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Mr A Coleman  
Worcester City Council  
Planning Department  
Orchard House  
Farrier Street  
Worcester  
WR1 3BB

25<sup>th</sup> July 2014

Dear Mr Coleman

**Environmental Impact Assessment Screening and Scoping Request on land to the east of Blackpole Road, Worcester**

On behalf of Maximus Ltd, I write to request a screening opinion from Worcester City Council under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (hereafter the EIA Regulations). Should the Local Planning Authority adopt a positive screening opinion then it is requested that the Local Planning Authority provide a scoping opinion as to the information required.

The proposal is seeking to develop a total of 250,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (23,225.8 m<sup>2</sup>) of B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) floor space, based on the following subdivision;

- 8 units measuring 5,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (464.5 m<sup>2</sup>)
- 2 units measuring 40,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (3,716.1 m<sup>2</sup>)
- 1 unit measuring 60,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (5,574.2 m<sup>2</sup>)
- 1 unit measuring 70,000 ft<sup>2</sup> (6,503.2 m<sup>2</sup>)

The development also includes a new access road directly off Blackpole Road, requisite on-site parking and the creation of a surface water attenuation pond. The site itself measures 13.3 ha (32.9 acres).

Section 10(a) of schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations identifies that the construction of industrial estates in excess of a site area of 0.5 ha are required to be screened by the relevant Local Authority. This screening process is to determine whether there are any likely significant environmental impacts arising from this proposal. In this regard the proposed development on land off Blackpole Road exceeds such thresholds and a screening opinion is required.

In determining a screening opinion it is necessary to examine the potential methods as to which any environmentally sensitive sites could be vulnerable to adverse impacts resulting from the proposed development. In this regard it is noted that immediately south of the site is the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. Analysis of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) proposals map identifies that the Worcester and Birmingham Canal is a site of regional or local wildlife importance.

The Worcestershire Biodiversity Action Plan 2008 examined the importance of the Canal network within the County and ultimately produced a Canals Habitat Action Plan (HAP). In summarising the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, the HAP states;

*"The Worcester and Birmingham Canal has frequent though generally narrow stands of Typha latifolia common reed and a good diversity of other emergents in its margins. Other valuable habitat includes occasional wetlands associated with winding holes, marginal ditches, weirs and reservoirs. Mature woodland is found in tunnel cuttings and on embankments and much of the canal has a continuous established hedge boundary. The canal is particularly important as it maintains some of the last known water vole populations in Worcestershire".*

The identified series of 'other valuable habitats' are not contained within the development site. Accordingly the primary risk to the environment is on the identified important species. Detrimental impact upon this species will come from any physical disturbance as well as adverse alterations to water quality.

The SWDP also identifies the Worcester and Birmingham Canal as a Conservation Area (designated in 1989). Accordingly the Canal is a heritage asset and, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, such designations forms part of the environmental role of sustainable development. Accordingly it is necessary in appraising any significant environmental impact to include assessment upon the heritage asset.

In connection with the above, it is noted that the Blackpole Road to the west of the proposed development site is designated as a Schedule Ancient Monument (SAM). This designation extends from the A449 and Blackpole Road junction, along Blackpole Road (including land now used for the existing retail park), Astwood Road and Rainbow Hill before joining the wider Worcester City Centre SAM. The proposed access road and the most westerly edge of the development site are situated within the SAM designation.

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To the north of the site are further vacant green fields, traversed by Barbourne Brook. This watercourse and the neighbouring fields are not covered by any form of environmental designation.

Based on the above paragraphs, it is noted that there are important environmentally sensitive receptors in close proximity to the proposed development.

Due to the operational nature of the proposed development, significant adverse impacts could arise from one of two potential sources; either during the construction process of the development or during the day-to-day operations and use of the industrial units. As no development will overhang or be set immediately adjacent to the Canal, then there is no likelihood of any direct physical environmental impact upon the watercourse.

#### Construction Phase:

During the construction of the proposed units, a risk of significant environmental impact arises from the potential of any materials or surface water run-off entering the Canal network containing pollutants (e.g. fuels or oils). However the likelihood of such an impact is considered very low insofar as there are sufficient protection measures that can be implemented and utilised. Any subsequent planning permission can incorporate a pre-commencement condition which requires the submission and agreement of a construction management plan. This plan will detail the construction processes envisaged and identify necessary barriers to ensure no adverse impacts.

#### Day-to-day use of the site:

As identified there is no likelihood of any direct physical impact upon the watercourse. However, impact upon the water vole population, and the wider environmental standards of the Canal network, could be derived from any pollutant or chemical discharge associated with the use of the proposed B2 General Industry units. Such discharges could be direct to the Canal network or conversely to the public sewer and thus causing potential detriment to wider watercourses. In this regard the public sewer connection from the proposed development site is connected to the Severn Trent waste water treatment works situated on the Bromwich Road, Worcester. Discharge from the treatment works is into the River Severn which, as with the Canal Network, is also classified as a

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Site of Regional or Local Wildlife Importance. As such, likely significant environmental impacts upon the River Severn must also be examined.

In terms of any adverse impact upon the River Severn then the content of s106 of the Water Industry Act 1991 is of relevance. This aspect of the legislation provides an automatic right to connect to the public sewer for foul water. However subsection 2(a) removes the right to discharge any liquid from a factory process. Such trade effluent discharge requires specific permission from the waste water treatment undertaker as covered under chapter III of the Water Industry Act. Accordingly there is no likelihood of significant environmental impact upon the River Severn through the discharge of waste water. This is on the basis that Severn Trent will not grant permission to connect to the public sewer if there is a risk of significant contaminants entering the sewer network. Alternatively the occupiers of the proposed units could apply for a new discharge licence from the Environment Agency and accordingly any resultant discharge (either into the Canal or River Severn) could have adverse effects upon the environment. However such environmental permits will not be granted permission should the Environment Agency have concerns regarding the environmental impacts.

Based on the above, the potential for trade effluent discharge to have significant environmental impacts upon either the River Severn or the Worcester and Birmingham Canal is unlikely due to existing legislative procedures. Notwithstanding the above, detrimental environmental impact could be experienced through either the spillage or mishandling of any chemicals that might be used within the proposed industrial units. However, the final design of the development can include such safety precautions as metal gully traps. Such traps will stop any chemical spillage entering the watercourse alongside collecting the substance and allowing for its treatment / removal. As such it is again considered that it is unlikely significant environmental impacts will arise from any spillage or mishandling of chemicals. Furthermore, the fact that the larger industrial units proposed (and thus more likely to undertake high volumes of manufacturing) are set back from the site's southern boundary by 50 metres. This ensures that there is very little likelihood of any chemical pollutant reaching the Canal network.

In turning to the Conservation Area, its local character is defined by the presence of the high number of industrial units that neighbour the canal. Accordingly no adverse impacts are anticipated upon such a designation as the proposal seeks to continue such land uses. Furthermore, given the scope of development within the boundaries of the SAM that runs along Blackpole Road alongside the very

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limited encroachment of the designation within the study site, no adverse impacts upon the SAM are anticipated.

In examining the likely adverse impacts it is also important to note the wider land uses surrounding the site. Immediately south of the Canal network, and running east up to the junction 6 of the M5, is a key strategic employment location within Worcester. These industrial units are of comparable scale and nature to those proposed and also immediately abut the Canal. Given that the SWDP identifies the Canal as a Site of Regional or Local Wildlife Importance, it is considered that these existing units are posing no adverse environmental impacts. As the proposed uses of the development are not dissimilar to those already adjoining the Canal, then it is again considered highly unlikely that significant environmental impacts will be experienced.

This screening and scoping request letter has identified that the only likely significant environmental impacts upon environmentally sensitive sites would arise from the discharge and/or spillage of chemicals used within the proposed industrial units. However primary legislation as well as the design of the scheme will ensure that the likelihood of significant environmental impacts is greatly diminished.

Alongside the above, significant environmental impact could arise during the construction process of the development. However, as part of any subsequent planning permission, a condition can be attached requiring agreement with the Local Planning Authority of a suitable and appropriate construction management plan. Accordingly this ensures that there is no likelihood of significant environmental effects at this stage of the development.

I look forward to Worcester City Council's screening opinion and, if necessary, scoping opinion. However should the Local Planning Authority require further information under s5 (4) of the EIA Regulations then please contact me on the details below.

Yours sincerely,



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