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**Proposed Distribution Centres  
West Bank Industrial Estate, Widnes**



**WESTLINK GROUP LTD**

PORTS INTERMODAL TRANSPORTATION LOGISTICS

**Design & Access Statement  
October 2007**

# Proposed Distribution Centre, Widnes

## Design & Access Statement

### Introduction

1. West Link Group Limited are applying to Halton Borough Council for planning permission to construct 2 new distribution centres which will serve each end user's other regional warehouses throughout the northern half of the U.K. Both developments are central and crucial to the future of the end user's businesses, and Widnes has been identified as the most suitable location for the overall major investment.
2. West Link Group Limited will be responsible for construction of the distribution centres to the stage where it is ready for fitting out and occupation by the end users.

### The Development

3. The unit 1 high and lowbay distribution centre will extend to 107,556 square metres, on a site of 34.48 hectares. The building will have the capacity to handle more than 215 delivery vehicles at one time, and will employ around 900 people on site. The unit 2 distribution centre will extend to 31,278 square metres on a site of 6.685 hectares. The building will have the capacity to handle more than 47 delivery vehicles at any one time and will employ around 963 people on site.
4. The unit 1 building will handle the distribution of a wide range of retail products including dry grocery, garments, electrical, household etc.
5. All delivery vehicles, both end user and suppliers will arrive and depart site via Desotto Road where secure access will then direct them to their relevant destination within the main site. In-bound deliveries of goods by suppliers will be directed to the North side of the building. After completion of delivery, the supplier will depart from the site via the same route as in-bound vehicles, onto Desotto Road.
6. End user delivery vehicles will arrive at the site from Desotto Road onto a four-lane dedicated access road before passing through a security checkpoint to enter the site. The vehicles will proceed either to a refuelling point, or to the vehicle washing area, or to a layover bay in one of the trailer parking areas, or to a bay for the loading of goods for onward transit to other distribution centres. There will be some 390 trailer parking bays on site.
7. When departing the site, loaded vehicles will leave via a dedicated exit route, through a security checkpoint to a new roundabout to be constructed linking up Desotto Road to the development site. Unit 2 traffic will arrive via Desotto Road, linking up with a full service yard for shared use by car and HGV traffic.
8. Unit 1 will have a staff car park on the south side of the building, accessed from a roundabout to be constructed in place of the existing site access from Foundry Lane. There will be 900 spaces in the staff car park. From the car park staff will access the south side of the building via a security entrance. Unit 2 will have 200 staff car parking spaces accessed from the main approach from Desotto Road.
9. Bus laybys will be provided and a new footway/cycleway will be constructed round the north-western corner of the site.

## **Future Development**

10. The unit 1 distribution centre will be constructed in 2 phases, with the first phase consisting of 87,746 square metres of part highbay and part lowbay. Phase 2 will comprise of a further 4,606 square metre of highbay and 14,100 square metres of lowbay. Being an extension to what will be the established main function of the site, there is unlikely to be any requirement for separate access to this extension area. If the extension proceeds at some future date, the area will be integrated into the main development area.

## **Development Issues**

11. As has been described above, the masterplan devised for this site and submitted with the planning application shows a large proportion of the site being occupied by the unit 1 highbay distribution centre, but with a further parcel of land being created, for separate development for the unit 2 distribution centre. The masterplan shows that the site will not be developed in a fragmented or piecemeal way, but that the development, access and landscaping strategy for the entire site will be determined at the outset.

## **Uses**

12. The development proposes storage and distribution uses within Class B8. This is entirely in accordance with the allocated use of the site within the Halton UDP and the Ditton Strategic Rail Freight Terminal Draft SPD. The uses are tailored to specific end users. The scheme will provide a genuine and deliverable development.

## **Density/Height**

13. The unit 1 highbay distribution centre will be 40m to its highest point, whilst the lowbay element and the unit 2 building will both be 18m to their highest structures.
14. Although the distribution centre will be a very large building, it will only occupy some 31% of the overall site. The important setting of the site has been taken fully into account, and the higher parts of the building will be a substantial distance from the locally sensitive receptors lying to the west of the site. A detailed landscape strategy has been produced, to which reference is made later. Signage on the buildings will be addressed in detail at a later stage in the project programme, but care will be taken to ensure that signage is appropriate to the scale of the buildings and their surroundings. The nature of the terrain and existing development surrounding the site is such that the new buildings will not be too visible and will not be unduly dominant a feature when viewed from the passing infrastructure such as rail and road, particularly as a result of retained and enhanced landscaping.

## **Appearance**

In terms of overall design, the building will represent a substantial improvement upon the existing setting, providing a more modern, forward thinking and robust appearance. This includes the use of specialised long span cladding systems, extensive roof lighting across the warehouse, colour contrasting external features including docks and office pods, and extensive sustainable technologies. The rooflight system will help to maximise natural lighting and sustain a more energy efficient heating system.

The materials employed will relate to the scale of the building in its context. The walls of the building will be finished in long span microrib style cladding and tinted glass ribbon glazing to various office elements to provide a modern practical building incorporating

sustainable design and providing a robust and modern supplement to the existing built and natural environment.

### **Access and Transport**

15. Access arrangements have been described earlier in this statement, and a separate Transport Assessment is being produced by ADL for consideration by the Council, contained within the Environmental Statement. The principal access point to the site will be from Desotto Road. The existing access to the west will be used to serve the unit 1 car park and may be used eventually for access to a south western development site.
16. Further information regarding traffic management is contained in the transportation assessment, and details have been given earlier in this statement regarding provision for pedestrians, cyclists and bus passengers. A Green Travel Plan is being prepared. The building is orientated so that staff access to the site is taken from the west, which is where many bus services currently run.
17. **Pedestrian Access** - Within the main West bank site, from West to unit 1, and East to unit 2 pedestrians will be guided through the car park to ensure that safety is maximised.
18. **Cycle** - cycle parking will be provided offering 24 spaces
19. **Public Transport** - The site is well served by public transport and in terms of bus stops.
20. The unit 1 development proposes a bus stop within the site.
21. **Car** - The proposed development provides parking for 1100 spaces in total including spaces for staff with special needs
22. **Inclusive Access** - The proposed development has been designed so that it can be accessed from a range of points that are accessible for all. The development is tied into the surrounding transport infrastructure and public realm, in order that it is highly accessible for all users whilst being appropriate in its context.
23. Highway arrangements, such as pathways, junctions and crossing points are all designed to meet standard specifications to address the needs of disabled users on an equitable basis with other users.
24. **Servicing** - The service yard areas will be accessed from the revised access to Desotto Road. This arrangement will assist the overall efficient operation of the site and management of vehicular traffic through it. This arrangement has been designed to address concerns in terms of the functionality and amenity impact of the servicing arrangements proposed.
25. **Emergency** - Emergency vehicles will be able to access both the car park and service yard areas as necessary.
26. Means of escape - Will be provided in accordance with building regulations.
27. **Summary** - The scheme has been designed to take maximum advantage of its relationship to the surrounding movement network including footpaths and roads in order to make the development as accessible as it can be.

### **Landscaping and Shelter-Belt Planting**

28. A detailed landscaping strategy is being submitted on behalf of the applicants by Bell Fischer Landscape Architects. This addresses all the issues raised by the planning brief, in particular the need to ensure that the sensitive west end of the site – adjacent to the residential areas – benefits from careful and comprehensive new planting and the enhancement, management and rationalisation of existing planting. Significant concentration of trees along the northern boundary and west coast mainline railway will also be retained and additional landscaping provided.

### **Ground Conditions, Development Constraints and Drainage**

29. A detailed assessment of ground conditions and mitigation measures is being submitted as part of the Environmental Statement, together with a drainage strategy. The submitted scheme takes account of all the issues raised in the planning brief. The main unit 1 building is being considered to implement the use of recycling of rainwater collected from the roof, thereby reducing demand on water supplies and water run-off.

### **Sustainability**

30. A sustainability statement that sets out the client's design responses to ensure adoption of good, proven, sustainable design practices, is provided in separate documentation

As green design methods and technologies are adapting quickly, a prescriptive approach, however, would not be appropriate. Notwithstanding this, we will seek to ensure that current proven best practice is applied to the new developments as a minimum and as established at the time that the development progresses on site.

The scheme embodies the principles of sustainability including:

- Reducing the need to travel for customers and workers;
- Promoting sustainable transport choices (particularly walking and public transport);
- Designing and siting buildings in order to reduce energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency;
- Use sustainable demolition and construction methods and sustainable materials; and encouraging recycling.
- Benefit local training and local employment schemes with new jobs and opportunities for local residents during and after construction.

### **Construction and Materials**

31. The construction of the development can have a big impact on sustainability, even through very small actions. We have considered the following:
- Lean construction and Conscious construction: The buildings have been designed around efficiency and ease of construction (aimed at responding to the Government's lead to drive the construction industry towards leaner, more efficient and sustainable construction) with a layout specially created for the form of the building.
  - Recycling of building materials from the existing buildings on the site. Materials like panelling and glazing will be considered for re-use.

- Standard prefabricated composite components: Employing prefabricated materials offers a number of advantages in the construction phase.

These are:

- High quality materials can be used that add to the overall visual presence of the building but without excessive onsite waste.
- Reduced on-site waste means that there will be less construction related movements of vehicles.
- Waste is managed more efficiently and can be sorted between recyclable waste and non recyclable waste.
- Reduction of wet trades used onsite.
- Materials with low embodied energy are employed as the amount of energy required for the manufacture of bricks or blocks is extremely high in comparison to the materials proposed for cladding. The cladding, as it is made up of composite elements, can be reused should the building reach the end of its life.

### **Conclusions**

32. This proposal represents a very substantial investment in the Ditton area, and the bringing back into more effective economic use of a major industrial site, delivering job creation and environmental renewal. The proposal generally complies with the development plan, and realises the aims of the local plan to achieve comprehensive development of the site with an employment-generating use. The proposal is supported by detailed documentation addressing the transportation, landscaping, ground conditions and drainage aspects of the proposal, as well as a masterplan which indicates how the overall site will be developed, as required by the council's planning brief.

This Statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme has been developed in the context of its setting and local environment, and adopted and emerging planning policy.

The proposed development will provide a high quality building that is well located and relates well to its surrounding in terms of its siting, external appearance and connectivity with surrounding uses.

The new developments will be considerably more energy efficient than existing site occupier units and will be considered for the benefits from grey water recycling that makes significant impacts upon water usage.

The raised finish floor level of the warehouses has significant benefits in terms of residual flood risk as compared to the existing plateaus, and greatly reduces the risk to staff from extreme flood events.

The scheme has significant regenerative benefits in respect of job creation and through the creation of a landmark building at the gateway junction to this industrial site which will provide impetus to the Council's aspirations for the regeneration of the west bank dock estate.