

## **Design and Access Statement O'Connor Group – Widnes Intermodal Rail Depot**

Please read this information in conjunction with associated drawings attached

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### **Executive summary**

The purpose of this summary is to take an overview of the whole project, and it does not include the procurement phase or the implementation method.

#### HQ Building concept

The concept design of the HQ Building is to construct a commercial office and control building of medium to high quality that will sit comfortably in the heart of the Freight Terminal, which is predominantly industrial with a very high traffic throughput. The design concept aims to mirror some of the structural elements that make up the mobile cranes on the site by exposing the structure and mounting the building on four steel legs, allowing access below. This scheme will promote excellent views of the site and the business process for staff and visitors, whilst avoiding the relatively poor vistas at ground level. Elevating the building on legs also enables it to be located on the site, to achieve the best business process location and maintain high levels of safety on the site.

#### The client demand

The O'Connor Group wishes to be the best in class and in time become the largest inland port in the UK. To this end, quality and image for customers and their own staff is very important. The building needs to accommodate a growing organization, possibly up to three times its current size. This growth will initially be accommodated by constructing a building that is larger than is required day one and later by adopting new methods of working that will support a more flexible mobile work force. The main components of the office facilities are as follows.

- Office space for around 100 workstations
- Break out facilities for 150 to 250 mobile workers and office staff
- A control room area with views over the site
- Lockers and changing facilities for mobile workers
- Good views of the site and the function of the business for everyone in the building.

The building must assist the O'Connor Group to integrate parts of the work force that have traditionally worked separately. Mobile workers and office based staff need to form one team, one business culture.

#### Accommodation standards

The objective is to create a smart, contemporary work place that will communicate to customers that the O'Connor Group is professional and reliable, and to staff in promoting teambuilding, company loyalty and recruitment. The top floor is planned as a rooftop break-out area with wide reaching views across the landscape.

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The office accommodation on the two floors below will be air conditioned open plan. It will have full height glass curtain walling on three sides of the building with level three lighting in a suspended return air plenum and a carpeted raised floor. The overall quality of the space will be city centre quality commercial office space. The cores will be functional with steel and quality timber details giving these areas a professional corporate feel.

The accommodation standard will be based on Grade "A" office development standards.

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### **The brief and context**

The O'Connor Group is growing their business and therefore need to expand their facilities at Widnes to meet their needs. This requires the replacement of existing HQ and workshop buildings, the initial expansion of container storage and the extension of existing crane tracks on the southern part of the site. Additional rail sidings are also proposed to be implemented as the business demands.

In order to achieve these upgrades a number of changes will be required as follows.

1. A new improved entrance road access for operational vehicles and staff/visitors is required together with a new one way road system to accommodate the increase in traffic.
2. The existing office and workshop will need to be relocated in order to allow the crane tracks to be extended.
3. A new exit gate house will be required at the front of the site.
4. Workshop facilities will be relocated on expansion land to the north-east of the existing site.
5. New rail sidings will be provided beneath the western cranes.

In addition to the above the overall landscaping condition of the site will be upgraded and new ways of working within the Freight Terminal including the application of new technologies will be implemented.

### **The objectives**

- Construct new HQ office accommodation
- Construct new gatehouse facility
- Extend crane tracks/container storage
- Relocate workshop
- Provide new rail sidings as the business demands.

The business drivers for this development are as follows;

- Complete in the most cost effective manner
- Fit for purpose to meet all O'Connor business Group requirements
- Enable O'Connor Group to integrate their staff more effectively
- A showpiece that will assist in selling O'Connor Group services to new customers
- Ensure the HQ Building does not look out of place on the site
- Construct the new facilities in a safe and sustainable manner

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### The Design Component

The table below indicates the amount of development proposed for every building, please refer to the site plan to confirm location.

	GIA Area m2	Description of use
<b>HQ Building</b>		
3 <sup>rd</sup> floor	220.00	Canteen space
2 <sup>nd</sup> floor	432.00	Office space
1 <sup>st</sup> floor	432.00	Office space
Mezzanine level	66.00	Entrance lobby and core space
Ground floor	42.00	Core space
<b>Total GIA</b>	1,192.00	
<b>Locker block</b>		
Ground floor	150.00	Ancillary locker room facility and toilets
<b>Workshop</b>		
Ground floor	288.00	workshop
<b>Gatehouse</b>		
Ground Floor	16.00	Gatehouse to monitor traffic

Designated pedestrian access routes will be clearly marked and signposted between every occupied facility on the site.

### Site layout

The HQ Building has been located at the northern end of the Freight Terminal where there are no other buildings and where access from the car park is easiest. This location allows the building safe pedestrian access below in the form of a type of plaza area.

In this location the building occupants can be separated from the main operational traffic movement of the Freight Terminal. The space below the HQ Building allows pedestrians a safe location from which to observe the activity of the site. The main access from the car park is via a high level walkway separating pedestrians from the site. The HQ Building will be secured in the normal manner including 24 hour security guard cover.

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#### **Scale**

The HQ Building will have a control room function that requires views of the activity of the site and in addition the client wished all his staff to be involved with what happens on the site. To achieve this end the building has been elevated and all the views have been maximised by increasing the glazed area of the envelope.

This elevated building concept will also allow the office function to be separated from the busy operational traffic at ground level making it a more pleasant place to work. The open walkway approach to the entrance will be a dramatic and interesting experience for visitors and staff as they approach the building safely and above all the activity. From below and around the building it will feel like a bridge structure where the engineering of the building will be visible making it an interesting object to explore.

Elsewhere on the site, the new gatehouse building and workshop will fit in as ancillary, operational buildings, of a scale which complements the scale of the site's container storage/transshipment.

#### **Landscape**

The landscaping scheme involves creating accessible space below the building with a tree lined backdrop to the rear of the site and full views of the Freight Terminal to the front. The access from the car park involves a high level approach that will enable visitors to enjoy views across most of the Freight Terminal and full view of the building as they approach it.

The area below the HQ Building will be predominantly paving with perhaps some cobble sets creating the plaza feel and perhaps the inclusion of a water feature to bring sound and create a stronger sense of place.

The operational area of the site will be hard surfaced with an impermeable layer, draining through existing and new interceptor tanks.

#### **Appearance**

The HQ Building concept is based on references found on the site such as the existing crane steel work and the industrial nature of the location. The building needs to have a strong dominant feel if it is to have any presence on what is a strong visual site.

The new Gatehouse building has been designed to present a modern interface at the entrance to the site.

In contrast, the Locker block/changing facility, Amenity block and Workshop building have been designed with a more utilisation role in mind. Simple, and fit for purpose, they complement the site's function.

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### **Access**

Most users and visitors to the HQ Building will use the new main car park to the west of the site with access along illuminated paths and a high level walkway that avoids the need for access at road level within the operational area. Disabled visitors and staff will be able to park below or in front of the HQ Building together with deliveries and tradesman.

In all cases all access routes to the HQ Building and around the site will be all clearly marked designated routes illuminated for night access and designed to separate pedestrians from vehicles.