

Case Study – FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies: Bio-Campus Expansion Phase 1 and future Phases Masterplan

Submission to the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2021

Project Background

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies (FDB), is a leading global biologics and vaccines Contract Development and Manufacturing Organization (CDMO). The company that is at the forefront of developing and manufacturing life-impacting medicines such as cancer treatments, gene therapies and vaccines including COVID-19. The planning system has played an important role in supporting FDB in its commitment to investing and expanding in the UK.

In 2014, FDB purchased land adjacent to its Bio-Campus at Billingham and in late 2018, the Tees Valley Combined Authority announced its decision to fund over £7 million towards the delivery of FUJIFILM's expansion plans, amounting to an overall investment of around £43 million to create of an extended, fully integrated Bio-Campus.

In early 2019, FDB appointed its planning and design team to bring forward the first phase expansion and to masterplan later phases. From the outset, a key component of FUJIFILM's plans was the achievement of a fully integrated development with its existing Bio-Campus. Achieving this requires the closure of a main road through Billingham, Belasis Avenue, and re-purposing of the space as an arrival point, whilst also offering a high-quality public realm within the expanded campus.

May 2021 saw the completion of FDB's first phase: a new purpose-built office and visitor building to accommodate in the region of 400 staff and to act as a gateway facility to the wider site. The closure of Belasis Avenue was not required to facilitate this first phase. It was important, however, at the outset of the project to ensure that the closure of the road and its integration into the masterplan was achievable so as to enable FDB, together with its planning and design team, to move forward swiftly and with certainty.

The project team recognised that the closure of Belasis Avenue could raise concern within the local community: for local residents, businesses that rely upon good connections to the A19 and pass-by trade, as well as local schools and community facilities whose focus was on the continued safety of its children and visitors.

Changes made to the Growth and Infrastructure Act in 2013 were hugely beneficial to this project, in order to provide greater certainty to FUJIFILM that its ambitions could be realised without adversely impacting local communities and causing delay to the consenting process. Up until 2013, it was not possible to pursue an Order to confirm the closure of a highway, through Section 247 of the Planning Act, without first having obtained planning permission. This change in legislation meant that FDB could do both concurrently, to explain the approach in its community consultation, and to understand and assuage any concerns early on.

Planning permission for Phase 1 (the subject of this submission) was granted in November 2019.

Outline planning permission was granted in December 2019 for the Masterplan and future phases of development across the wider site.

Outcomes for People and Communities

The grant of outline planning permission gives certainty to FDB in its future global investment decisions, safe in the knowledge that it can move quickly to provide new accommodation in Billingham to meet business

growth opportunities. It enables FDB to act ‘fleet of foot’ in delivering additional accommodation as and when required by the international biopharmaceuticals and medical research industry FDB has the ability to respond quickly and nimbly to support public health efforts such as we have seen with the production of the COVID-19 Bulk Drug Substance.

In a visit to FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies in February 2021, Prime Minister, Boris Johnson commented “The work of the team here to get this vaccine ready showcases some of the very best of British science and manufacturing. I’m hugely proud of the efforts here at FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies, as we all come together to beat this pandemic.”

The delivery of the new bio-campus cements FDB’s commitment to Teesside, proving innovation and employment opportunities, making a significant positive contribution to the local economy. The development is an exemplar in the realisation of the economic strategy of Teesside, the region and the UK: to attract, retain and support global businesses in the advanced industrial sectors, who can benefit the UK population not just through job creation but through advancements in social wellbeing.

FDB is committed to implementing a Training and Employment Management Plan with the aim to promote training and employment opportunities at all stages of the development for local people, addressing local issues of unemployment and inequality.

The Phase 1 building has been designed in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. Under the Act, service providers and employers are required to make their services and the employment environment equally available to both disabled and non-disabled people. Together, the project team worked to create the best accessible design solution, ensuring no groups were discriminated against.

Wellbeing of staff and visitors has been central to the design process. The site is attractive, to support staff retention and future recruitment, while increasing functional efficiency and to enable easy access and egress between buildings and offices. The quality of buildings and the public realm has been designed to be robust and durable to cope with the flow of 700 staff and visitors.

Planning Contribution

Leadership and Vision

In 2013, Lichfields joined a steering group led by the Department for Transport to explore the implications of the changes to the Growth and Infrastructure Act that ultimately allowed for the concurrent submission of planning applications and highways stopping up orders (under Section 247). Having an in-depth understanding of how the two processes inter-relate enabled Lichfields to lead the planning and stopping up processes in a joined-up, cohesive approach and to undertake community consultation that focussed on both aspects equally and mutually.

Our vision as to how the project could unfold and how the local community could react to the proposals, resulted in us adopting a strategy that separated the Phase 1 scheme from the Masterplan (outline) proposals and pursuing two separate applications. This approach would ultimately avoid delay in the determination of the Phase 1 application and its implementation should the Order to stop up Belasis Avenue have been delayed.

Key tasks included:

- Providing the planning strategy to ensure the swift delivery of Phase 1, separate from any issues which could have arisen relating to the closure of Belasis Avenue;
- Liaison with all key stakeholders including the local planning and highways authorities, the Department for Transport, the Health & Safety Executive; bringing those parties together to aid their understanding of the

interdependencies of the planning and stopping up processes;

- Leading community consultation and communications, ensuring that the benefits of the scheme were fully understood, the importance of closing a main road through Billingham and assuaging any concerns arising.

Partnership Working

From the outset, forward thinking accompanied by early and comprehensive discussions, as well as partnership working with the local planning authority was critical in ensuring successful applications and timely decisions.

The result of this engagement was that the planning application for the Phase 1 development was determined swiftly within 13 weeks, in November 2019. The appointed contractors commenced construction swiftly thereafter in order that the first phase of the expanded bio-campus to be operational by May 2021.

Managing Implementation and Delivery

Working closely with the local planning authority at Stockton on Tees, Lichfields sought to minimise the number of pre-commencement conditions attached to the Phase 1 permission to ensure that a start on site could be made as soon as possible and that the build programme could be completed in accordance with timescales meeting contractor and occupier requirements.

Outcomes for climate action

The scheme makes a positive contribution towards the Green Agenda and climate action, incorporating a number of sustainable design and construction management measures to mitigate against climate change.

Green energy underpins the development with no direct fossil fuel (gas) using applications are present on the site. The development aspired to use materials with a high Green Guide rating and low embodied carbon, and purchase from manufacturers which operate environmental management systems.

The office space was be designed with occupant comfort at the forefront by encouraging the use of materials with low VOCs, suitable acoustic levels and a heating and cooling system designed to provide a thermally comfortable space for occupants. Water is reduced through the specification of low flow sanitaryware, water leak detection and sub-metering of areas within the building. Low energy LED lighting and presence / daylight controls have been extensively incorporated throughout the project, internally and externally. Photovoltaics have also been incorporated into the design.

A key feature of the campus is water. Formal water features in the arrival plaza provide a high-quality welcoming experience for guests, whilst natural ponds to the south create a relaxed setting to the café terrace and provide a low-cost sustainable drainage solution for the campus.

Provision of Electric Vehicle charging points and cycle spaces have also been made to offer staff and visitors alternative sustainable travel options.

During the construction phase, contractors worked responsibly to ensure that site waste and impacts on local communities were minimised.

To further enhance site ecology a Green Roof has been utilised on the roof of the substation building.

Given their strategic nature, the proposals were underpinned by extensive engagement with the local community, local schools and neighbouring businesses, particularly as we had identified that people and businesses could be impacted by the proposed closure of Belasis Avenue.

A Public Exhibition, leaflet distribution and press notice were considered to be the most appropriate ways to maximise our reach to communicate and explain the scheme proposals to the general public, whilst providing an opportunity for comments to be made on the emerging proposals ahead of any planning applications and road closure Order being made.

The exhibition was held in July 2019. In order to raise awareness of the exhibition, and to enable people to respond with views and suggestions, a leaflet was distributed to around 700 households and businesses in Billingham. The leaflet provided details of the proposals and allowed people to respond with any comments they had, via a freepost return form to encourage inclusivity and maximise engagement from those who may not have been able to attend the exhibition.

Emails were also sent directly to Councillors representing the relevant Wards covering Billingham (North, East, Central and South). The leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Housing and the Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport of Stockton Borough Council were also notified directly, as well as the MP for Stockton North and Billingham Town Council. Emails were also sent to neighbouring businesses, as well as the neighbouring Primary School and community centre.

Attendees at the exhibition were encouraged to give feedback on the proposals by completing a feedback form on the leaflet and depositing it in a response box provided. The questionnaire provided a suitable approach to gathering feedback and provided space for attendees to provide their own views and queries, whilst also answering questions as to whether they supported the proposals.

Outcome and sustainable development

The scheme will deliver substantial public benefits across all limbs of sustainable development. In economic terms the scheme attracts major private investment, supports jobs in the construction industry along with other spin off jobs. In social terms, the development is an exciting opportunity to expand FUJIFILM's Bio-Campus, providing opportunities for the company's growth in the UK and in the field of bio-medical research and production, benefiting not just those on Teesside but making a global contribution to sustainable development, particularly in respect of social wellbeing. The environmental benefits include the sustainable re-use of former industrial site for an active and vibrant use that makes a positive contribution to the visual appearance of the area. The scheme has embedded advanced technology, construction techniques and practices to improve the sustainable credentials of the development. A strong landscaping scheme supports the creation of high-quality public realm, providing an attractive and safe pedestrian environment as they move around the site.

The development assists in the delivery of a number of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals. This project is a fine example of how the planning system and public-private sector collaboration has delivered on the UK's pledge to support the attraction and growth of global advanced industries: a particularly important facet of this region's future sustainable economy, thus meeting UN Sustainable Development Goals 8 and 9 to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" and to "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation".

The design and integration of the wider Bio-Campus, including the closure of Belasis Avenue, assists in meeting Goal 11 to "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". The development and growth of an international biotechnologies industry on Teesside, fostering the development of pharmaceutical manufacturing for the multinational market, meets UN Sustainable Development Goal 17 to "strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development". Finally, FDB's long-term commitment to the UK and the region, with its ability to now upscale and expand its operations quickly in response to instances such as Covid-19 (following on from its success with Novavax contract) assists in the achievement of Goal 3 to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all".

Community Engagement

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Leading Practice

The planning brief was driven by FDB's requirement to have its Phase 1 gateway building operational in 2021 but also by the fact that their aspirations and timescales for development across the wider site needed to be given the certainty of planning permission in a manner that would not delay delivery of the first phase.

In order to manage the swift delivery of planning permission for the Phase 1 development, Lichfields recommended that two separate but linked planning applications were submitted, a detailed application for Phase 1 and an outline application to allow future phases of development to come forward at an appropriate juncture, responding quickly to serve FDB's clients and to support the company in what is a global market for business opportunities (as demonstrated by the Novavax contract). This also enabled the application to Stop Up the Highway to be decoupled from the Phase 1 planning application.

Working together with the Council, this strategy was endorsed.

The Planning Brief was complicated by the fact that approximately one third of the expansion site lies within the Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) defined planning consultation zones of various hazardous installations.

Within the inner zone the HSE would advise against the grant of planning permission for anything other than low density industrial use, where each workplace building will contain fewer than 100 occupants and no more than two occupied storeys. To ensure that detailed proposals were brought forward in accordance with the strict requirements of the HSE, representatives of Lichfields and FDB entered into consultation with the HSE. Following discussions, a change in the orientation of the Phase 1 building was agreed amongst the project team. This amendment enabled the HSE to support the proposals whilst not compromising the

architecture and aesthetic of the Phase 1 scheme.

This project is a prime example of what can be achieved through high quality planning - managing inter-related consenting processes (in this case planning and highways stopping up) and multiple stakeholders, balancing competing pressures and removing obstacles to progress. The greatest lesson learned was the importance of positive and proactive engagement with all stakeholders and consultees to ensure that when challenges arise, solutions or compromises can be found. The tight turnaround for this project delivery also highlights the need for planning process to be responsive to the external influences - such as funding, construction or operational demands. In such cases a timely action, pragmatic decision or creative solution can mean the difference between losing an opportunity or securing a flagship development.

Does the scheme or project have particular significance to the region

The scheme is of major significance to the region. Indeed, off the back of their commitment to expand its bio-campus FUJIFILM Corporation has recently announced its intention to invest £613 million across the US and UK to increase capacity to manufacture components of the Coronavirus vaccine. A significant proportion of this investment will come to the North East. This investment places Teesside at the heart of the UK's advanced industrial sector, particularly in pharmaceutical research and development.

The Phase 1 scheme is more than a building; it is a huge vote of confidence in the region by a global business that is a leader in its field: confidence in the region and in the quality and skill set of its workforce. Teesside is fast becoming world-renowned for its cluster of outstanding biotech services. FDB's commitment to the region and in expanding its bio-campus is a springboard for future success.

Upon hearing Fujifilm's commitment to invest in the UK to increase its manufacturing capacity, Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen commented "After months of discussions with the Government and Fujifilm I'm delighted at this amazing news. The game changing investment is a huge win for Teesside and our life science sector. Fujifilm's Billingham facility is already playing a critical role in the fight against coronavirus by pre-producing the Novavax vaccine....and expanding its Billingham facility will allow Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies to play an even more important role locally, nationally and internationally. This hugely significant investment is testament to the skills of our scientists and engineers and will cement Teesside's reputation as a centre of excellence when it comes to life sciences and biologics. We are already seeing Fujifilm expanding their Billingham facility with the development of a new multi-million-pound Bio Campus, this new investment will see even more skilled jobs come to our region in yet another sector Teesside is driving forward."