

Planning Services

COMMITTEE REPORT

APPLICATION DETAILS

APPLICATION NO:	DM/22/03273/FPA	
FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:	Erection and use of a temporary warehouse building (70m x 30m) until December 2024 and three permanent welfare units.	
NAME OF APPLICANT:	Mr Gary Jones (Erwin Hymer Group UK Ltd)	
Address:	Explorer House Butsfield Lane Knitsley Consett DH8 7PE	
ELECTORAL DIVISION:	Delves Lane	
CASE OFFICER:	Scott Henderson Senior Planning Officer Telephone: 03000 256286 <u>scott.henderson@durham.gov.uk</u>	

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND PROPOSALS

The Site

1. The site is part of the long-established Erwin Hymer production facility located on the southern edge of Delves Lane with the junction of Butsfield Lane. The site is an existing protected employment site in the County Durham Plan. The site borders areas of existing residential development to the north and south.

The Proposal

- 2. The proposal is retrospective in the main, with all but one of the welfare units already in place and in use. The main element of the proposal is the erection and use of a temporary warehouse facility to be in place until December 2024. The unit measures 70m x 30m and is used exclusively for racked storage only, no manufacturing or assembly processes take place within it. The applicant states that the hours of operation for the warehouse would be 07.30-18.00 hrs. The welfare units are standard, prefabricated buildings located at three points around the site and will provide canteen and change facilities etc. They range in size from 20-36m in length and 6-9m in width. The 2 already in place are 2 storey and the final one, yet to be installed, will be single storey only, replacing existing temporary welfare units. No trees, landscape features or protected species will be affected by the proposals.
- 3. This application is being considered by committee at the request of a Local Member.

PLANNING HISTORY

4. The site was established in the 1970s and has seen numerous additional buildings and areas come into use as the business has expanded. Most recently a new

production building was approved and completed in 2021 under reference DM/21/00076/FPA with a further building approved in 2020 under reference DM/19/03427/FPA.

PLANNING POLICY

NATIONAL POLICY

- 5. The following elements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are considered relevant to this proposal:
- 6. NPPF Part 2 Achieving sustainable development. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and therefore at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It defines the role of planning in achieving sustainable development under three overarching objectives economic, social and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. The application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development for plan-making and decision-taking is outlined.
- 7. NPPF Part 4 Decision-making. Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decisionmakers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 8. NPPF Part 6 Building a strong, competitive economy: The Government is committed to ensuring the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore, significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.
- NPPF Part 9 Promoting sustainable transport. Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion. Developments that generate significant movement should be located where the need to travel will be minimised and the use of sustainable transport modes maximised.
- 10. *NPPF Part 12 Achieving Well-Designed Places.* The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, with good design a key aspect of sustainable development, indivisible from good planning.
- 11. NPPF Part 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change. The planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
 - 12. NPPF Part 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. The Planning System should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests, recognising the wider benefits of

ecosystems, minimising the impacts on biodiversity, preventing both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from Page 73 pollution and land stability and remediating contaminated or other degraded land where appropriate.

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework

NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE:

13. The Government has consolidated a number of planning practice guidance notes, circulars and other guidance documents into a single Planning Practice Guidance Suite. This document provides planning guidance on a wide range of matters. Of particular relevance to this application is the practice guidance with regards to; air quality; historic environment; design process and tools; determining a planning application; flood risk; healthy and safe communities; land affected by contamination; housing and economic development needs assessments; housing and economic land availability assessment; light pollution; natural environment; neighbourhood planning; noise; open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space; planning obligations; travel plans, transport assessments and statements; use of planning conditions; and; water supply, wastewater and water quality.

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance

LOCAL PLAN POLICY:

The County Durham Plan

- 14. Policy 2 Employment Land Supports business, general industrial and storage and distribution development within specified employment allocations and also protects other existing employment sites from being changed to non-employment uses, unless appropriate marketing has been undertaken or that the use would not compromise the main employment use and would comply with retail Policy 9 where main town centre uses are being proposed. Where a non-employment development is proposed on the protected employment sites, any existing jobs on site must be relocated. Specific further protection and safeguarding is outlined for land north of NETpark, at Integra 61 and Project Genesis, Consett.
- 15. Policy 21 Delivering Sustainable Transport states that all development shall deliver sustainable transport by (in part) ensuring that any vehicular traffic generated by new development, following the implementation of sustainable transport measures, can be safely accommodated on the local and strategic highway network and does not cause an unacceptable increase in congestions or air pollution and that severe congestion can be overcome by appropriate transport improvements.
- 16. Policy 26 Green Infrastructure. States that development will be expected to maintain and protect, and where appropriate improve, the County's green infrastructure network. Advice is provided on the circumstances in which existing green infrastructure may be lost to development, the requirements of new provision within development proposals and advice in regard to public rights of way.
- 17. Policy 29 Sustainable Design Requires all development proposals to achieve well designed buildings and places having regard to SPD advice and sets out detailed criteria which sets out that where relevant development is required to meet including; making a positive contribution to an areas character and identity; provide adaptable buildings; minimise greenhouse gas emissions and use of non-renewable resources; providing high standards of amenity and privacy; contributing to healthy neighbourhoods; providing suitable landscape proposals; provide convenient access

for all users; adhere to the Nationally Described Space Standards (subject to transition period).

- 18. Policy 31 Amenity and Pollution Sets out that development will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that there will be no unacceptable impact, either individually or cumulatively, on health, living or working conditions or the natural environment and that they can be integrated effectively with any existing business and community facilities. Development will not be permitted where inappropriate odours, noise, vibration and other sources of pollution cannot be suitably mitigated against, as well as where light pollution is not suitably minimised. Permission will not be granted for sensitive land uses near to potentially polluting development. Similarly, potentially polluting development will not be permitted near sensitive uses unless the effects can be mitigated.
- 19. Policy 35 Water Management. Requires all development proposals to consider the effect of the proposed development on flood risk, both on-site and off-site, commensurate with the scale and impact of the development and taking into account the predicted impacts of climate change for the lifetime of the proposal. All new development must ensure there is no net increase in surface water runoff for the lifetime of the development. Amongst its advice, the policy advocates the use of SuDS and aims to protect the quality of water.
- 20. Policy 36 Water Infrastructure. Advocates a hierarchy of drainage options for the disposal of foul water. Applications involving the use of non-mains methods of drainage will not be permitted in areas where public sewerage exists. New sewage and waste water infrastructure will be approved unless the adverse impacts outweigh the benefits of the infrastructure. Proposals seeking to mitigate flooding in appropriate locations will be permitted though flood defence infrastructure will only be permitted where it is demonstrated as being the most sustainable response to the flood threat.
- 21. Policy 39 Landscape states that proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views and that development affecting valued landscapes will only be permitted where it conserves, and where appropriate enhances, the special qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm.
 - 22. Policy 40 Trees, Woodlands and Hedges states that proposals will be expected to retain existing trees where they can make a positive contribution to the locality or to the development, maintain adequate standoff distances between them and new land-uses, including root protection areas where necessary, to avoid future conflicts, and integrate them fully into the design having regard to their future management requirements and growth potential.
 - 23. *Policy 41 Biodiversity and Geodiversity* states that proposal for new development will not be permitted if significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity resulting from the development cannot be avoided, or appropriately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for.

CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY RESPONSES

STATUTORY RESPONSES:

24. DCC Highways have no objections or requirements.

INTERNAL CONSULTEE RESPONSES:

- 25. Design and Conservation officers have no comment to make.
- 26. *Environmental Health (Nuisance)* have no objections. They note that no statutory nuisance matters have been raised during its use, but notwithstanding that consider that the proposed storage use would not lead to any adverse impacts and would be unlikely to constitute a statutory nuisance.

PUBLIC RESPONSES:

- 27. A total of 20 representations have been received in response to the consultation exercise involving individual letters, press and site notices. Of these, all of them object to the proposals.
- 28. The main reasons for objection are as follows:
 - Overspill car parking in the nearby streets is already a problem.
 - Adverse impact from noise and light spill
 - Size and scale of the building is out of keeping with the area
 - Excessive dust creation from the factory
 - Bad language from employees.

APPLICANT'S STATEMENT:

- 29. As the largest employer in the Derwentside area the business is continuing invest in the facility in Consett, County Durham. Recent investment exceeded £11m in both manufacturing excellence and facility infrastructure. The company plan to continue with this investment for the foreseeable future securing jobs in the area for over 550 employees. This application, albeit retrospective shows our intentions of growing the business and improving the welfare for the employees of the future.
- 30. The facility was planned during late 2020, following the interruption to the business caused by Covid 19. Installed in Jan 21 with the intension that the building would be removed in Feb 22. Worldwide events such as Covid, Brexit and now the war in Ukraine have severely impacted on the ability of our suppliers to deliver parts when they are needed. For this reason, we will have to retain the temporary warehouse for a further period, predicted to be up to Dec 24.
- 31. The business is currently working with architects to provide a vision for a permanent structure to be in a very similar location on the EHG UK site. This project will be subject to the required planning application in the future and would result in the removal of the temporary warehouse structure mentioned above. EHG UK and the Architect would aim to reduce the roof height by targeting a sloping flat roof rather than pitch roof, assuming this met design intent, planning and building regulation.
- 32. The company continue to invest in the welfare areas of the site since the removal of restrictions put in place during Covid, we have installed two units of a proposed three to accommodate up to 500 production team members. These units are sited on foundation blocks and are made up of sectional "portacabin" type parts. There is no intension to change the location of these units in the future. Unit No. 1 & 2 are already in place, unit No. 3 is planned to be installed in March 23. Welfare within the business has been substandard for several years in some areas and following an advisory note

served by the HSE the business were challenged to improve the status of welfare across the whole site.

- 33. It is the genuine belief of the team that the noise is not related to the warehouse space directly, but another process which has been introduced since the temporary warehouse has been installed. The warehouse parts were moved in early 2021, following this the process used to manufacture the side, roof and floor panels has been moved into the space vacated by the warehouse. The transportation of the parts to the assembly lines is via the external roadway on trollies, towed by a tugger truck. It is possible these parts would be moving during all shifts on site (6am 10pm). The towing process does generate a rattle which we believe is the issue. There are no deliveries or vehicle movement outside normal day shift working practices (7:30am 6pm). Following the installation of an internal lift and mezzanine all such movements are now carried out inside the building.
- 34. During the tour of the facility, it was noticed that the light installed on the temporary warehouse was pointing across towards the houses. It was agreed that this light could be tilted down to avoid the light issues it may be creating for the residents. This has been logged with our internal site maintenance team and will be tilted down as soon as possible.

The above is not intended to list every point made and represents a summary of the comments received on this application. The full written text is available for inspection on the application file which can be viewed at https://publicaccess.durham.gov.uk/online-applicationS/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=P8X9C0GDL8J00

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

35. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that if regard is to be had to the development plan, decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In accordance with advice within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the policies contained therein are material considerations that should be taken into account in decision making. Other material considerations include representations received. In this context, it is considered that the main planning issues in this instance relate to: the principle of the development, residential amenity, highway safety and access and visual impact.

Principle of the Development

The Development Plan

- 36. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material planning consideration. The County Durham Plan (CDP) is the statutory development plan and the starting point for determining applications as set out in the Planning Act and reinforced at Paragraph 12 of the NPPF. The CDP was adopted in October 2020 and provides the policy framework for the County up until 2035.
- 37. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking this means:
 - c) approving development proposals that accord with an up to date development plan without delay; or

- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or,
 - ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 38. The NPPF advises that 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. The business continues to employ approximately 550 local people with substantial economic benefits for the local community. The temporary storage facility is essential to allow the business to continue production due to the insecurity of parts deliveries following the global pandemic, Ukrainian conflict and subsequent disruption to logistics and supply chains. The facility was required urgently and will still be needed going forward to allow the business to continue and the local benefits that the business brings.
- 39. The site is an existing protected employment site in the County Durham Plan therefore policy 2 is of relevance. Policy 2 supports development of and extensions to B1, B2 and B8 developments within specified areas, Delves Lane South being one such area. This is a B8 use class and would involve better facilities and job retention therefore it is supported by the Part 6 of the Framework and Policy 2 of the CDP in principle. It should be noted that planning permission would still be required in the future to change from B8 storage to B2 general industrial (manufacturing).

Highways Safety and Access

- 40. Policy 21 of the CDP outlines that development should not be prejudicial to highway safety or have a severe cumulative impact on network capacity. It also expects developments to deliver well designed pedestrian routes and sufficient cycle and car parking provision. Similarly, Policy 29 advocates that convenient access is made for all users of the development together with connections to existing cycle and pedestrian routes. Specifically, the NPPF sets out at Paragraph 110 that safe and suitable access should be achieved for all people. In addition, Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that development should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts on development are severe.
- 41. The temporary storage building is not considered to directly lead to any additional impacts on the highway network. Assurances have been given that adequate staff parking is available on site and DCC Highways have raised no objection to the proposals. The company continue to encourage all staff to park within the site. In summary it is considered that the proposal accords with the relevant part of the Framework and Policy 21 of the CDP.

Visual Impacts

42. Policy 29 of the CDP outlines that development proposals should contribute positively to an area's character, identity, heritage significance, townscape and landscape features, helping to create and reinforce locally distinctive and sustainable communities. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF also seek to promote good design, while protecting and enhancing local environments. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF also states

that planning decisions should aim to ensure developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area and establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit.

- 43. Policy 39 of the County Durham Plan states proposals for new development will be permitted where they would not cause unacceptable harm to the character, quality or distinctiveness of the landscape, or to important features or views. Proposals would be expected to incorporate appropriate measures to mitigate adverse landscape and visual effects. Policy 26 outlines developments are expected to provide new green infrastructure and ensure provision for its long-term management and maintenance. Similar requirements are outlined in Policy 29. Policy 40 seeks to avoid the loss of existing trees and hedgerows unless suitable replacement planting is provided. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF promotes good design and sets out that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (amongst other things) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.
- 44. The site is outside of any area of specific landscape value, rather it is allocated in the CDP for employment uses. However the siting and scale of the temporary building is clearly within the outlook of nearby residential properties, notably those on Sunningdale and accordingly it is acknowledged that it does have a substantial visual impact with a ridge height of almost 11m. The recently approved building has a ridge height of 9m in comparison and it is unlikely that a permanent building of this scale could be supported. The temporary nature of the proposal therefore weighs heavily in the acceptability of the structure which is required due to the unprecedented delay in supply chain issues for the business, due to initially the COVID pandemic and now the conflict in Ukraine.
- 45. The NPPF advises that 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. The visual impact of the structure is such that a permanent approval would not be considered acceptable, but on balance, and based entirely on its temporary nature and enforceable end date, the marginal negative visual impact can be accepted given the economic benefits that are considered to weigh favourably overall. On this basis the proposal would be acceptable in regard to Policies 29 and 39 of the CDP.

Residential Amenity

- 46. Policies 29 and 31 of the CDP outline that developments should provide high standards of amenity and privacy, minimise the impact of development upon the occupants of existing adjacent and nearby properties and not lead to unacceptable levels of pollution. A Residential Amenity Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has also been adopted by the Council. The aforementioned policies and SPD can be afforded significant weight. Parts 12 and 15 of the NPPF require a good standard of amenity for existing and future users.
- 47. There has been a substantial level of local objection raised in respect of noise and light pollution which are significant material considerations. Discussions and site inspections have taken place to establish exactly what processes are taking place in what parts of the site. It is evident that the temporary building is a very quiet operation, with its use limited to racked storage only. There are no manufacturing processes taking place within it and its B8 use class would in fact restrict it to storage only.
- 48. Notwithstanding the above, concern was raised that vehicle and stock movements to the warehouse would create noise with rattles from tugger trucks and cages being a

long-established issue for local residents. However, a significant amendment in process has also been initiated since the original application was submitted in response to the raised concerns. Until recently parts were transported externally using a tugger truck on a route which passed by residential properties on Sunningdale. Following the installation of a new internal lift and mezzanine floor, these external parts movements have ceased with all such operations now entirely within the main building.

- 49. So in terms of the proposal under consideration no significant noise is likely to be generated within the storage building itself and the changes to the assembly line process in terms of parts movement have been significantly mitigated by the applicant.
- 50. Additional concerns are raised in regards to light spill. This assessment is only considering new lights proposed as part of the temporary installation. Following the receipt of photographs from local residents as well as a site visit, it is acknowledged that certainly one of the new building's lights was pointing towards Sunningdale with light spill likely. It was agreed that this was unacceptable and that the lighting should be either shielded or re-orientated to avoid this. Subject to a condition to control this, it is considered that an acceptable lighting solution can be delivered for the temporary lights which would not significantly impact upon neighbouring residential properties.
- 51. Given the changed assembly line procedures and proposed lighting condition it is considered that the impact on residential amenity will be acceptable in regard to Policies 29 and 31 of the CDP.

Other Considerations

- 52. Policy 29 of the CDP sets out that major development should achieve CO2 reductions. Part 14 of the NPPF advises that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Policy 41 Biodiversity and Geodiversity states that proposal for new development will not be permitted if significant harm to biodiversity or geodiversity resulting from the development cannot be avoided, or appropriately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for. Policy 35 requires all development proposals to consider the effect of the proposed development on flood risk, both on-site and off-site, commensurate with the scale and impact of the development and taking into account the predicted impacts of climate change for the lifetime of the proposal. Policy 36 advocates a hierarchy of drainage options for the disposal of foul water.
- 53. Given the unique temporary nature of the proposal, which would be removed after December 2024, it is considered on balance that normal targets in terms of sustainability, biodiversity and SUDs measures, are almost impossible to achieve however these issues will need to be addressed as part of the pending permanent application which the applicant is preparing.
- 54. The majority of issues raised in the letters of objection received have been taken account and addressed within the report, where appropriate. In terms of the issue of bad language from employees, this has been passed onto the applicant but is not an issue to be controlled by the planning system.

Public Sector Equality Duty

55. Officers have considered whether there are implications in the proposals including the loss of the existing land, the nature of the proposed development and the development period that would affect rights under the Human Rights conventions and the Equalities Act 2010 over and above those implicit in the planning assessment, concluding that in this instance there are none. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities when exercising their functions to have due regard to the need to i) the

need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct, ii) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share that characteristic.

56. In this instance, officers have assessed all relevant factors and do not consider that there are any equality impacts identified.

CONCLUSION

- 57. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 58. In summary, the application site is an existing industrial operation, and the proposal does not seek to change this. The applicant has demonstrated a willingness to mitigate the lighting and noise impact of not only the temporary warehouse but the wider lawful operation on site. The scale and visual impact of the building would introduce an element of visual harm, albeit it small, but on a temporary basis, and when balanced against the economic benefits, this can be accepted subject to the conditions listed below.
- 59. Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with Policies 2. 21, 26, 29, 31, 35, 36, 39, 40 and 41 of the County Durham Plan and Parts 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be **APPROVED** subject to the following conditions:

1. This permission is granted for a temporary period expiring at the 31st December 2024 thereafter the site shall be reinstated to its former use and condition.

Reason: The development is only considered suitable for a temporary period in accordance with Policies 29 and 31 of the County Durham Plan and Part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved plans listed in Part 3 - Approved Plans.

Reason: To define the consent and ensure that a satisfactory form of development is obtained in accordance with Policy 29 of the County Durham Plan and Part 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Details of any external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority within 1 month of the date of this decision. The detail provided shall demonstrate adherence to the ILP guidance notes for the reduction of intrusive light. The external lighting shall be erected and maintained in accordance with the approved details thereafter.

Reason: In order to minimise light spillage and glare, in accordance with Policy 31 of the County Durham Plan and Part 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. The development hereby approved shall at all times be operated in accordance with the submitted Revised Assembly Line Transportation Route document.

Reason: In the interests of residential amenity in accordance with Policy 31 of the County Durham Plan.

STATEMENT OF PROACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with Article 35(2) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the Local Planning Authority has, without prejudice to a fair and objective assessment of the proposals, issues raised and representations received, sought to work with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner with the objective of delivering high quality sustainable development to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area in accordance with the NPPF.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Submitted application form, plans, supporting documents and subsequent information provided by the applicant Statutory, internal and public consultation responses The National Planning Policy Framework National Planning Practice Guidance Notes County Durham Plan County Durham Landscape Strategy (2008)

Planning Services	Erection and use of a temporary warehouse building (70m x 30m) until December 2024 and three permanent welfare units.	
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