PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE CHANGE OF USE OF FORMER HGV TESTING CENTRE TO PARKING,OFFICE AND STORAGE FOR USE BY JOHNSON MATTHEY

PLANNING STATEMENT

FORMER HGV TEST CENTRE, ORCHARD ROAD, ROYSTON SG8 5HA

ON BEHALF OF JOHNSON MATTHEY PLC

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004

Prepared by: Kate Wood BA(Hons) MRTPI

Pegasus Group

Suite 4 | Pioneer House | Vision Park | Histon | Cambridge | CB24 9NL

T 01223 202100 | **W** www.pegasuspg.co.uk

Birmingham | Bracknell | Bristol | Cambridge | Cirencester | East Midlands | Leeds | Liverpool | London | Manchester

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1. Introduction

1.1 Pegasus Group has been instructed by Johnson Matthey plc to submit a planning application for the change of use of the former HGV test centre on Orchard Road.

1.2 The Test Centre is an L-shaped vacant site, and comprises extensive hardstanding and a large building. It is proposed to use the hardstanding for additional parking for the company, and to utilise the office and storage space to rearrange allocations of space on the main site.

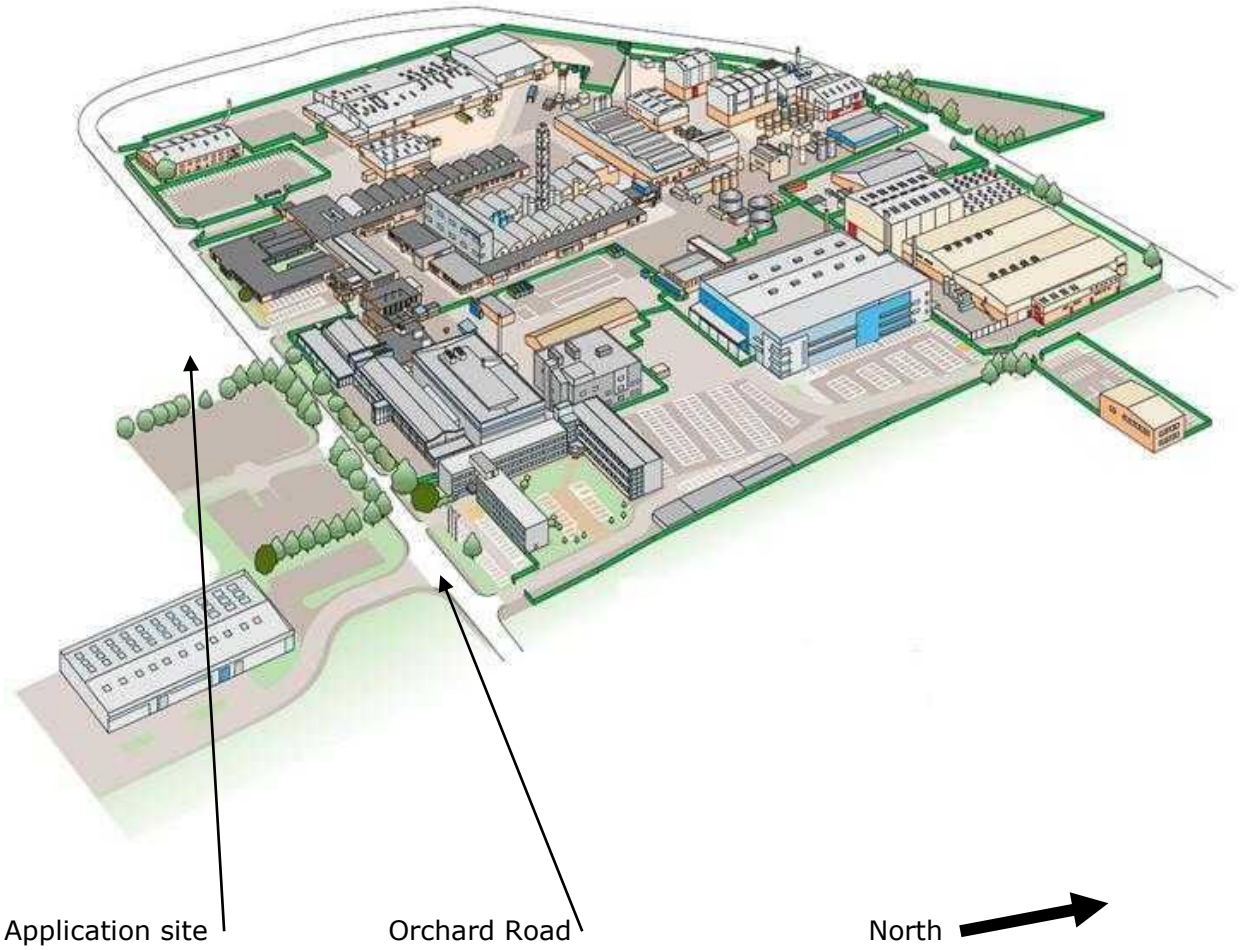
1.3 As a growing company, parking need is also growing, and the company already rents some parking space from other landowners on the estate. This application proposes to provide an additional 168 parking spaces on the vacant HGV Testing Station. As that site also contains a building, the opportunity will be taken to use the building to relocate some of the office functions presently within the main site, and to utilise the storage space offered by the building. This will free up space within the main building to accommodate the growing staff numbers, by re-allocating functions around the enlarged site. It will also enable storage of some machinery (not raw materials) to be relocated to the application site.

1.4 The application comprises the following plans and documents:

Application form
This planning statement
Location plan
Proposed parking layout plan

2. Site context and planning history

2.1 The site lies within an established employment area, comprising the York Way and Orchard Road industrial estate on the north-western side of Royston. The applicant company, Johnson Matthey, occupies large parts of this area and is a long-established major employer in the District. The plan below shows the extent of Johnson Matthey's occupation in the area, through ownership and rental. The application site lies adjacent to existing car parking, on Orchard Road.



2.2 The application site was formerly an HGV Test Centre for the DVSA (sui generis use), but became surplus to requirements. It remains as it was in that last use, mainly comprising hard surfacing on which are marked test routes and bays for lorries. There is also a large building on the site that was used for the inspection of vehicles and associated offices.

2.3 Planning permission was granted on 20th February 2017 under reference 16/03247/1, for the change of use of the site to mixed B1/B2/B8 use in order to facilitate ongoing occupation of the site by commercial users. However, that change of use has not been implemented.

2.4 Additionally, Prior Approval has been granted for the demolition of the existing building under reference 17/04207/DD. Again, that has not been implemented.

2.5 The site measures 0.68ha, and comprises a fenced and gated hard surface, with existing lighting. The only buildings on the site are the Testing Hall of 559sqm, and the ancillary office block. The office block lies along the length of the main building and comprises 313sqm of offices, break-out areas, etc.

3. Planning policy context

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in March 2012, and promotes the approval of applications for sustainable development. Paragraph 19 notes that "significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system."

3.2 North Hertfordshire District Council's Emerging Local Plan is at Examination Stage, and therefore carries some weight and indicates the direction of travel of the Council's wider strategy. Emerging Policy ETC1 Appropriate Uses in Employment Areas designates the locality for B1, B2 and B8 uses.

3.3 However, the adopted plan remains the relevant policy document in accordance with which decisions are to be made. This is the District Local Plan No2 with Alterations, 1996. The relevant policy for this application is Policy 36:

> Policy 36: Employment Provision
> For employment uses, the Council will permit proposals, particularly for small firms, for development and redevelopment to meet the needs of the available labour supply and changes in the local economy:
> i. within Employment Areas, particularly sites specified in Part 5 and shown on Proposals Maps;
> ii. elsewhere which is appropriate in land use, highway, settlement character and amenity terms.

4. Assessment and justification of the application proposal

4.1 The application proposes no physical development, merely the change of use and the marking out of routes and parking bays on the hard surfacing. There are therefore no issues in terms of contamination, pollution or drainage, since the ground will remain undisturbed. Similarly, the building will be utilised in the form it currently stands, with office and storage uses as already set out.

4.2 The main purpose of this application is to provide parking for use by staff of the wider Johnson Matthey site. The table on the left below shows the growing staff numbers, which is projected to continue into the future. The company already suffers from a lack of parking, despite the fact that some of the numbers in the table are vacancies which will further increase pressure on parking when they are filled. By comparison, the number of parking spaces the company has in its control are fewer than 50% of staff numbers, as noted in the table on the right:

Year	Headcount
08/09	1409
09/10	1421
10/11	1266
11/12	1508
12/13	1608
13/14	1687
14/15	1709
15/16	1961
16/17	1983
17/18	2086
18/19	2130

Gate 6	13
Gate 8	18
Gate 9	104
Gate 21	25
Old HQ	29
ECT	178
NM	132
Gate 20 EuroCat	52
Gate 14 MJ	19
York Way	111
Bev Close	76
Thermal	177
Sunnyhill	75
TOTAL	1009

4.3 Clearly, the addition of 168 spaces through the current application will accommodate a small proportion of the staff, but in numeric terms will be vital in preventing staff from parking inappropriately, such as on the estate roads or in local residential areas.

4.4 Additionally, the company has a working Travel Plan, produced by URS in 2013. The company continues to comply with the Travel Plan, and in accordance with the Travel plan's timetable, is due to update it in the 2018/19 financial year once

a new staff survey has been carried out. Whilst the Travel Plan goes some way to promoting green travel (membership of lift-share, promotion of car sharing, allocating spaces for car sharers, annual events, etc), the growth of the company is such that additional parking continues to be required.

4.5 We are aware of the Council's desire to install electric vehicle charging points (EVCP). As this is to be a leased site, the applicant is not in a position to install them at this car park. However, the company has a rolling programme of EVCP provision, and currently has 12 such points within the car parks it owns outright. It has a respond-to-demand policy so will continue to provide these going forwards, and will continue to do so in car parking spaces that are more attractive for users, i.e. close to building entrances.

4.6 Please also note that spaces for cycles and motorcycles are already provided on the company's main site and will continue to be so.

4.7 The company doesn't anticipate the need to provide any additional lighting. However, if this becomes necessary it will be provided. We therefore suggest that any required planning condition for lighting is worded to the effect that "details of any additional external lighting required shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA prior to its installation." This will allow the company to implement the permission and apply for lighting if it is required in the future through a discharge of conditions application.

4.8 Similarly, the two access points on Orchard Road, which are to be used for separate entrance and exit, to ensure convenient circulation around the car park, are currently gated, so that they can be locked when not in use. The company may decide to install barriers for this purpose. In that instance, we request that this is also controlled by condition, thus: "details of any entry and exit barriers at the access points on Orchard Road shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA prior to their installation." This will allow the company to implement the permission and then apply for barriers if they are required in the future through a discharge of conditions application.

4.9 Meanwhile, the intention for the building is to use the office and storage space ancillary to the use of the main site. There are additional staff numbers to be accommodated through the growth of the business, and the building provides the opportunity to re-organise the way staff are deployed around the site, in order to

accommodate these new staff. It is likely that the offices will be allocated for use by contractors. Around 20-25 staff will be based in the offices on this site. Similarly, the storage space provided in the test building will enable the company to re-allocate storage around the site, with machinery to be accommodated here, leaving additional space for other materials on the main site, the storage of which requires more security.

4.10 The proposed development, by providing ancillary functions for an existing company on the industrial estate, complies with the national and local policies aimed at supporting economic growth. In particular, it complies with the Council's policy 36 by meeting the needs of the labour supply and responding to changes (i.e. growth) in the local economy, in an appropriate location.

5. Conclusion and conditions.

5.1 The application represents a solution to the current parking problems experienced by the company and by other users of the surrounding roads. The company is fully committed to promoting green travel, and on the other hand is a victim of its successful growth. The additional car parking will support the business and is located within an established employment area where commercial uses are anticipated.

5.2 The Council is therefore respectfully requested to grant planning permission for the proposed development. If the officer has any queries then please do not hesitate to contact the agent.