perimeter fencing and reconfiguration of existing vehicle parking areas”.
- 4.2.4. The relocated DO will also include a Customer Service Point (CSP) where members of the public will come and collect undelivered mail. This will be an ancillary function to the main operation of the DO and will comprise a small hatch on the southern elevation covered by a small canopy. It will be secured by a roller shutter when not open to the public.
- 4.2.5. Customer parking, which will include two electric charging points will be provided, just to the south of the building close to the CSP.
- 4.2.6. An operational access into the building will also be created along the northern elevation, close to the operational vehicle parking bays.
- 4.2.7. In order to secure the site, a specific requirement for Royal Mail DOs, a new weldmesh fence will be erected around the site perimeter. This will extend to 2.4m in height.
- 4.2.8. The existing vehicle parking areas will be reconfigured, with parking spaces increasing from 25 to 35. These will still be in the same broad locations as they are currently, to the north, east and south of the building. As discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections, these parking areas will offer EV charging facilities. Cycle parking will also be provided within the main vehicle parking area and will be covered by a shelter.

5

PLANNING POLICY



5 PLANNING POLICY

5.1 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1.1. In the context of this application, planning policy operates at two levels:
- **National:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023) will be a material consideration in the determination of any planning application at the site; and
 - **Local:** The Development Plan covering the site comprises the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan 2006 to 2026 which includes the Core Strategy (adopted 2009) and the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) Development Plan Document (DPD) (adopted 2016). The site is also included in the Burbage Neighbourhood Plan (made 2021).
- 5.1.2. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires any planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 5.2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was first published in March 2012, with a number of updates issued since. Most recently, the NPPF was revised in December 2023 in response to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: reforms to national planning policy consultation on 19th December 2023 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Any applications made after this date are required to give material consideration to this version, even if the adopted Development Plan documents were adopted under the previous NPPF (2012).
- 5.2.2. The NPPF (2023) emphasises the importance of sustainable development and sets out the core planning principles guided by the Government's planning policies. Under paragraph 11, development proposals that accord with the Development Plan should be approved without delay.
- 5.2.3. Paragraph 85 advocates for planning policies and decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Furthermore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

5.3 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

- 5.3.1. The Hinckley and Burbage Policies Map identifies the application site as being located within a larger allocated Existing Employment Site (BUR52).

CORE STRATEGY

- 5.3.2. The Core Strategy was adopted in 2009 and is the key Development Plan Document (DPD) in the Local Plan 2006 to 2026 providing the vision and spatial strategy for the Borough. The Strategy outlines the broad locations proposed for housing development and other strategic needs such as employment, retail, and transport development. The policies listed below contained within the Core Strategy are likely to be relevant to this proposal:

- **Policy 4 (Development in Burbage)** - land will be allocated for development of 10 ha of B8 employment land and 4 ha of B2 Land within Hinckley around the railway line and Ashby Canal.
- **Policy 24 (Sustainable Design and Technology)** – only requires BREEAM to be met on schools, hospitals and office developments.

SITE ALLOCATIONS & DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT POLICIES DPD

- 5.3.3. This document allocates land to deliver the development requirements outlined in the Hinckley and Bosworth Core Strategy and includes development management policies which apply across the Borough and are used in the determination of planning applications. There are a number of policies contained within the SADMP that are likely to be relevant to this application.
- 5.3.4. Policy DM10 Development and Design states that where parking is to be provided as part of a scheme, charging points for electric and low emission vehicles are included where feasible.
- 5.3.5. Policy DM17 Highways and Transportation states that development proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the residual cumulative impacts of development on the transport network are not severe and there is not a significant adverse impact upon highway safety. Additionally, all proposals for new development and changes of use must reflect the highway design standards outlined in the most up to date guidance adopted by the relevant highways authority.
- 5.3.6. Policy DM18 Vehicle Parking Standards requires all new development to provide an appropriate level of parking provision, including disabled parking provision, justified by an assessment of the site location, other modes of transport available and appropriate design.
- 5.3.7. Policy DM19 Existing Employment Sites outlines the criteria for development within any existing employment areas. The application site is within a Category A site (as per the Employment Land Premises Review). In Category A areas, the Council has committed to retaining such sites in their entirety for B1, B2 and B8 employment uses.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.3.8. The following documents are also considered to be relevant to this proposal:
- **Employment Land and Premises Review 2020** – This review aims to assess the supply, need, and demand for employment land and premises (use Class B). Burbage remains one of the main focuses for employment within the Borough and the review identifies Sketchley Meadows as a Category A B-Class existing employment site.
 - **Burbage Neighbourhood Plan 2021** – This document identifies the site as being located within a larger employment land allocation, and notes that Sketchley Meadows is a significant area of local employment within Burbage. In particular, Policy 3 sets out that proposals for B8 use will be viewed favourably provided it:
 - Is in keeping with the scale, form and character of its surroundings;
 - Does not significantly adversely affect the amenity of residents in the area;
 - Does not cause harm to highway safety;
 - Does not have a detrimental impact upon the local environment; and
 - Has safe and suitable access to the site for all people.

5.4 EMERGING PLANNING POLICY

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

- 5.4.1. Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council is currently in the process of producing an updated Local Plan.
- 5.4.2. The draft Local Plan (2020-2041) (Regulation 19) was subject to consultation in March 2022. The next stage of consultation is not expected imminently, with the Local Development Scheme (LDS) suggesting that an updated Regulation 19 consultation will not take place until May 2024. The LDS estimates that the draft Local Plan will be adopted in August 2025.
- 5.4.3. The draft Local Plan Proposals Map which formed part of the March 2022 Regulation 19 consultation, continues to allocate the application site as being located within an existing employment area.

BURBAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

- 5.4.4. The 2021 version of the Burbage Neighbourhood Plan is in the process of being revised in line with new government guidelines and the emerging Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Local Plan.

6

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS



6 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1.1. This section assesses the development against local and national planning policy and other material considerations, as identified within Section 5. This assessment concludes that the proposal is wholly compliant with planning policy and should therefore be permitted.

6.2 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2.1. In accordance with the adopted Local Plan and Burbage Neighbourhood Plan, the site forms part of a larger Existing Employment Site (BUR52). This allocation is also proposed to be carried forward into the emerging Local Plan and strongly supports the delivery of B8 employment uses on the site. Therefore, a B8 DO would be an acceptable use to be located and operate from the site.
- 6.2.2. The Neighbourhood Plan outlines that B8 proposals within Burbage employment areas must be in keeping with the scale, form, and character of their surroundings. However, although this proposal involves some minor external alterations, none of these changes would increase the scale of the building. Therefore, the change of use would remain in keeping with the form and character of the area and complement existing industrial uses operating across the wider site.
- 6.2.3. The principle of development therefore accords with the adopted Development Plan.
- 6.2.4. Supporting this relocation of the Royal Mail DO is also of significant benefit to the local economy and community. It ensures retention of a major national employer in the local area and enables Royal Mail to continue serving the local community in accordance with its requirements and obligations as a Universal Postal Service Provider.
- 6.2.5. Furthermore, the proposal seeks to bring back into active use an existing building, therefore, supporting the Government's focus on utilising brownfield development sites.

6.3 OTHER TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

BOUNDARY TREATMENT AND ACCESS

- 6.3.1. The site currently has a knee-high fence along parts of the boundary and a height restriction barrier above the site access point. However, in order to satisfy Royal Mail requirements for site security this proposal includes the installation of 2.4m weldmesh fencing.
- 6.3.2. On the basis that the vehicular access point from Sketchley Meadows is shared with the other adjacent and adjoining units, it is not possible for Royal Mail to manage site access arrangements at this point. Therefore, in order for Royal Mail to be able to control and restrict access to the operational areas of the site, the 2.4m fence around the perimeter will be extended into the site to segregate customer and operational vehicle parking areas. A double gate will provide secure access into the operational part of the Royal Mail site.
- 6.3.3. The erection of the new fence will require some minimal pruning to the five trees present within the grass verge running along the eastern boundary of the site. However, at this stage it is anticipated that all five trees can be retained.
- 6.3.4. Although the proposed fence is higher than the current knee rail around the site perimeter, such weldmesh fences are typical features of industrial estates and there are examples of other units within the Sketchley Meadow Industrial Estate having similar size fences. The fence is a necessary

security requirement for Royal Mail and will be in keeping with the character and nature of the site and its surroundings.

- 6.3.5. The fact the fence will be weldmesh will provide a more open feel to the site, creating a better environment for those using the footpath running along Sketchley Meadows compared to this being a brick wall.

HIGHWAYS AND PARKING

- 6.3.6. The site is located within a well-established industrial estate, where vehicle movements, including HGVs, are common. The site also has good access on to the major road network without needing to travel through residential or rural areas. Therefore, this is an improved location for the Royal Mail operations compared to adding to the traffic on the busy shopping streets within the Town Centre.
- 6.3.7. Policy DM17 refers to the need for all development proposals to accord with the most up to date guidance adopted by the relevant highways authority. In this instance, the relevant authority is Leicestershire County Council. However, their adopted 6Cs Design Guide has since been superseded by interim guidance set out in the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide (2022). This guide states that for B8 land-uses of up to 3,000sqm no additional detail regarding transport impacts is required to support development proposals. Therefore, as the site area is approximately 1,633sqm there is no requirement for this application to be accompanied by a Transport Statement, Transport Assessment or Travel Plan.
- 6.3.8. The assessment referred to under Policy DM18 relates to parking standards also outlined in the 6Cs Design Guide. However, as previously mentioned, this has been superseded by the Leicestershire Highway Design Guide which notes that normal maximum parking standards for a B8 use of 2,500sqm and above within an urban town is one space for every 180sqm. For units below this threshold, previous guidance (Leicestershire Highway Requirements for Development) is still being used which sets out one car space per 100sqm and one lorry space per 400sqm for B8 warehouses. However, the unit already has 25 parking spaces, and this proposal only seeks to increase this by 8 spaces, which is a minimal increase. This increase is necessary in order for Royal Mail to continue managing the same level of mail as it currently does at the existing Hinckley DO to ensure it is still able to meet its Universal Postal Service Provider obligations to the local area.
- 6.3.9. EV charging points will be provided with double chargers. One point will be provided in the customer parking area which will be able to charge two cars; two chargers in the parking area to the north with capacity to charge four vehicles and five chargers in the parking area to the east of the building providing capacity to charge 10 vehicles. The proposals therefore accord with SADMP policy DM10.

TREES AND LANDSCAPING

- 6.3.10. There are five trees located on the grass verge within the site boundary to the east of the existing building. At this stage, it is envisaged that all five trees can be retained, albeit pruning to each will be required to enable the fence to be erected. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, there are historic TPOs located directly to the west of the site, however, the trees located within the grass verge to the east of the site are not included and are not covered by any TPO.



Figure 2 – Location of TPOs (Source: Extract from the Council’s on-line TPO search)

- 6.3.11. Whilst there will be loss of some of the existing grass verge to the east of the building, this is only marginal and extends to circa 118sqm of grass. The overall site area is below 1ha in size, therefore, as set out with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) such sites will be exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements until 2 April 2024. Therefore, on the basis that this application was submitted in advance of that date, there is no requirement for the development proposals to achieve a 10% BNG.

NOISE

- 6.3.12. The site is located within an existing industrial estate and is not in close proximity to any residential properties. Furthermore, the access route to the major highway network does not pass through any residential areas. Therefore, the proposal will not generate any adverse impact on the amenity of the surrounding area.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

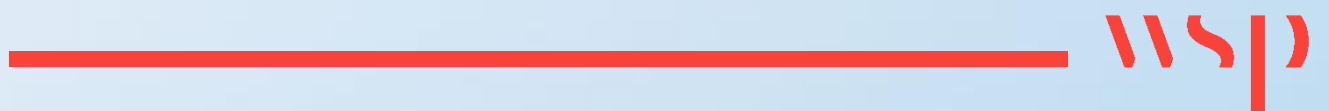
- 6.3.13. As illustrated by the Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps, the site is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore, has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea. It is also located within an area at very low risk of surface water flooding.
- 6.3.14. The increase to the level of hardstanding in the northern part of the site is only minimal and surface water drainage will remain as existing.

CONSERVATION / HERITAGE

- 6.3.15. The site is not located in a Conservation Area and the Unit is not a listed building. In addition, there are no listed buildings immediately surrounding the site.

7

CONCLUSION



7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the change of use of an existing building located at Sketchley Meadows Industrial Estate to B8, (warehouse/storage and distribution) to facilitate the relocation of the Royal Mail Hinkley Town Centre DO.
- 7.1.2. The proposal supports the continued function of this site for employment purposes which is in accordance with both the adopted and emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. It also secures the retention of a major employer in the local area and enables Royal Mail to continue serving the local community but more efficiently from this more suitable location.
- 7.1.3. The minor external alterations would be consistent with the industrial aesthetic of the wider site.
- 7.1.4. As set out within this Statement, the proposals accord with the adopted Development Plan and there are no technical or material considerations that would prevent planning permission being granted for these development proposals. Therefore, in accordance with the NPPF, this application should be support and approved without delay.



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