



KRONOSPAN, CHIRK

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WAREHOUSE BUILDING IN THE NORTH EASTERN AREA OF THE SITE AND ANCILLARY WORKS INCLUDING ALTERATION TO EXISTING BUND AND EXISTING EAST WAREHOUSE

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

JULY 2021

The axis logo consists of a solid blue square with the word 'axis' in white, lowercase, sans-serif font centered within it.

Chester Office | Well House Barns | Chester Road | Bretton | Chester | CH4 0DH
South Manchester Office | Camellia House | 76 Water Lane | Wilmslow | SK9 5BB
t 0844 8700 007 | e enquiries@axisped.co.uk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application made by Kronospan Limited (hereafter referred to as 'Kronospan') for the development of a warehouse building with ancillary works which are described in Section 2 (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development would be located at the existing Kronospan Manufacturing Facility in Chirk (hereafter referred to as 'the Site').
- 1.1.2 This document is to be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement, planning drawings and technical assessments which accompany the proposal. In particular, the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment provides analysis and commentary, which is relevant to the contents of this document.
- 1.1.3 The statutory requirement for the production of a Design and Access Statement is set out within Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (see details below). It requires that this application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement that sets out the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development, demonstrates how the development takes context into account, and how issues relating to access to the development have been dealt with.

1.2 Structure of Design and Access Statement

- 1.2.1 This Design and Access Statement is divided into 7 sections. Following this Section, Section 2.0 describes the legal background and guidance that underpins the document. Section 3.0 describes the Site and its surroundings. Section 4.0 provides a description of the Proposed Development and Section 5.0 describes the design principles. Section 6.0 identifies policies and issues relating to access. Section 7.0 provides some concise conclusions.

2.0 LEGAL BACKGROUND AND GUIDANCE

2.1 Legislative requirements

- 2.1.1 The legal requirement to provide a Design and Access Statement is set out in Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 (as amended). This is hereafter referred to as the “DMPO”.
- 2.1.2 A Design and Access Statement is required for development which is (*inter alia*) a major development. The Proposed Development is a major development as it would provide for greater than 1,000sqm of new floorspace, and accordingly a Design and Access Statement is provided.
- 2.1.3 Paragraph 4 of Article 7 requires that a Design and Access Statement must:
- (a) explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development;
 - (b) demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the development and how the design of the development takes that context into account;
 - (c) explain the policy adopted as to access, and how policies relating to access in the development plan have been taken into account;
 - (e) explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the development have been addressed.

2.2 Design and Access Statements in Wales (April 2017)

- 2.2.1 This document provides guidance on how good design can be reflected in a Design and Access Statements.
- 2.2.2 A Design and Access Statement “...communicates what is proposed and demonstrates the design process that has been undertaken to reach the final proposal” (page 5). It is recommended that a Design and Access Statement is concise.
- 2.2.3 This statement provides a description of the relevant design and access issues in respect of the development. The level of detail provided is considered to be appropriate and proportionate to the nature and complexity of the scheme.

3.0 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1.1 The Proposed Development comprises the construction of a new warehouse and ancillary works. The location for the Proposed Development is within the existing Kronospan Manufacturing Site, which is located on land adjacent to Holyhead Road (the B5070), Chirk and covers a total area of approximately 40 hectares.
- 3.1.2 The warehouse would be in the north east of the site with Holyhead Road to the east and existing buildings to the west and south. This part of the site is currently used for open storage and an existing planted bund screens the development from the east.
- 3.1.3 The entirety of the Kronospan site covers an area of circa 40ha, with circa 14ha of this developed with industrial buildings and plant. A number of industrial process facilities are located in the west portion of the site. These facilities are used to process, sort and dry the raw wood materials used in the manufacture of MDF / particle board and include a number of tall structures including stacks that emit clean process emissions to the atmosphere. The tallest structure on the site is the combined heat and power (CHP) biomass plant stack which is 70m in height.
- 3.1.4 A number of process buildings are located in the northern half of the site including: a sawmill, formalin plant and the secondary product manufacturing facility (*Kronoplus*) which produces laminate flooring and worktops.
- 3.1.5 The site car park, reception building, weighbridge and main site offices are located in the south eastern corner of the site to the south of the MDF / particle board manufacturing buildings.
- 3.1.6 The western perimeter of the Kronospan site is formed by the Shrewsbury to Chester railway. Improved railway siding facilities have been constructed within the site to enable an increased volume of timber to be imported by rail. The Llangollen Canal is located to the west of the railway line, circa 30m from the boundary of the site at its closest point. The canal is designated as the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site and as a Scheduled Monument. Water is abstracted from the canal for use in the manufacturing process. The eastern perimeter of the site is formed by Holyhead Road (B5070). An earth bund, planted with trees, has been developed along the eastern perimeter of the site in order to reduce the visibility of the site operations from neighbouring properties on Holyhead Road.

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- 3.1.7 A sewerage pumping station and one property, owned by Kronospan, are located to the immediate north of the site. To the immediate south of the site is the Cadbury's (Mondelez) factory, the Chirk AAA sports ground and the Chirk recreational ground.
- 3.1.8 The main residential area of Chirk is located to the east of the site with residential properties lining the majority of the eastern side of Holyhead Road. Chirk town centre is located approximately 500m to the south and south east of the site and parts of the town centre are designated as Chirk Conservation Area.
- 3.1.9 The wider area beyond the urban settlement of Chirk is dominated by agricultural fields and woodland. Chirk Castle (Grade 1 listed) and its grounds (Registered Park and Garden) are located circa 500m to the west of the site, beyond the canal. The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) also lie to the west of the site, the closest boundary of the AONB runs concurrent with the grounds of Chirk Castle.

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1.1 The proposed general arrangement, floor plan, elevations and sections are shown on drawing 7000/607 Revision D.
- 4.1.2 The main component of the Proposed Development is the warehouse in the north-east of the Site, which would provide for 15,029sqm (GEA) of floorspace. It would be sited within an area currently consisting of hardstanding which is used for storage of equipment associated with the operation of the wider Site. There is one tree in this area, which is the subject of a TPO, which would need to be removed. This area is a relatively narrow strip of land between a large building to the west, and a large building to the south with a bund extending up the eastern and part of the northern side of the Site. The proposal would consist of the construction of a warehouse building with a width of 60m and a length of 240m. The warehouse would be split into three sections, each of 80m in length.
- 4.1.3 The external walls of the eastern and western elevations of the warehouse would be 8.7m in height. There would be a pitched roof which would increase the overall height to 11.7m, which would be the maximum height of the north and south elevations. The land falls from south to north, so each of the three sections would be 1m lower than the adjacent one to the south, with an internal ramp to bridge this difference. Externally, there would be 6 roller shutter doors on the western elevation of the proposed building, 2 in each section. The walls to the east and north elevations would be constructed of galvanised steel sheeting, and the walls facing east and north would be Olive Green in colour.
- 4.1.4 The proposed warehouse would be 20m north of the building to the south, which is known as the East Warehouse. In the space between the two buildings is a large underground gas main which has influenced the position of the proposed warehouse. There would be an 8.5m ramp proposed to allow access between them. This would necessitate the installation of a new roller shutter door in the northern elevation of the East Warehouse.
- 4.1.5 To the west of the proposed warehouse there is the *East Roadway*, which is an internal road within the site providing access to the north of the site. The distance from the western edge of the warehouse to the eastern edge of the roadway would be approximately 5.7m with some variation. The existing gas main runs in parallel

with the eastern edge of the *East Roadway* and has influenced the position of the proposed warehouse.

- 4.1.6 To the west of the southerly third of the building, and beyond the *East Roadway*, there is an area of hardstanding containing several structures. This is the *Log Yard Vehicle Garage Area*. The distance between this area and the proposed warehouse would vary slightly but would be approximately 21.5m at its nearest point. The other two sections of the proposed warehouse, which would be further north, would be opposite *Krononplus*, which is a large building. It is orientated at a slightly different angle to the proposed warehouse, such that the distance between the two varies from approximately 40m at its widest point to approximately 25m at its narrowest.
- 4.1.7 To the north of the proposed warehouse the existing area of hardstanding would remain.
- 4.1.8 To the east of the proposed warehouse there would be some changes to the existing bund and landscaping. A 4m wide working area is proposed to allow for the construction of the development. Following construction, this would allow for pedestrian access to the eastern side of the building, and would consist of a narrow strip of gravel against the building for emergency escape with the remainder as grass. The distance from the eastern edge of the proposed warehouse to the western edge of Holyhead Road would be circa 18m at its northern-most point, with this distances increasing to the south to in excess of 40m.
- 4.1.9 The existing bund is not uniform in height along its length and is not precisely parallel with either the B5070 Holyhead Road or the existing hardstanding. Hence, the extent of its removal to create space for the proposed warehouse varies. The impact would be greatest at the north eastern corner of the warehouse, where the 4m wide working area would extend to the bund's furthest extent (ie. for this small section the bund would be removed in its entirety). However, for much of its length the impact would be restricted to less than half of the bund's width, which is also less than the maximum height. There would be a retaining wall constructed to retain the bund beyond the 4m wide working area. The bund and the areas to the east are planted with trees and other vegetation such that the bund itself is not always visible from Holyhead Road. Some trees would be removed but the majority would be retained. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been conducted to assess the impact.

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- 4.1.10 The proposal would involve the reconstruction of parts of the bund, and planting of trees and other vegetation to provide further screening along the eastern boundary of the Kronospan site.
- 4.1.11 The area of the bund which would be affected by the Proposed Development includes a second tree which is the subject of a TPO. This was planted as a replacement for a tree and is still relatively immature. The intention is to transplant, but more likely replace this tree in a more suitable location.
- 4.1.12 Between the northern extent of *Kronoplus* and the Site's northern boundary a new sprinkler tank is proposed. It would be octagonal with a diameter of approximately 10.8m and a height of 11.4m.

5.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 The following sub-sections provide an explanation of the design principles and concepts that have been applied in formulating the proposal scheme.

5.2 Design Principles and Concepts

Use

- 5.2.1 The Proposed Development would not constitute a change of use at the site, but instead would add additional floorspace to the existing industrial facility. This would complement the existing operations on the Site. The Planning Statement provides a detailed assessment of the land use policies, but as a summary there is support for locating a warehouse in this location. Policies PS1 and PS2 of the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996 – 2011 direct development to within the defined settlement limits / employment areas, which includes the Site as part of the wider settlement of Chirk. Policy PS3 also encourages development on previously developed land, which the Kronospan Facility is considered to be.
- 5.2.2 The policies of the Local Development Plan, which are not adopted but are at an advanced stage, strengthen the approach of the UDP: Policy SP2 continues to direct new development to settlements and employment areas, although the draft Proposals Map proposes to demarcate settlement limits and employment areas so providing a stronger and more focussed indication of where employment uses should be located than the existing UDP. In addition, the Kronospan Facility is within one of 25 designated employment areas in the County of Wrexham which are safeguarded from a change of use, with the rest of Chirk identified as a settlement with defined boundaries. The Proposed Development accords with both the existing and proposed planning policy approach.
- 5.2.3 The Kronospan Facility covers an extensive area on the western side of Chirk. It has been a manufacturing site for over 40 years, and so is well established. The Mondelez site is also to the south, so the industrial context is an established feature of the western side of Chirk. The remainder of Chirk is predominantly residential, and there is a clear demarcation between these two land uses, with Holyhead Road forming the boundary. The Proposed Development would respect this with the Proposed Development being entirely within the existing Kronospan site. There is an existing

planted bund on the eastern boundary of the Kronospan Facility, and this would be altered, but the entirety of the development and the altered bund would be within the area identified for employment uses.

- 5.2.4 Therefore, the immediate and wider context has been considered in determining that the proposed warehouse would be appropriate when considering the Site and also the wider context of Chirk.

Amount

- 5.2.5 The floorspace proposed reflects both the operational needs and the Site's constraints, in particular the bund to the east and its intended purpose of providing a screen. Operationally, there is a greater need for on-site storage than is being proposed. However, the design seeks to balance this against landscape and visual considerations, and the practicalities of design and construction.
- 5.2.6 The original proposal extended further to the north with the building having a fourth section of 80m which would have cut into a substantial amount of the bund at its northern end. Whilst there remains potential for the corresponding part of the bund to be reconstructed to provide screening it was decided that a reduced warehouse would respond to many of the current storage needs and simplify the alteration to the bund.

Layout

- 5.2.7 The layout of the warehouse has been carefully considered, and the Proposed Development has had regard to the buildings and spaces which make up the existing Kronospan Facility. A key component of the layout is the bund which is proposed to be altered. This is primarily discussed under *Views* and *Landscaping* below.
- 5.2.8 The north-eastern part of the Site is currently previously developed land used for open storage, and so it does have a function which contributes to the operation of the Kronospan Facility. However, it is underused and does not serve a specific landscaping purpose with the exception of the areas of the bund which would be altered. The intention is to ultimately improve the productivity of Site by using this previously developed land to allow the Site to operate more efficiently and effectively.
- 5.2.9 The Site Plan and Block Plan show that the Site is well defined on all boundaries. The eastern side of the Site extends to Holyhead Road, but the areas of bund, trees, and grass ensure that the buildings themselves do not extend to its eastern boundary.

The width of this undeveloped area varies due to the path of Holyhead Road deviating, but this is not apparent when travelling along Holyhead Road as the trees and vegetation provide a consistent screen between the Kronospan Facility and public and private vantage points to the east.

- 5.2.10 The Proposed Development has been designed with reference to the existing building to the south, which is known as the East Warehouse. This is a large building used for the storage of products and the distance between it and Holyhead Road is approximately 38m at its nearest point, with dense tree coverage ensuring that it is not visible except for near to the entrance to the Facility. The eastern building line of the proposed warehouse uses the existing building line of the East Warehouse as a reference point with both following the same line. Whilst acknowledging that the distance between the proposed warehouse and the nearest part of Holyhead Road is approximately 18m at its closest point, much of it would be in excess of 38m and so is comparable to the existing building. It is necessary to have a 4m working area between the eastern elevation of the building and the altered bund. This would be for maintenance and access, and is considered proportionate to a building of this size, and cannot be removed.
- 5.2.11 The layout also reflects the practical use of the Proposed Development. The warehouse would be immediately north of the East warehouse with a ramp proposed between the two allowing for vehicular access.
- 5.2.12 The southern and western extents of the proposed warehouse building are dictated by the position of an existing gas main which is shown on drawings 7000_607: access is potentially required to the gas main and hence it cannot be built over. The width of the Proposed Development is less than the width of the East warehouse for this reason. The gas main enters the Site from the east and at the point at which it meets the East Roadway it splits and a branch turns 90 degrees and extends north. The ramp is proposed to cross it, but would only be 8.5m in width and so could be removed if access was required to the relatively small section of gas main which is underneath it.
- 5.2.13 The *East Roadway* is an important existing route within the Site. Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) entering the Site to pick up goods are able to follow a straight route north from the controlled entrance near to the junction with Holyhead Road, through the large storage and production building, to the East Roadway which continues to the northern boundary where vehicles turn west. This minimises the number of turns

that have to be made when navigating through the Site which allows vehicles to move efficiently in the safest manner possible. It is not practical or desirable to disrupt this existing route, which has also influenced the western extent of the proposed warehouse. Even in the absence of the gas main a building could not easily be sited further west. Hence, these constraints have resulted in a building of the width proposed.

- 5.2.14 The existing substantial building to the west is known as *Kronoplus*. The angle of the proposed warehouse would be different to *Kronoplus*, with the gap between them slightly narrowing from south to north, as described in Section 4.0. However, this would not be readily appreciable from outside of the site.
- 5.2.15 Overall, the warehouse layout proposed has responded to the constraints of the Site and the operational requirements. It is a logical position for a building which references the pattern of existing buildings which form part of the existing Kronospan Facility and which constitute the immediate context.
- 5.2.16 The sprinkler tank would be located in a discrete location between *Kronoplus* and the Site's northern boundary, such that it would not be readily visible from either inside of outside of the Kronospan Facility.

Scale

- 5.2.17 The scale of the proposed warehouse is substantial but reflects its use. It would occupy a substantial footprint, albeit on a Site with buildings of a similar or greater scale. For example, the southern part of the Site is occupied by a complex of connected and adjacent buildings and structures, and their collective scale is in excess of the proposed warehouse.
- 5.2.18 The proposed warehouse would have a width of 60m, but this would be appreciated within the Site itself with views of it from public and private areas to the east being very limited.
- 5.2.19 The building would be 11.7m at its highest point with the pitch of the roof reducing this towards the eastern and western walls. This is necessary to allow for the volume of storage required and for products to be stacked and moved as required. This height allows for forklift trucks to safely lift and stack products to a standard height. A lower height would compromise the efficiencies that can be achieved and would necessitate a greater footprint to accommodate the same amount of storage. The height matches

the existing building to the south, which is important as it allows for products to be stored in the same way in both. There is a change in land level from east to west which would result in the proposed warehouse projecting 1.7m higher than *Kronoplus*, even though the height from floor to ceiling would be 30cm less.

5.2.20 The sprinkler tank would be slightly over 11.4m in height. This would be lower than *Kronoplus* which is the building nearest to it.

5.2.21 The conclusion is that although the scale of the Proposed Development would be substantial: the warehouse would be proportionate to other buildings within the Kronospan Facility. Importantly, its scale would not be appreciable from outside of the Site. Even where some glimpses of the warehouse would be possible the overall size and scale of the building would not be readily appreciable. The bund and landscaping have been designed to respond to the height of the building, and this is described in the section below.

Landscape and Visual (including Heritage)

5.2.22 The locations from where the Proposed Development would be visible from cannot be separated from the proposed alterations to the existing bund and landscaping. The application is accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which identifies viewpoints and identifies the potential impacts of the Proposed Development. This includes an assessment of the impacts on heritage assets.

5.2.23 Six viewpoints were identified as being appropriate locations to test the visual impact. This includes two short views from the west along Holyhead Road, two medium views to the north (one from the canal and the other from the edge of Chirk) and two long views. One of the long views was from the Chirk Recreation Ground to the south, whilst the other was from New Hall to the west.

5.2.24 A material consideration is that the Proposed Development would be similar in height to adjacent buildings, slightly higher than *Kronoplus* but lower than other buildings and structures at the Site. Also, the surrounding landform and pattern of vegetation cover (in particular the existing bund and tree cover to the east) is a further consideration.

5.2.25 The larger trees along the Holyhead Road frontage would be retained and those trees which would be removed are considered to be low quality, with replacement trees

planted. The eastern perimeter of the Site would continue to be defined by an extensive belt of tree cover.

- 5.2.26 The impact of the Proposed Development has been modelled from the six viewpoints, and this has demonstrated that there would not be significant visual effects. Generally, the Proposed Development would be very well screened by a combination of landform, vegetation cover and existing structures, and as such, would not be widely visible. It is significant that the modelling was based on the level of vegetation in the winter months when the trees are not in leaf. This is considered to be a worst-case scenario and so throughout the remainder of the year the screening provided by the trees would be greater. Where visible (in the context of the screening features described above), the Proposed Development would be viewed in the context of existing and larger structures already present at the wider Kronospan Facility.
- 5.2.27 Following on from this, it is concluded that the impact on the nearby Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB would not be significant in the context of the Kronospan Facility. The effect on heritage assets is considered in the LVIA and the impact is demonstrated to not be significant.
- 5.2.28 Overall, the impact of the Proposed Development would be acceptable, and hence there is no need for specific mitigation to screen it. The replacement planting would largely be to mitigate the trees which would be removed to make way for the development and the enhance the habitat at the Site. The existing planting would further develop over time.

Appearance

- 5.2.29 The proposed elevations illustrate the Proposed Development's appearance. The warehouse would be constructed of galvanised steel, and it is proposed for the north and east elevations to be Olive Green in colour. The appearance would reflect the use of the building as a warehouse forming part of an industrial facility, but the colour selected is intended to make it blend in alongside the trees and vegetation to the east.
- 5.2.30 The change to the East Warehouse to introduce the roller shutters is a minor change to an existing building. The alteration would only be visible from within the Site, and would not appear incongruous in the context of the building as a whole.
- 5.2.31 The proposed sprinkler tank would also be constructed of steel.

6.0 ACCESS POLICY

- 6.1.1 This section of the Design and Access Statement explains the relevant access policies and sets out how policies relating to access have been considered.
- 6.1.2 The legal basis for Design and Access Statements within the DMPO includes the need for an explanation of how the approach to access has been defined with reference to relevant policy in the development plan.
- 6.1.3 The adopted development plan document of relevance in this case is the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 (UDP), which was adopted on the 14th February 2005. Local Planning Guidance Note 6, *Access to and Use of Buildings*, supports it. This is dated September 2004, updating the original document of February 1993. The Guidance Note seeks Access Statements for developments which are accessed by members of the public or residential developments of 3 or more homes (which does not apply to the Proposed Development).
- 6.1.4 The emerging LDP contains SP12 (Transport and Accessibility) which seeks to improve accessibility of new developments to existing public transport facilities and the walking and cycling network. This principle is reflected in policies DM1 (Development Management Considerations) and T1 (Managing Transport Impacts) which seek to maximise sustainable travel choices.
- 6.1.5 The existing arrangements for accessing the Site would remain unchanged. Those persons travelling to the Site for work would be able to use existing public transport or cycle storage at the Site.
- 6.1.6 The Site is not publicly accessible, and there is a controlled gated access near to the main entrance to prevent unrestricted access to the operational part of the Facility. Access within the Facility is heavily controlled for safety reasons, with protocols to ensure the safety of employees and visitors.
- 6.1.7 Once within the site vehicles and pedestrians have clearly demarcated routes. As noted above the route towards the north of the Site has influenced the siting and layout of the proposed warehouse building.
- 6.1.8 The Proposed Development would accord with Part M of the Building Regulations. When approaching and entering the building there would be level access with a finished floor level of 0.15m above the adjacent ground. This is necessary to accord with Part C of the Building Regulations as well as Part M. Within the building sufficient

clear widths would be provided to door openings to meet current Building Regulations and level door thresholds would be incorporated throughout.

- 6.1.9 The Proposed Development has been designed with access as an important consideration.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1 The details submitted with the application show that the Proposed Development will provide a high-quality development utilising existing industrial land in a sustainable location.
- 7.1.2 The design has been considered carefully and responds to the context of the Site and its constraints. Access to and within the site has been considered and the form of the development reflects this.
- 7.1.3 As such, there are not considered to be any unresolved design or access matters which should prevent the grant of planning permission.