

Spring Gardens Shopping Centre
Buxton
Environmental Statement
Non-Technical Summary

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Indigo

In conjunction with

Camlin Lonsdale
Wardell Armstrong
CgMs
Capita Symonds
Ashley Helme Associates

indigo

Indigo Planning Limited
36 Park Row
Leeds
LS1 5JL

Tel: 0113 380 0270
Fax: 0113 380 0271

info@indigoplanning.com
indigoplanning.com

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared to accompany a full planning application submitted on behalf of Zurich Assurance Ltd c/o Threadneedle Asset Management Limited and Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd for a comprehensive mixed use development comprising a foodstore, retail, hotel, offices and multi storey car park on land currently used as a surface level car park to the rear of the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre, Buxton. The development represents a major regeneration opportunity to put the site to more beneficial town centre use.
- 1.2. The ES has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (S.I.1999 No 293) 'The Regulations') and should be read in conjunction with the submitted plans and other documentation submitted with the planning application.
- 1.3. The proposed development has been the subject of discussions with Planning Officers at High Peak Borough Council ('the Council') at a number of pre-application meetings. Further to an EIA screening and scoping request (letter dated 5 September 2007) made by Indigo, the Council confirmed that the development has the potential to cause significant environmental effects and consequently it is EIA development for which an Environmental Statement (ES) is required to support the application. The screening and scoping request included a Scoping Report which the Council advised (letter dated 29 October 2007) covered a sufficient scope of information needed to test the environmental impacts of the scheme.
- 1.4. As detailed in the Scoping Report, agreed by High Peak Borough Council, the ES has addressed the following scope of issues with a dedicated chapter on each:
 - Socio-demographic and population effects;
 - Visual, Built Heritage and Landscape Impact;
 - Transportation;
 - Air Quality;
 - Noise and Vibration;
 - Hydrology: Water Resources, Flood Risk, Drainage and Groundwater;
 - Archaeology;
 - Sustainability.
- 1.5. For each issue considered within the ES, the adopted methodology is set out including details of the existing (baseline) situation and impact likely to result from the proposed development. Using this information, any mitigation measures necessary to reduce or avoid the impact are identified in the main body of the ES, and the significance of any remaining impacts are evaluated.
- 1.6. Consideration of other technical aspects relevant to the development, including ecology, ground conditions and waste have been carried out by the applicant team. An assessment of the site revealed little ecological value, and it was agreed that it was not necessary to assess ecological impacts further. Similarly given the existing nature of the site the Council agreed it is unlikely that there will be any issues relating to ground conditions. With regards waste,

whilst waste production will arise from the development it is agreed that it is unlikely to cause any significant adverse effects and has not been considered in the ES other than through the Sustainability Chapter.

2. Site Location

Site Description

- 2.1. The site comprises approximately 2.8 hectares and is located within the town centre of Buxton.
- 2.2. The development site is currently used as the surface level car park for the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre which also serves the rest of the town centre. The application site also includes the exiting Spring Gardens Shopping Centre which will remain, and a small parcel of land to the east of New Wye Street which is also used and will be retained as a surface level car park.
- 2.3. Given its current use as a surface level car park, the site is principally made up of hard standing, with the exception of the River Wye which is culverted throughout the majority of the site.
- 2.4. The application site is environmentally unremarkable with little ecological or visual merit, attributed largely to its current use. The site does however adjoin the Buxton Conservation Area. The site is situated in an area designated by the Council as a “Regeneration Area” by saved Policy 39 (TC15) of the adopted High Peak Local Plan.
- 2.5. The site is within the ownership of Zurich Assurance Ltd (c/o Threadneedle Asset Management Limited) who also own the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre. The application site also includes land within the ownership of the Local Highways Authority.

Surrounding Area

- 2.6. The town’s main retail area is located on Spring Gardens to the south of the site and The Quadrant directly west of the site. Beyond the main retail area on the quadrant to the west of the site lies the Buxton Crescent which fronts onto the landscaped areas of the slopes within the heart of Buxton town centre.
- 2.7. The train station is located to the north of the site beyond Station Road which is at an elevated level in relation to the surface level car park. To the west of the train station is an Aldi foodstore and beyond that the associated car parking is the Buxton Mineral Water Factory which takes a dominant position on the outside of the town centre.
- 2.8. The Buxton Conservation Area abuts the development site at its west and east and in some discreet locations on the southern edge at the rear of Spring Gardens.

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1. The proposed development comprises a mix of large foodstore and small scale retail units a hotel, offices and the consolidation and expansion of the existing car parking provision into a new multi-storey car park.
- 3.2. The scheme will provide significant new local employment opportunities and represents a physical improvement to the existing surface level car park and currently exposed rear elevation of the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre. The application proposes the following schedule of uses:
- Retail foodstore of circa 6,174sqm (66,386 sq ft) Gross External Area;
 - Hotel of circa 3,570sqm (38,392 sq ft) Gross External Area (82 beds);
 - Office floorspace of circa 430 sqm (4,628 sq ft) Gross External Area;
 - Retail Units (Use Class A1-A4 inclusive), totalling circa 1,556 sqm (16,726 sq ft) Gross External Area; and
 - Multi-storey car park.
- 3.3. Additional to the above land uses the scheme will provide a comprehensive scheme of landscaping and areas of new public realm.

Retail

- 3.4. The foodstore will be located to the west of the site (to the north of the existing Spring Gardens Shopping Centre). The store's main pedestrian entrance will be at street level from Station Road providing an active frontage and link from Station Road through the store into the existing shopping centre and town centre beyond. Pedestrian access to the store will also be gained from the existing shopping centre. The foodstore will comprise three storeys from the ground level of the existing car park including two levels of car parking beneath the foodstore; the store will be at single storey above pavement level on Station Road.
- 3.5. In addition to the foodstore, an additional small scale retail provision will equate to circa 1,556 sq m within four separate retail units located to the south east of the site proximate to the open section of the River Wye.

Hotel

- 3.6. Station Road slopes down to the east towards the existing roundabout. As this occurs the proposed buildings increase in height with the downward slope resulting in a maximum of five storeys at the proposed hotel adjacent to the roundabout.
- 3.7. The new hotel, which will comprise a 82 bedroom Premier Inn, will meet a niche in the market for mid range hotel accommodation in Buxton satisfying an acknowledged identified tourist needs. This will compliment and expand the hotel accommodation within the town.

Car Park

- 3.8. The development proposal will result in a total net increase of 202 car parking spaces on the site from the existing 427 on the surface level car park to 629.
- 3.9. Access to the car park is provided via a single access arrangement from New Wye Street to

maintain the principal of the existing site's car park access arrangement.

- 3.10. The car park is located both beneath the foodstore and sandwiched between the hotel and the non food retail units to minimise visual impact.

Design and Landscaping

- 3.11. The development has been designed to respect the surrounding context of the town and the scheme also includes areas of comprehensive landscaping to provide a pleasant environment for pedestrians and users of the facilities.

Summary

- 3.12. The scheme will create a sustainable mixed use development within the town centre which will maximise the use of a currently under utilised town centre site which makes no positively contribution to the local economy and character of Buxton. The scale of the uses proposed is entirely appropriate for the location of the site and will assist in meeting specifically identified community and development needs.

4. The Environmental Statement

4.1. The ES addresses the following issues along with a dedicated chapter on each:

- Planning Policy Context;
- Socio-demographic and population effects;
- Visual, Built Heritage and Landscape Impact;
- Transportation;
- Air Quality;
- Noise and Vibration;
- Hydrology: Water Resources, Flood Risk, Drainage and Groundwater;
- Archaeology;
- Sustainability.

4.2. Set out below is a brief synopsis of the key findings and conclusions in respect of each topic of the ES. However, in order to fully understand the likely environmental impact of the proposal, it is important to consider each of the above issues in detail, and also to understand the inter-relationship between these. The summary below should therefore be read in that context.

Planning Policy Context

- 4.3. The development will create a sustainable mixed use development within the town centre which accords with all the principles of National Planning Policy as set out in PPS1, PPS6, PPG13, PPS22 and PPS25.
- 4.4. Within the adopted Derbyshire Structure Plan, Buxton is recognised in the second tier of the regional hierarchy of centres as a ‘town centre’. As such, development proposals are encouraged where they will sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the centres.
- 4.5. The local planning policy for the site is contained in the adopted High Peak Local Plan (March 2005) and the Buxton Station Road Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which will form part of the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF is at an early stage of preparation and consequently the Council have ‘saved’ the majority of the policies of the Local Plan. The Station Road SPD however is adopted and supplements the Local Plan representing a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 4.6. The site is shown on the Local Plan Proposals Map as part of the Buxton Central Regeneration Area which is permissive of comprehensive redevelopment schemes including retail, leisure, office, housing and tourist accommodation facilities provided that the development meets other planning policy criteria. All uses proposed are consistent with the site’s Regeneration Area allocation.
- 4.7. The Local Plan specifically states that the site offers scope for town centre redevelopment in order to enhance the area which “*currently presents the very stark rear view of the Spring Gardens Shopping Centre from the relief road and the station area.*” The Plan states that any car parking that will be displaced as part of the scheme will need to be incorporated into

the new development, which will be achieved through the development proposal.

- 4.8. The Buxton Station Road SPD seeks to guide development and regeneration activity within the area to realise the full potential of the area as a gateway to the town centre, improve pedestrian movement and connectivity, address the negative aspects of Station Road, integrate the River Wye and to transform the appearance of the Station Road corridor from the back door to the front door of the town centre, amongst other objectives.
- 4.9. The SPD states that pastiche development should be avoided in favour of high quality contemporary architecture that responds to the distinctive building and townscape qualities of Buxton town centre.
- 4.10. The design of the scheme has regard to the town's built heritage and the character of the adjacent Conservation Areas to provide a development which will represent a significant physical improvement to the existing site.

Socio-demographic and Population Effects

- 4.11. One of the principal threads of planning policy is the need to promote regeneration and economic growth. For example PPS6 specifically refers to factors that should be taken into consideration when assessing appropriate locations for development each of which are directly related to this overarching focus on regeneration, i.e. physical regeneration, employment, economic growth and social inclusion.
- 4.12. Though the site currently performs an important function as the main town centre car park, its size and proximity to the town centre coupled with its poor environmental quality in its current state means that the site is not fulfilling its potential. The development will provide new economic use and regenerate the site in addition to maintaining and enhancing the current car parking provision. It is demonstrated in the ES that the site will have a major positive impact on the socio-economic status of Buxton.
- 4.13. The scheme will increase the retail offer of Buxton which will have a positive impact for more sustainable patterns of retail travel, enhancing consumer choice and benefiting retail competition. It will also meet tourist needs; the new hotel will extend the range of accommodation providing for new overnight visitors in Buxton resulting in additional expenditure into the town centre.
- 4.14. The scheme will result in approximately 320 jobs from the retail and hotel components and a further 20 - 40 in the office accommodation plus in excess of 50 induced jobs. In addition circa 200 temporary jobs will be created over the 30 month construction period. These employment opportunities will be immediate, broad ranging, and specifically directed at the local population. They will be varied in skill level and nature.

Visual, Built Heritage and Landscape Impact

- 4.15. The Landscape, Visual, and Built Heritage chapter of the ES assesses the likely landscape and visual impacts of the development proposals and their consequent effects on the relevant receptors, including the setting of built heritage features, identified through a series of discussions with the Council's Design and Conservation officer and English Heritage. Where potential negative effects were predicted mitigation measures to reduce such effects were considered and proposed for incorporation into the evolving design where possible.
- 4.16. The assessment was based on a series of views taken from publicly accessible points that were selected in consultation with Council Officers as representing an indication of the typical situation for areas surrounding the proposed development area. In order to inform the assessment photomontages for the viewpoints have been prepared with the basic block massing for the proposed development superimposed on existing views to illustrate the magnitude of change at each particular viewpoint and aid the prediction of the likely scale, form and massing of the proposed buildings in comparison with the existing view of the site.

- 4.17. The baseline situation was established and assessment work followed in stages beginning in September 2007 to enable the worse case scenario, of winter vegetation cover, to be assessed. Further desk based studies and reassessments were conducted in November 2008, December 2008, and February 2009 to assess the visual impacts associated with revisions to the proposals particularly at the west end following discussions with English Heritage. The finalised scheme includes a greater degree of architectural detail for the proposed development at the western end to meet concerns raised by English Heritage and Council officers.
- 4.18. The landscape and visual impact assessment concludes that the introduction of built form on the site and associated public realm will have a positive impact. Presently the site has a degraded landscape associated with the existing surface level car parks to the north of the existing Spring Gardens Shopping Centre. The scheme offers the opportunity to significantly improve the visual quality of the public realm within the development area, introducing a public realm framework appropriate to its new use.
- 4.19. The assessment of the built heritage features has established that the development overall would have the effect of preserving the setting of surrounding built heritage features and has the potential to enhance the setting of the adjacent and nearby conservation areas, listed buildings, and registered park subject to the detailed design of elements of the development and of the public realm.
- 4.20. The assessment finds that direct impacts would have a moderately beneficial effect on the landscape resource; a slightly beneficial effect on the visual resource; and, that predicted visual impacts will at least preserve and have the potential to enhance the character and setting of the identified built heritage resource where there is a visual interrelationship between the development and the setting of the relevant features.
- 4.21. Overall the assessment concluded that the development will complement surrounding land uses and can be integrated successfully within its surrounding town centre context including built heritage features in the vicinity of the site. It would therefore accord with the relevant planning policy for the area.

Transportation

- 4.22. The development proposal is expected to generate additional travel movements to and from the Spring Gardens Centre. A comprehensive appraisal of transport sustainability has been undertaken, which finds that the location of the development offers excellent opportunity for travel on foot, or by cycle, bus or train. The scheme accords with policies at both national and local level aimed at reducing the reliance on the car for travel.
- 4.23. The development proposal includes car parking, which will be accessed from New Wye Street which will be upgraded. The development will introduce additional traffic movements on roads near to the Site. The effect of this additional traffic has been thoroughly examined during peak times (weekday and Saturday) and it is concluded that the local roads are capable of accommodating the additional car trips without any adverse consequences on highway safety or capacity.

Air Quality

- 4.24. The potential impacts of the proposed development on air quality primarily relate to generation of dust during the construction of the proposed development and the increase in air pollution caused by increased vehicle emissions from traffic once the development is operational.
- 4.25. Prior to operation of the new development earthworks/enabling works will be carried out. This will involve ground preparation to enable construction work to be carried out, which is likely to result in the creation and movement of dust, and additional exhaust emissions created by vehicles and plant associated with the works.

- 4.26. To mitigate dust impacts a number of measures will be implemented for dust suppression; the assessed impact of dust will be minor at all sensitive receptors.
- 4.27. The assessment has also considered the potential emissions from site plant and vehicles during earthworks/enabling works and construction phases. It has also considered the potential emissions from traffic during each of these phases, concluding that the good maintenance of site plant and vehicles will ensure that emissions are minimised and that the residual impacts are not significant. The residual impact of earthworks/enabling works and construction phase traffic emissions will also not be significant.
- 4.28. Air pollution concentrations arising from the development have the potential to increase due to additional vehicle movements and exhaust emissions associated. To determine the impact that the proposed development may have on air quality the future concentrations of air pollutants have been predicted with and without the proposed development (and associated vehicle movements) in place.
- 4.29. A comparison of pollutant concentrations has then been carried out to determine the impact on air quality caused by the proposed development. The model predicted that none of the air pollutant concentrations will exceed any of the accepted objectives with the development operational.
- 4.30. The changes in concentrations of pollutants due to traffic generated by the proposed development have been assessed, and the results confirm that such impact will be insignificant.

Noise and Vibration

- 4.31. The assessment considers the impacts generated by the earth works/enabling works, construction phase and operational phase of the proposed development. Impacts have been considered at both existing noise sensitive locations and also at the potentially sensitive elements of the development itself i.e. the hotel.
- 4.32. During the earthworks and construction phase of the development, any work on the site is likely to generate noise, which may propagate beyond the site boundary. The levels of noise at the properties close to the site will depend on a number of factors including the sound output of the machines used, the distance between the properties and sources of noise, and the presence of any barriers.
- 4.33. To reduce the potential impact of noise levels generated during the construction phase of development at existing receptor locations in the immediate vicinity of the site, mitigation measures (outlined in the ES) will be put in place. In addition best working practice will be implemented during each phase of the enabling works, earthworks and construction works at the site, with the effects of the development being negligible with only brief periods of minor impacts.
- 4.34. However, as with noise from earthworks and construction works, working practices should be implemented to prevent unnecessary vibration at all receptors.
- 4.35. It is possible that piling will be required; however at this time it is not known what type of piling would be used. If piling is required, once the ground conditions for each location and subsequent type of piling are confirmed, the estimation of vibration levels could be used to assist with the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures.
- 4.36. The impact of traffic noise on existing residential properties, due to vehicle movements associated with the development, has been predicted, and which indicate that if the development was to proceed as proposed, the increase in traffic noise would not be perceptible at the existing sensitive receptor locations identified in the area surrounding the site.

- 4.37. Measures to control noise from sources associated with the operational phase of development, for example the air handling units and activities associated with the delivery of goods to the food store and retail units, will be included in the detailed design of the development to control and limit noise impact is not created at existing noise receptors.

Hydrology: Water Resources, Flood Risk, Drainage and Groundwater

- 4.38. A proportion of the proposed development is at risk from flooding from the River Wye and from surface water flooding, namely the areas of public open space and some of the small retail units proposed near the River Wye. The remainder of the site is not vulnerable.
- 4.39. The site is on an existing impermeable surface and this will remain following construction which means there will be no increase in the amount of surface water that runs off the site into the River Wye. Implementation of a construction management plan during the redevelopment of the site will ensure measures are taken to restrict water penetrating the ground surface, this is required because of the sensitivity of the groundwater below the site.
- 4.40. The proposals will not have any significant impact on the River Wye or on the level of flood risk on site or downstream, however climate change guidance indicates that flood risk may increase over time as a result of changing weather patterns. Flood risk to the areas of public open space adjacent to the River Wye and to the small retail units adjacent to the river will be managed as part of the proposals, an emergency flood plan will be implemented which includes a flood alarm system, evacuation procedures and designated evacuation routes.
- 4.41. Overall the impacts of the proposed development on the water environment are assessed as 'not significant' with the use of appropriate mitigation measures.

Archaeology

- 4.42. Buxton came to prominence as a spa during the Roman period. Remains related to the spa have been found close to the site of St Anne's Well, approximately 250m south-west of the site, and recorded remains of the Roman town lie generally to the south and east of the well. There is no indication that the small Roman town survived beyond the end of the Roman period, and there are no records of Saxon remains in the vicinity. Nor is Buxton recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, the earliest documentary reference dating from 1108. In 1572-3 New Hall was built for visitors taking the waters, and Buxton continued to develop through the seventeenth century, although it remained a very small settlement. The town grew extensively from towards the end of the eighteenth century, although the site remained undeveloped until the Midland Railway occupied its northern portion in 1863. Piecemeal development continued thereafter, and in the late 1960s and 1970s the site was comprehensively redeveloped with the construction of Station Road, New Wye Street and the Spring Gardens shopping centre.
- 4.43. The site has a generally low potential for archaeological remains, particularly taking into account the extensive terracing and ground modelling that has taken place during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is however considered prudent to implement an archaeological watching brief during the earthworks phase of development, followed by the archaeological investigation and recording of any remains, and their subsequent analysis, reporting and archiving. Preservation by record in this form could be secured by a planning condition.

Sustainability

- 4.44. The ES appraises the development against the sustainability principles and objectives contained in National, Regional and Local Planning Policies. It is concluded that:
- The proposed development involves the redevelopment of a brownfield site of low ecological and environmental value. The ecological value of the site will be enhanced through the provision of landscaping features within the development.

- The development will provide town centre facilities (retail and hotel) in a highly accessible location within the existing town centre.
 - The development is of a scale, density and design which is appropriate and sensitive to the existing town centre and the nearby Conservation Areas. The development will generate a significant level of employment for the local population.
 - The development proposals have been influenced by the cultural heritage of the site and surroundings.
 - The proposed development is located close to public transport links and local amenities, facilities and services.
 - Pedestrian routes throughout the site will be developed and storage facilities for cycles will be provided with a view to reduce the need for vehicle travel and promote the adoption of more sustainable transport modes.
 - Contractors will carry out construction activities in accordance with best practice with a view to preventing, minimising or controlling any impact of the construction and demolition.
 - Construction processes will be carried out in a way which would where possible minimise the indirect impact of materials with sustainable materials being selected wherever possible.
- 4.45. Overall the scheme will contribute positively to the sustainability objectives set out in relevant policy documents.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. Conclusions of the assessments on specific topics of potential concern carried out for this EIA are reported in the ES. In reaching a conclusion, each topic takes into account the particular issues of concern in relation to that topic and any features of the design proposals which would address likely environmental concerns or minimise potentially significant effects.
- 5.2. The individual assessments conclude that there are unlikely to be any significant effects on the environment arising as a result of the development. Development control is promoted within the ES, including mitigation measures in relation to construction and operational use in order to minimise potential adverse effects during the construction period and post construction period. These include protection against noise, dust pollution and adverse transport effects. Any residual adverse effects remaining from construction carried out in accordance with the measures identified to minimise the disturbance will be temporary in nature and of low significance.
- 5.3. It is concluded that the development proposed in the submitted application will not result in any significant adverse effects on the environment, and that all environmental effects can be appropriately controlled.