Ideal Standard factory site, Middlewich

Pre-planning application consultation

Summary of results
Production date: Friday 24th April 2015

Results analysed and report produced by:

Ben Buckley and Elliott Coe
Research and Consultation
Business Intelligence
Cheshire East Council
Westfields
Middlewich Road
Sandbach
CW11 1HZ

Email: RandC@cheshiereast.gov.uk

Report produced on behalf of:

Christopher Allman, Professional and Commercial Services, Cheshire East Council
## Contents

Introduction .............................................................................................................. 5

General perceptions of the proposals ...................................................................... 7

Comments made about various aspects of the proposal ........................................... 8

Outright opposition to the proposals ....................................................................... 8

Traffic and access routes to the site ......................................................................... 8

Pollution ..................................................................................................................... 10

Building and canal-front design ............................................................................. 11

The social club ......................................................................................................... 12

The memorial ........................................................................................................... 12

Negative perceptions of Middlewich ....................................................................... 12

Negative perceptions of the consultation ............................................................... 12

Conclusions ............................................................................................................. 14
This page is blank.
Introduction

The Ideal Standard factory site, pre-planning application consultation was conducted between 13th March and 10th April 2015.

The aim of the consultation was to assess the public’s view on Cheshire East Council proposals for the former Ideal Standard site at Middlewich. The proposal is that the site becomes the borough’s main recycling centre, as well as the new headquarters for Ansa Environmental Services, the Council’s operating company for recycling and streetscape services. These views would then be assessed, and used to inform the submission of a planning application for the site.

The consultation consisted of two exhibitions, held on 13th and 14th March at Middlewich Town Hall, where draft proposals for the site were on show – residents were invited to attend and discuss proposals.

Residents were also invited to feedback their views on the proposals by 10th April, either through an online and paper based survey, which was available at the exhibitions, or by sending their views via email or letter to Cheshire East Council.

71 residents responded to the consultation over the month that it was open – 67 through the online/paper survey and 4 via email. The 4 responses via email have been added to the open comment analysis within this report.

37 of the 67 survey completions were paper based, with the remaining 30 online. Of the 67 that responded to the survey: 64 were responding as residents; 1 was responding as an ex-resident and a frequent visitor; 1 represented a local parish council; and 1 did not specify.

A summary of responses to this consultation are presented in the following report.
Respondent location

54 of the 67 survey respondents provided their postcode. Those postcodes which had at least one survey respondent have been mapped below.

The majority of respondents lived in Middlewich itself, though it is interesting to note that responses came from residents right across Middlewich.
General perceptions of the proposals

The first 2 questions in the survey were closed questions, and sought to ascertain residents’ general perceptions of the proposals.

A significant majority (76%, 51 out of 67) disagreed that the Ideal Standard site should become the borough’s main recycling depot. 12% of respondents (8 out of 67) agreed the site should become the borough’s main recycling depot, with the remainder neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Similarly, almost two thirds of survey respondents, 64% (43 out of 67), did not like the draft proposals for the site, with 19% that did.
Comments made about various aspects of the proposal

The remainder of the survey asked a number of open comment questions about various aspects of the proposal for the site – The nature of these questions meant respondents were able to discuss any aspect of the proposal they wished to.

Responses to these open comment questions have been grouped together under the following headings.

Outright opposition to the proposals

The first thing to note is that many respondents refused to answer specific questions about the proposal, stating outright opposition to the scheme instead (26 comments in total).

Traffic and access routes to the site

Current traffic levels

The most significant opposition to the proposal concerned access to the site, and traffic levels within Middlewich: “I do not oppose a waste centre; I oppose a lack of consideration of traffic levels and movement”.

There was a feeling that “the site is simply in the wrong place” and that “if this site is chosen it will create chaos”.

Further to that respondents felt the proposal will exacerbate what is already an over-capacity road network: “There have been years of traffic plans that have come to nothing” and “the proposal only serves to aggravate what is already a serious issue”.

Respondents made a total of 64 comments between them highlighting the current traffic issues within Middlewich. As one respondents put it: “How a site in this location could even be considered owing to the already huge and debilitating traffic flow in Middlewich is extraordinary”.

These 64 comments came under the following categories:

- The roads are already bad enough/Traffic in Middlewich is already very bad! /Middlewich traffic is the worst in the UK
- Middlewich is becoming a car park/Middlewich is always grid-locked and any extra traffic will be intolerable/Middlewich is grid locked during rush anyway
- The roads in Middlewich are very dangerous
- The roads in Middlewich are not suitable for wagons/Middlewich cannot take bin-lorries
- HGVs are too big to use Middlewich/are very dangerous/cause problems/mount pavements
- The current road layout not suitable for extra trucks and staff cars
- When accidents occur on the M6, Middlewich turns into chaos.

Specific areas of the road network that would be most affected

More specifically, respondents had concerns about 5 particular sections of the road network in Middlewich that would be most affected by the proposals. These were:

The canal bridge on Cledford Lane (22 comments made): Residents simply feel that this canal bridge, and the wider access to the site, is inadequate: “This access is wholly inadequate for the volume of vehicles it will carry”. Specifically they felt the bridge was too small to carry wagons: “The bridge over the canal is clearly not wide enough”. They felt the canal bridge cannot cope, is unable to take extra traffic, and that it needs to be made bigger as it cannot take 2 HGVs side-by-side. Used as it currently is would cause queueing in both directions, and would be dangerous. Lorries currently go over, and come off, the bridge on the wrong side of the road and hold up traffic.

Cledford Lane (7 comments made): Respondents felt that Cledford Lane itself was too small, already too busy, dangerous and not suitable for HGVs/Wagons. Again, they felt this was inadequate access: “(The current road layout is) totally unsuitable and dangerous due to the position of the canal bridge and the amount of traffic already using Cledford Lane”.

Cledford Lane/Cross Lane junction (6 comments made): Further to comments about the Cledford Lane bridge, respondents were specifically concerned about the junction just off the bridge onto Booth Lane. They felt this junction as it is cannot take extra traffic, is dangerous and an accident waiting to happen.

Booth Lane (11 comments): The feeling here is that Booth Lane is simply too busy as it is, without extra traffic being generated by the proposal: “Normal road traffic is horrendous at the best of times along Booth lane/Lewin Street, and the proposed number of wagons in/out are only going to add to it if another route isn’t found.”

Lewin Street (10 comments): Finally, several respondents highlighted Lewin Street as a concern. Although Lewin Street is situated some distance from the proposed site, respondents felt it was a
bottle neck within the town centre that currently suffered significant traffic problems, without more being added to it. They feel it is too narrow to carry current levels of traffic and HGVs, too busy, that it was dangerous and again, a disaster waiting to happen: “Lewin Street is hazardous already - Prams/small children and elderly people take their life in their hands walking down it. Wagons travelling to this site will add to an already dreadful situation”.

A bypass needed?

As a solution to the current high level of traffic currently within the town centre, many residents suggested that a bypass is needed (49 comments made in total). Respondents stated that such a scheme had been in the pipeline for several years without coming to fruition, and that the proposal should only go ahead once a bypass scheme was going ahead. Others pointed out that the Congleton bypass scheme was going ahead before one in Middlewich, and that was unfair when they perceive the need to be greater in Middlewich. Others suggested that the proposal for the waste depot could only go ahead once the bypass was built, and that access routes to the proposed waste site should be via this Eastern bypass: “The Eastern by-pass is essential before (the proposal goes ahead), Middlewich town cannot take bin lorries passing through it”.

Furthermore, several residents stated that there is so much development happening in Middlewich, that the current over-capacity road network will be further stretched, even without the proposed waste depot being built (8 comments in total). Development mentioned included 2 housing developments, including one in Sandbach on Booth Lane. The new proposed gypsy site on Cledford Lane was also cited as an example of development in the area.

Ultimately, as one resident stated: “LACK of thought and LOCAL KNOWLEDGE has been demonstrated here by ANSA and Cheshire East Council. The Booth Lane and Cledford Lane crossroads is on a busy main road through the town, which is already overused and under funded by the council. It is pure ignorance to suggest that this route is a viable option for access to this site by 60 lorries each day”.

Pollution

Concerns about pollution were not significant as those around traffic and access, indeed several respondents stated that they expected the site to adhere to the very highest standards, and so they were not as concerned (8 comments made). One stated that should the site not adhere to such standards they would “lobby the Environmental Health department to close the site if that wasn’t the case”.

Many respondents did list concerns around pollution however. Two of these main concerns were actually linked to the potential increase in traffic levels:
• I am concerned about the noise pollution from the increased traffic (14 comments made)
• I am concerned about vehicle pollution (e.g. fumes) from the increased traffic (9 comments made).

Thereafter, there were several other pollution concerns listed, including:

• Noise pollution from the site itself (10 comments made)
• Bad smells from the site (10 comments made)
• Concern for the canal and local wildlife, and about the concern for potential contamination of these (8 comments made)
• Vermin and birds – There was a fear of an increase in these. Creatures specifically mentioned included rats, seagulls, pests, flies and pigeons (6 comments made)
• Dust/Air pollution (4 comments made).

**Building and canal-front design**

Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on the proposed design of the buildings and canal-front. A few felt that the building should remain as it is: “Keep the building the same” (4 comments in reply to Q3). Others felt that whatever is done would be an eyesore: “It will be an eyesore” (2 comments in reply to Q3).

However, if the building design is to change a few felt a modern design would be good: “A modern design would be nice” (6 comments in reply to Q5). Respondents also felt that the site and buildings need to be well screened: “The building will be fine along as it’s well screened” (8 comments in reply to Q3), “(The site) needs to be well screened” (5 comments in reply to Q5), “Make sure the recycling plant is screened” (7 comments in reply to Q6).

Similar to the building design, some felt the canal front should be kept as it is: “Keep the canal front as it is now” (3 comments in reply to Q6). However, others were positive about any potential improvements to the canal-side: “Any improvement to the canal side is good” (3 comments in reply to Q6).

Other comments stated that any development should be sympathetic to the current surroundings, that a wide range of planting should be used and that the area could be better maintained: “Have
a wide range of plants” (5 comments in reply to Q6), “Any developments should be done sympathetically” (2 comments in reply to Q6) and “More maintenance would be good” (2 comments in reply to Q6).

**The social club**

Feelings were mixed on proposals for the on-site social club. On the one hand some felt it shouldn’t be re-opened: “Don’t re-open it” (6 comments/17%). On the other, others felt it should be re-opened: “Keep it the same as it used to be and re-open it” (5 comments/14%).

Others suggested several contingencies if it were to be re-opened: “It depends on the effect the site will have on it” (4 comments/11%), “Its fine as-long as it’s noise controlled” (2 comments/6%) and “Move it somewhere more accessible” (2 comments/6%).

**The memorial**

Comments about the memorial were more positive: “It should stay and be preserved” (10 comments/24%) and “The memorial proposal looks good” (8 comments/19%).

However, some felt it should be re-located in a more appropriate setting: “It should be re-located somewhere else in Middlewich away from the site” (2 comments/5%). And there was some cynicism towards the questions concerning the memorial: “This has got nothing to do with the waste site” (2 comments/5%).

**Negative perceptions of Middlewich**

There were a number comments made around general perceptions about Middlewich itself: “Middlewich is treated as a dumping ground” (8 comments/15%) and “As the site is transferring from Crewe with existing staff, there will be small benefit to the Middlewich employment market, if any!” (2 comments/4%).

**Negative perceptions of the consultation**

Finally, there were a number of comments around the consultation process itself: “The publicity of this development and its consultation were awful” (16 comments in reply to Q11), “No proposals about tackling traffic levels were given” (9 comments in reply to Q8), “You have no plans?” (3
comments in reply to Q8), “I was told traffic levels had not been assessed yet” (1 comment in reply to Q8), “No proposals about the memorial were given” (3 comments/7%), “A highways survey should have been conducted before the site was purchased” (1 comment in reply to Q8) and “The cart has been put before the horse - no traffic survey undertaken BEFORE the consultation” (1 comment in reply to Q8).
Conclusions

A summary of attitudes towards the proposal

It is clear from analysing results to this consultation that respondents were opposed to the scheme – 76% of those completing the survey disagreed that the proposal should go ahead.

Traffic and access

From a traffic viewpoint, respondents believe that the road network in and through Middlewich is over-capacity, that traffic is a significant issue within the town, and that it has been for some time. They felt that adding an extra 60 refuse trucks a day to the traffic, without providing more suitable access to the depot, would further contribute to high levels of traffic in the town centre, which could exacerbate congestion problems along Lewin Street and Booth Lane in particular. The addition of more traffic to a route which is being increasingly used due to other development in the area, may have a negative impact upon quality of life of the residents of the town.

From a site access viewpoint, respondents cite that: Cledford Lane is too narrow, and too busy, to accommodate high numbers of refuse trucks; the canal bridge on Cledford Lane is completely unsuitable for access purposes; and the junction between Cledford Lane/Booth Lane and Cross Lane is again unsuitable and would become dangerous.

Other concerns

Opposition towards the proposal on the basis of other concerns (e.g. pollution, building design etc) was not as significant as the concerns around traffic and road access. As another respondent put it: “I do not oppose a waste centre; I oppose a lack of consideration of traffic levels and movement”.

However, there were significant concerns around noise and fume pollution from increased traffic, noise pollution from the site itself, air pollution from the site (including bad smells and dust), concern for the canal and local wildlife being adversely affected by the proposal, and a fear of increased vermin/birds. Any planning application should look to mitigate these concerns, and should include adequate screening along the canal side.
In summary

Respondents were quite clear that, if the proposal were to go ahead, major traffic access changes to the site, and throughout the town, would be preferred.

Ultimately, a significant proportion of respondents stated that the town needed a bypass, and that the bypass should be built before the waste depot opens. They also felt access to the depot should go via this bypass.

It is also noted that there was significant public discussion about the proposal in local press, and on social media, before, during, and after the consultation, during which the proposal itself, as well as the consultation, was criticised. A petition has been started to have the bypass built before further any development in the town commences.