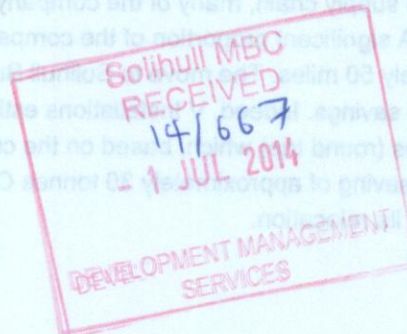


30 June 2014

Delivered by email

Claire Bishop
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 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
 Central Library
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Dear Claire

PLANNING APPLICATION REF 2014/667: SOLIHULL BUSINESS PARK, MONKSPATH HALL ROAD, SOLIHULL: SECTION 73 APPLICATION TO VARY PLANNING CONDITIONS ON PLANNING PERMISSION REF: 2013/2141

We write on behalf of IM Properties Development Ltd in relation to the above application at Solihull Business Park. The planning application was taken to Planning Committee on the 11 June 2014 and the committee resolved to defer the application, pending further clarification on matters relating to noise and ecology.

This letter sets out further information to clarify points raised at the Committee meeting. In addition, we set out further information on V Installations, the prospective occupier for Plot 3 at Solihull Business Park, as well as proposals for additional landscaping at the park (as part of package of measures to address perceived issues relating to potential impacts on adjoining residential amenity).

BACKGROUND TO V INSTALLATIONS

IM Properties are now in an advanced stage of discussions with the proposed occupier 'V Installations'. The company is eager to draw matters to a conclusion such that it can advance its planning for the relocation of activities from Saxon Business Park, Bromsgrove.

Our client is keen that officers (and members) fully appreciate the context to its relocation to Solihull Business Park.

V Installations has been trading for over 20 years. The company provides mechanical handling solutions for Jaguar Land Rover, and many other leading car manufacturers throughout the UK. Its proposed move will safeguard its current workforce (27 employees), with many of its employees already located in and around the Solihull area. In this light, travel to work patterns will be improved (and employee cost savings achieved) with less out-commuting to Bromsgrove. The new premises will also allow the company to grow its capabilities and workforce (with the potential for a further 15 local jobs), develop its apprenticeship

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scheme in the local area, as well as providing subcontracted work for in excess of 150 skilled workers through the local business partnership.

In terms of the supply chain, many of the company's customers and suppliers are also located within the Solihull area. A significant proportion of the company's business is with JLR Solihull, presently a round trip of approximately 50 miles. The move to Solihull Business Park, will deliver substantial time, cost and environmental savings. Indeed, V Installations estimate that its relocation will reduce journey distances to JLR to 18 miles (round trip) which, based on the current frequency of attendance at JLR, would represent an emissions saving of approximately 30 tonnes CO₂(equivalent) per year. There are clear environmental advantages in its relocation.

NOISE

A number of issues were raised by Members at Planning Committee in relation to the noise assessment submitted with the application, the operational characteristics and management of V Installations activities (based on a crude assessment of its existing operation at Saxon Business Park), and specifically the acoustic qualities of the proposed building. We have addressed each of these matters below. This information is in addition to that already submitted with the planning application, the findings of which have been accepted by the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

Building Fabric

The proposed external building fabric will be Kingspan or similar composite insulated panels, or a proprietary built-up cladding system, such as CA Group 'Twintherm'. These systems offer a high level of thermal and acoustic insulation with the appropriate internal detailing.

The tested performance of these systems is generally in the region of 38dB Rw or more, depending on the exact specification.

Assessment Input – SEL

Members have commented on the SEL noise levels in the noise report, expressing concern at the high levels shown.

It is important to understand exactly what the SEL is. The acronym stands for Sound Exposure Level, or Single Exposure Level, both are used. It is an artificial noise level used for calculation purposes, which was included in the noise report, so that the reader, principally the Environmental Health Officer, could see how the assessment was undertaken.

The unique aspect of the SEL is that it incorporates both time and level into a single value, which makes it very useful for noise calculations, particularly where the aim of the calculation is to understand the overall 1 hour or 5 minute noise level.

The SEL is derived by taking all of the measured sound for a particular activity, which may have occurred over a period of, say 30 seconds, and condensing it into a single one second period. By normalizing the noise level to a one second period, the SEL accurately represents the activity in a single number that is easy to use in calculations.

As an analogy, if one litre of water is poured into both a bucket and a long test tube, and the two were placed next to each other, the top of the water in the test tube would be much higher than the water level in the bucket. However, they both contain the same amount of water. This is roughly how the SEL works;

the water is analogous to the sound energy, and the relative sizes of the bucket and test tube are analogous to the time period over which the energy is spread.

By way of example, if a sound of 50dB occurred for 30 seconds, the equivalent SEL value would be 65dB. The listener would only hear 50dB for the 30 seconds, but the 65dB SEL value allows it to be used in a calculation without needing to know how long the event occurred for. The listener would not hear 65dB at any point. This is an important distinction for Members to make.

Assessment Input – Acoustic Properties of Proposed Plant / Machinery

V Installations is proposing to commit significant investment in new equipment in their new premises. This will complement recent investment in the production facilities in their existing building, which is delivering operational and environmental benefits.

It is understood that V Installations will be using a new CNC Plasma cutting machine, which will significantly reduce the amount of angle grinding required to finish work. The Plasma cutting machine uses a high pressure jet, which is ignited using an electrical arc to form a plasma that melts the metal instead of physically grinding it, giving it a cleaner finish that does not require further work with an angle grinder.

This machine is understood to be quieter than angle grinding and should therefore result in a reduction in the overall emissions from V Installations' processes.

With regards to handling equipment, the company is proposing to invest in new fork lift trucks which are not only more efficient and environmentally friendly (less emissions), but will be specified to not include an audible reversing alarm for use outside the building.

Having reviewed plant and machinery specification provided, Resound Acoustics is satisfied that the conclusions of the assessment submitted with the original application remains robust and reflects a worst case scenario.

Noise Management Plan

As officers acknowledged in their report to committee, there is a requirement in the Outline Planning Permission (ref: 2013/1525, Condition 20) which specifies:

"Prior to the occupation of any units on the site for B2 uses (as defined under the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Order 2010), a scheme shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority showing any relevant measures necessary to protect residential amenity. Depending upon the nature of the operations to be carried out, such a scheme may include appropriate insulation / noise mitigation measures and control over any outdoor working. Thereafter, any B2 occupation of the unit(s) shall be in accordance with the agreed scheme".

A submission will be made to discharge this condition at the appropriate time, and certainly – as required – prior to occupation of Unit 3. However, in the short term, our client is collaborating with V Installations to progress a draft Noise Management Plan. A copy of the emerging plan is attached (ref: RA00297 Rep 2).

The report should be set against the context that V Installations has carefully considered its operational requirements and how these can be accommodated within the new building, to ensure an efficient, environmental friendly and good neighbourly operation. Key aspects include:

- Independent interlocked automatic closing roller shutter doors (to reduce both heat loss and limit noise emissions);
- Production processes designed to reduce movement and 'rework' (noise generating) activities; and
- Strict adherence to legislative requirements impacting upon the internal building environment (noise management, temperature control, heating and ventilation requirements).

The emerging Management Plan covers the following:

- (i) physical measures – details of existing and proposed investment in equipment and building specification that will deliver acoustic benefits; and
- (ii) management measures – and overview of the site management philosophy, accountability, communications protocols, site specific measures, review and reporting mechanisms.

The document has been prepared for discussion prior to formal submission. We would welcome officers observations (particularly those of the EHO). We consider that the document should provide more than sufficient reassurance to Members with regards to the responsible manner in which V Installations is looking to undertake its operations.

ECOLOGY

Further clarification was sought by Planning Committee members on the ecological surveys carried out on the site.

IM Properties instructed Middlemarch Environmental Ltd to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Badger Survey of the remaining plots within Solihull Business Park, in order to satisfy condition 18 of the outline planning permission for employment development at the site. The survey was undertaken on site in August 2013.

The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Badger Survey Report was submitted to the Council in December 2013, and approved by the Council's ecologist prior to the condition being discharged in January 2014.

A series of recommendations are made in the report to ensure that construction and operational phase impacts on ecological receptors are avoided, and that appropriate control measures are implemented.

LANDSCAPING

A number of observations were made regarding the proposed landscaping surrounding Unit 3 from the adjoining residential areas, and the potential to further enhance the scheme to deliver both visual and acoustic benefits.

IM Properties have revisited the approved landscaping solution (Reserved Matters ref: 2103/2141), and is prepared to commit to additional planting on the eastern boundary of the site (both units 2 & 3) as set out on the attached drawing "Proposed Landscaping Eastern Boundary" (dwg ref: 13-50-06).

The approved planting scheme, which comprises woodland blocks of whip planting 1-2m tall (growing circa 1m per year) is now to be augmented with semi-mature tree planting. These trees (10 no. Alder specimens) will be 7m tall when planted. Planting is to be carried out this season (November 2014 to March 2015).

It is proposed that the enhanced landscaping scheme will be submitted as part of the suite of measures proposed to address the requirements of planning condition 20 referenced above (*'...relevant measures necessary to protect residential amenity'*).

We trust the above responds satisfactorily to the issues raised by Members at Planning Committee and would be happy to clarify any issues further.

We would be grateful if you could confirm receipt of this letter and associated attachments.

Yours sincerely



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Director

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