
2 The Site and its Setting

Introduction

- 2.1 This chapter provides a description of the general physical and environmental characteristics of the application site and its surrounding environment outlining the existing and previous uses of the site, including a brief site history.

Site Location

- 2.2 Brunner Mond's Lostock site is located near Lostock Gralam, approximately 2km to the east of the centre of Northwich in Cheshire. The site is accessed via the A530 which then connects directly to the M6 south at Junction 18 and to the M6 North and the M56/M60 via the A556 at Junction 19.
- 2.3 The site location is shown on Figure 1.1.

Site Description

Lostock Site

- 2.4 The Lostock site is occupied by a number of independent businesses. Brunner Mond's operations form the main use of the site as the UK's only producer of soda ash (sodium carbonate) and related products. These uses occupy a total of 68 hectares, including a significant area of waste treatment lagoons. A number of other companies producing chemical and chemical related products are also clustered within the Lostock site, including Solvay Ltd, Ineos Chlor, Organic Waste Management and SABIC.
- 2.5 The area is well served by road and rail communications. The nearest access to and from the M6 is at Junction 19 located approximately 7 km to the north east of the site via the A556. The A556 serves as a bypass for Northwich and its satellite settlements. The A530 runs past the eastern edge of the Brunner Mond site south of its junction with the A559. However, traffic from the A559 to the north is restricted due to the low bridge under the railway. To the south the A530 provides access to M6 Junction 18 via Middlewich at a distance of approximately 12 km.
- 2.6 The Manchester-Chester railway line runs past the northern edge of the Brunner Mond site, providing access to it. The existing rail connection is currently used for the delivery of limestone to Brunner Mond from quarries in the Buxton area.

Project Site

- 2.7 The project site comprises an area of approximately 9.2 hectares on land at the former Lostock Power Station site (now redundant) and land associated with the site rail connection and existing coke storage area. The site is accessed via Griffiths Road and an existing rail

link. In addition to the main site (approximately 6.4 ha), the project boundary includes the proposed relocated coke storage area to the north of the main site (approximately 0.9 ha) and a construction laydown area to the east of the site (approximately 1.9 ha) as indicated on Figure 1.2.

- 2.8 The main site is currently occupied by a redundant power station that ceased operation in September 2000. The power station previously provided heat and power to the adjacent site prior to the installation and commissioning of the replacement gas fired CHP plant at Winnington.
- 2.9 The project would be located on and around the site of the former power station. Further land to the west of the former power station would be used to provide a rail connection (connecting to the existing rail link) and fuel reception and ash treatment facility. Existing site uses in these areas include:
- Former Power Station, including the former boiler and turbine halls and associated plant including water treatment plant;
 - Coke store;
 - Existing rail link;
 - Existing Brunner Mond offices and ancillary buildings;
 - Pipe bridges and culverts carrying steam, electricity and effluent services.
- 2.10 The main project site is bounded to the east by the Trent and Mersey Canal, which runs north/south. It is used by pleasure craft only and for no current commercial uses. The canal footpath is a public right of way. For security purposes that footpath is fully fenced preventing access to the site.
- 2.11 The main site is bounded to the north by the adjoining Brunner Mond chemical works and the brine purification plant owned by Ineos. The works extend approximately 800 m to the west with residential land beyond. Access to the site is from Griffiths Road to the east of the site beyond the canal. Further to the east of the site there is an extensive network of historic, elevated waste lime beds.
- 2.12 Griffiths Road Park, an area of public open space and a former lime bed and landfill, lies to the southwest and extends for a distance of approximately 500m in a southerly direction to a residential area at Rudheath. Adjacent to the south west of the site is an ethylene conditioning plant operated by Ineos on behalf of SABIC. The plant is associated with ethylene underground storage off site at the Holford brine fields.
- 2.13 In addition to the main site identified for the SEP, the project also includes land to the east of the canal, between the canal and Griffiths Road. This would be used as a temporary construction laydown area. This land is currently unused but has previously been used for

coal reception and storage. A further area of land to the north of the main site would be used for the relocation of the existing coke store.

Site History

- 2.14 The site is located in a larger area that has been used for industrial chemical manufacture since the early 1800's. Soda ash and bleaching powder production commenced in the late 1800's and much of the surrounding land, particularly to the south west and east, has been used for lime waste disposal associated with soda ash manufacture. During the First World War it is understood that ammonium nitrate production for use in explosives was undertaken at the soda works. Later, during the Second World War, a range of products were made on the site at the request of the Ministry of Supply, including chlorine, mono chlor-benzene and carbon tetrachloride.
- 2.15 The project site was used between 1880 and 1940 for the disposal of waste lime. However, between 1940 and 1950 the lime deposits were cleared from the area and the land redeveloped as a coal fired power station. Only traces of the original lime deposits can now be detected in core samples. The power station was taken out of commission in 2000 having previously provided heat and power to the adjacent chemicals complex (formerly part of ICI, now occupied by Brunner Mond, Solvay Chemicals and Ineos Chlor). No other chemical manufacture has been undertaken on the project site.
- 2.16 The Trent and Mersey Canal runs through part of the Brunner Mond site. As its name implies it connects these two major rivers, over a distance of about 90 miles. It opened in 1777 and over most its length, including at this point, it is a 'narrow canal' whose locks and bridges can accommodate narrowboats up to 72 feet (22 metres) long but only 7 feet (2.13 metres) wide. Given its narrow nature, the industrial use of the canal has declined and is now only used for recreational purposes.