Introduction

An application for Planning Permission has been submitted to Birmingham City Council (BCC) by St Modwen Properties SARL III, and Advantage West Midlands (hereafter referred to as the Applicants) to develop part of the former MG Rover Car Plant at Longbridge in south-west Birmingham.

The Longbridge Town Centre Application Site (hereafter referred to as the Application Site) has already been granted a number of planning permissions that have resulted in provision of a fully remediated site and associated infrastructure ready for this proposed development.

The proposed development of Longbridge Town Centre (hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development) will provide a high quality sustainable town centre, comprising a mix of shops, a new superstore, food and drink uses as well as supporting services, with additional upper floor residential, offices and hotel uses, together with a new public park, access, parking areas, new public realm and landscaping.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Proposed Development has been undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended).

This non-technical summary briefly describes the Proposed Development and summarises the findings of the Environmental Statement (ES). It forms part of one of the largest regeneration schemes in the West Midlands and is in line with and forms an integral part of the Longbridge Vision and planning policy for the site, as contained within the Longbridge Area Action Plan (AAP).

The Site & Surrounding Area

The Application Site is located 11 km south west of Birmingham city centre (refer to Figure 1). The Application Site comprises land previously occupied by the former MG Rover Car Plant.

The Application Site previously contained a mixture of manufacturing buildings and plant associated with car production. The majority of the buildings have now been demolished. The remaining buildings being demolished in early 2011.

The Application Site covers a total area of 12.2 hectares. It is bounded by the A38 to the west, Longbridge Lane, Tessall Lane and Longbridge Railway Station to the north, Lichfield to Redditch Cross City railway line to the east and further cleared land to the south beyond which is the retained MG Motor U.K Ltd site.

The River Rea runs through the Application Site from west to east. The river is currently in culvert beneath the site. A new Flood Relief Culvert is being constructed under a separate planning permission and a new park incorporating the River Rea will be created as part of this full planning application. Downstream of the Application Site the River Rea culvert outfalls into an open channel in Daffodil Park.

The Proposals

The Proposed Development for the Longbridge Town Centre Full Application is shown in Figure 2.

The development proposals for the application comprise:

- Shops and new Superstore
- Offices
- Park
- Food and Drink uses
- Residential apartments;
- Access infrastructure and park Landscaping,
Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – The Proposals
The Environmental Assessment Process

A Scoping request was initially submitted to BCC in February 2008 and then re-submitted in November 2010 to accompany the previous Longbridge North and West Outline Application and this full application. Consultations were undertaken with various parties including but not limited to:

- Environment Agency;
- Severn Trent Water;
- Natural England; and,
- Highways Agency.

Since 2008, key parties including BCC, have been continually kept informed regarding the evolving masterplan through a series of bi-monthly meetings and workshops.

Consultation with BCC has led to the scope of the ES being reviewed for this full planning application. It has been agreed that a re-assessment of all chapters to align them with current legislation and changes in the Application Site conditions was required. There has also been an agreement to update the Air Quality, Noise and Waste Management chapters to include further detailed assessment. These further assessments will provide more detailed information for the full planning application by including details in relation to the increased certainty on unit positioning and uses throughout the Application Site. An updated Waste Management Strategy has been produced along with Air quality and noise assessment based on updated traffic data.

Extensive public consultation with stakeholders informed the content, aims and objectives of the Area Action Plan for Longbridge. A number of key themes were identified including the aspiration to create a sustainable community with a mix of dwellings, employment opportunities and encouragement of business growth. A separate more detailed public consultation event has also taken place for the Longbridge Town Centre planning application in November 2010. This has re-infroced community support for the regeneration of Longbridge including the town centre proposals which are specifically the subject of this application.

Planning Policy Context

The proposals sit within a highly positive planning policy framework. National planning policy encourages the re-use of previously developed land and the theme of ‘sustainability’ runs through national, regional and local level policy.

An assessment has been undertaken of the main policies and plans which are relevant to the Proposed Development. National environmental policy incorporates themes of sustainable development, including the prudent use of natural resources and maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth and employment. The Proposed Development takes this into account. In relation to regional planning policy the Proposed Development meets the key objectives in that it proposes to provide a significant number of job opportunities.

In addition to the above, BCC and Bromsgrove District Council have produced an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Longbridge in response to the closure of the former car plant in 2005 and the opportunities the site presents to contribute to the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the area and wider region. The AAP has been adopted and the proposals have sought to adhere closely to the polices in the plans and the scale and nature of development which the AAP allows for and this part of the wider Longbridge redevelopment site.

Socio-Economic Effects

An assessment of the social and economic effects of the Proposed Development sets out the current policy context and profile of the area within which the Application Site.

It concludes that the Proposed Development will have significant positive impacts on the local economy, creates many jobs and stimuliates economic development.

The baseline information indicates that significant parts of Longbridge suffer economic deprivation. However it is anticipated that the Proposed Development will deliver direct economic impacts through creating employment both through construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. These impacts have been assessed as positive.

The assessment of impacts and mitigation measures indicate that the majority of the socio-economic impacts are beneficial. The additional demands of housing on social infrastructure, will be minimal given the scale
of the proposals and the wider positive benefits to the development by the provision of substantial new public open space.

**Biodiversity**

An assessment of the biodiversity issues in respect of the Proposed Development has been undertaken. Potential impacts on Sites of Local Importance for Conservation and Sites of Metropolitan Importance within 2km of the Proposed Development have been considered and include potential pollution and an increase in suspended solids in watercourses during construction.

Baseline surveys were undertaken to determine the habitat types and protected species present. No protected species were found to be present within the Application Site. Impacts considered include those relating to loss and fragmentation of habitats and disturbance. Indirect and short-term effects on protected species and sensitive habitats would be controlled using the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Mitigation measures in advance of, and during construction, would ensure that there are no significant negative impacts to protected species and positive impacts from enhancements to the River Rea corridor are anticipated.

**Landscape & Visual**

This assessment identifies and assesses the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development, given the current appearance and nature of the site most landscape and visual impacts of the Application Site are positive. Where adverse impacts have been identified, mitigation measures are highlighted that will avoid, reduce or compensate for these effects. The assessment has considered the construction stages, completion of the development at year 1 (i.e. first year as fully operational) and also the longer term effects at year 15.

The Application Site is currently not of high landscape value forming part of the former car plant and comprises vacant land now with only a few existing features such as vegetation and trees, which are of some value and warrant retention or protection where possible.

During construction, the effects on the landscape / townscape will generally be adverse due to the cumulative effects of various construction activities across the Application Site. Although adverse impacts will occur on the Application Site, the introduction of protective fencing and hoarding to the site will reduce these effects.

During operation the character of the Application Site will inevitably change but the Proposed Development will remain urban in character with the adjoining urban area of Longbridge. The Proposed Development will create a new townscape/landscape character type and elements, which replace the previous vacant land. The Proposed Development will introduce new public realm and landscape planting, which will improve the local environment, enhancing the street scene and adding interest to the character of the surrounding area.

The visual impacts of the Proposed Development will vary depending on the vantage point and type of receptors experiencing the effect. During construction the majority of visual effects will be adverse with a small number of receptors experiencing moderate adverse effects. However, this will be temporary in nature and proposed fencing and hoardings will reduce the effect on views.

When complete, the Proposed Development, albeit prominent in some views, will be in keeping the existing built up area and urban townscape and will be perceived in the context of the surrounding area and the MG Motor U.K Ltd site. It will enhance the current appearance of the Application Site particularly the new public realm, landscape planting and the new park. As new planting establishes and matures it will further enhance the street scene, integrating the new buildings with the surrounding townscape.

The resultant longer term residual landscape and visual impacts are predicted to be beneficial on landscape/townscape and visual amenity surrounding the Application Site.

**Ground Conditions & Contamination**

Multiple phases of ground investigation have been completed to assess ground conditions across much of the Application Site following the demolition of the buildings. Contamination testing and monitoring has been conducted to inform a comprehensive characterisation of the Application Site. Detailed Human Health, Controlled Water, Ground Gas, Building and Ecological Risk Assessments have been completed following the ground investigations.
Contamination testing of soil has indicated the presence in discrete hotspots of heavy metals; soil bound hydrocarbons and volatile organic compounds above relevant thresholds. Within groundwater, contaminants above assessment criteria, such as environmental and water quality standards, comprised of heavy metals, other inorganics, chlorinated solvents and dissolved phase hydrocarbons. In addition, a small number of borehole locations indicated the presence of an oil “floating layer” beneath the Application Site. The assessment of risk to buildings from ground gas indicated a low to moderate risk under the current gassing regime; and a low risk exists for plants from phytotoxic uptake. The contaminants identified beneath the Application Site are likely to be derived from historical processes associated with motor car manufacturing.

Construction phase impacts are predominantly associated with site workers, who may be at risk from exposure to potentially toxic contaminants within soil and groundwater, although this can be mitigated by the appropriate use of personal protective equipment. The creation of a contaminant pathway through piling, and the accidental release of oil/fuel from construction equipment can also be mitigated by suitable best practice site processes.

During the operational phase, potential risks to the site users associated with residual soil contamination following remediation will be mitigated by a combination of hard standing and inert capping to avoid exposure reducing the long term risk to humans to negligible.

All residual impacts on ground conditions and contamination after the mitigation measures have been implemented are considered to be negligible. The remediation of contaminated material can be viewed as a positive effect compared to present day conditions. No significant effects have been identified with respect to ground conditions and contamination as a consequence of the Proposed Development. Overall, the residual impact of the Proposed Development on ground conditions and contamination is anticipated to have no significant effect.

The Proposed Development will generate waste during the three phases of works, they are:

- Site development wastes (earthworks);
- Wastes produced during construction operations; and
- Wastes produced during the operational phase of the proposed development.

Construction waste is the largest single source of waste arisings in England. The National Waste Strategy 2007 for England has introduced a requirement on construction sites to reduce the amount of construction waste. As part of this and BCC’s ‘Municipal Waste Strategy – 2006-2026 – A strategy for Birmingham to use waste as resource, reduction in waste production in both the construction, and operational phases of the development have been addressed.

Material generated during the earthworks and construction phases will be reused within the Application Site, where possible and appropriate. Acceptable solutions for the disposal of waste materials will be agreed in full consultation with the relevant authorities/regulators. Through the appropriate legislative controls waste arisings on the Application Site have the potential to be re-used thus reducing the amount of waste taken off site.

Through the implementation of mitigation measures during the operational phase, including a waste management strategy, and decommissioning phase the assessment has shown that there will be no significant residual effect.

During the earthworks and construction phase, with mitigation applied, potential excess waste arisings will have a minor adverse significant effect. Management of waste arisings will be conducted in compliance with relevant environmental legislation, policies and guidance.

Water Resources

An assessment of the impacts of the Proposed Development on the water resources of the Application Site has been undertaken to consider flood risk, drainage, and water quality and associated ecological issues.
A detailed Flood Risk Assessment has been completed for the River Rea catchment through the wider Longbridge redevelopment site. The results show that the Proposed Development of the Application Site is not currently within the 100-year Floodplain. River Rea improvement works and the provision of an interim flood alleviation area have been undertaken to ensure that there will be no flood risk to the Application Site during ongoing construction work. Long term proposals for the wider site include improvements to the River Rea channel, which ensure provision of adequate capacity and a flood alleviation area. These will result in peak flood levels in Daffodil Park downstream of the Application Site being reduced. In addition, the Application Site will also provide an open section of the River Rea within the proposed new Park.

Effects to the water quality, discharge rates, drainage and changes to the flood regime (including site runoff) have been considered for the following receptors:

- Groundwater and Groundwater Source Protection Zones;
- Land drain & watercourses;
- Nitrate Vulnerable Zones;
- River Rea; and
- Daffodil Park.

All impacts identified will be mitigated against or minimised through appropriate scheme design, provision of a drainage strategy, use of sustainable drainage solutions and adhering to the CEMP and the Environment Agency’s Pollution Prevention Guidelines.

By nature of the cessation of polluting activities adjacent to the river channel the water quality of the River Rea is already showing signs of improvement. The Proposed Development, and previous remediation of the Application Site, will ensure constraints are removed adjacent to the water course, improving overall groundwater quality and therefore surface water quality. In addition to these benefits, the Proposed Development will include enhancement and improvement to the River Rea bringing it back to a more natural state and ensuring it is accessible to the public through the new Park.

All potential impacts on water quality and resources can be readily mitigated using best practice techniques and innovative drainage and site solutions will be implemented in line with development proposals.

**Noise**

An assessment has been undertaken to consider the effect that the existing noise climate will have on noise-sensitive elements of the development proposals and the potential for both construction and operational impacts to arise at sensitive receptors as a result of the development.

A baseline noise survey was undertaken in 2007-8 at fourteen locations to determine the existing ambient noise levels within the Application Site and at sensitive receptors in the surrounding area. It was agreed through consultation with BCC that the 2007-08 monitoring data was still representative of the noise levels in the Longbridge area in 2010 and was able to be used to carry out this assessment. The noise measurements were carried out over several weekdays and nights to obtain representative noise levels. In addition, vibration surveys were undertaken at two locations close to the rail lines at the eastern boundary of the development site.

The main existing noise and vibration sources that affect sensitive elements of the development proposals include traffic on the adjacent road and rail network.

The key potential impacts associated with the development proposals include noise and vibration from activities during the construction stage, the effect on noise levels due to changes in traffic flow on the surrounding road network, and noise from operations within the site including fixed items of building services plant, the use of service yards and vehicle movements.

The consideration of construction noise levels has indicated there will be impacts at a number of properties during potential worst case conditions. However, these worst case conditions would only be expected to occur for a limited period and typical noise levels during the construction would be expected to be below the threshold criterion identified individually at each receptor considered in the assessment.

Typically, there will be a perceptible change in road traffic noise levels adjacent to the surrounding road network, leading to a slight adverse impact.
Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the masterplan. These include positioning of buildings to place less noise sensitive end uses on the more exposed boundary positions of the development site, and the inclusion of glazing and ventilation measures for sensitive development in order to meet with the required noise design targets. Where vibration levels are expected to be potentially significant, mitigation measures have been suggested.

BCC mitigation criteria measures will be included in the site layout or structural design.

The assessment proposes noise limits for the design of fixed items of operational plant and noise mitigation fencing.

The assessment has found that with the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures the noise and vibration levels at the Application Site are suitable for the proposed uses.

**Air Quality**

The Air Quality Assessment has involved a review of existing BCC’s air quality monitoring data; qualitative assessment of the effect of the construction phase; and quantitative assessment of the operational impact of the Proposed Development using the dispersion model Breeze Roads. Particular attention has been given to the potential effect of the additional traffic on air quality in the vicinity of the Application Site.

Best practical means will be employed during the construction phase to mitigate any adverse impacts. Potential dust impacts are assessed to be temporary, of minor significance with no residual adverse impacts.

With regards to the operational phases the proposed year of completion 2015, traffic-derived nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate (PM₁₀) concentrations will all achieve national objectives in the vicinity of the Application Site.

The Proposed Development is predicted to have a negligible impact on local pollutant concentrations. Nevertheless, air quality enhancement opportunities will be sought through appropriate traffic management, the implementation of a Travel Plan and building efficiency measures which will minimise air emissions from energy production.

**Transport, Movement & Access**

A Transport Assessment has been prepared by Halcrow Group Ltd in December 2010 following discussions with BCC.

The vehicular traffic associated with the proposed development on the local road network has been assessed, and is likely to have a minor adverse to no significant effect.

The highway improvements and new accesses will have an overall negligible effect upon the local area. There will be some benefits to the increase in access to the site, although some adverse effects are anticipated as traffic is delayed for slightly longer.

The operational phase will create some adverse effects by the increase in traffic volumes, although the mitigation strategy of improved bus links, car parking management, Travel Plans and improved pedestrian and cycle links will result in moderate beneficial effects.

**Sustainability Appraisal**

An assessment has been made of the sustainability of the Proposed Development. Sustainable development is a key driver of national and regional planning policies. Sustainable development is also integral to the AAP and Birmingham UDP.

The Proposed Development will bring new jobs, economic diversification, through the development of a new mixed use Town Centre on the Application Site. Infrastructure will be in place to support green modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

An energy strategy is also in place which will improve energy efficiency through effective design of the building fabric and services. Sustainable materials will also be used including site won materials and materials rated highly under the Green Guide to Specification.

A CEMP will also ensure the protection of the environment throughout the construction of the Application Site.
Summary

The Proposed Development has been subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999 (as amended).

A specialist assessment has been undertaken for each of the key environmental topic areas and for any adverse impacts identified mitigation measures have been provided to either reduce or remove the impacts where possible. In some circumstances the opportunity for improvement has been highlighted and incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development.

The proposed development will provide a sustainable town centre development that will benefit the residents and businesses in the area, the city as a whole and the wider region. Through this EIA it has been shown that with the correct mitigation incorporated into design and construction of the proposed development there will only be beneficial long term effects to the Application Site.

Further details relating to the EIA of the Proposed Development of the Application Site are provided in the ES which has been prepared in support of the full planning application.
Further details and contact information

Further details relating to the Environmental Assessment of the scheme are provided in the Environmental Statement.

Additional copies of the Environmental Statement can be obtained. A paper copy can be provided at the cost of printing or on CD at a cost of £10, by writing to the following address:

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for the attention of the EIA Team