

## 3 Proposed Development

### 3.1 Introduction

Situated in Digbeth opposite the Bullring, the Beorma development is a flagship mixed use scheme comprising demolition of existing buildings, erection of two new block structures including a 30 storey tower building alongside refurbished listed buildings or building facades, and offering retail space (A1, A2, A3), business space (B1a), residential apartments (C3) and live-work units, together with ground source and other energy systems, surface level servicing and new landscape areas. A related development known as Beorma Phase 1 was approved in 2009 is now underway and will provide a hotel in addition to office, leisure and retail uses. The Phase 1 development is the subject of a separate planning application and EIA and is not addressed further in this ES which focuses on Phases 2 and 3.

It should be noted that for all up to date and accurate plans, developments statistics and design discussions the main Planning Application document should be referred to and should take precedence where there are discrepancies between that and the ES.

The Application Boundary of Phase 1, Phase 2 & 3 and the overall proposed layout of the scheme are indicated in *Figure 3.1* and *Figure 3.2*.



**Figure 3.1:** Beorma Quarter, *Site Location (Phase 1, Phase 2 & 3) (not to scale)*

**SECTION 3: PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT****Environmental Statement**  
Beorma Quarter (Phase 2 & 3), Birmingham

**Figure 3.2:** Proposed Scheme Layout (Phase 1, Phase 2 & 3) (not to scale)

A history of the previous and current development phases (*i.e.* Phase 1, Phase 1(extended) and Phase 2 & 3) and associated approvals is outlined below.

## 3.2 Previous Proposals and Approvals

The design of the site layout has been influenced by a number of factors. These include:

- the existing topography of the site;
- the conservation area in which the site is located;
- the visual impact of the proposed development, notably on the near-by St Martin's Church and the Selfridge's building;
- the need for the representation of the medieval burgage plots and Hersum Ditch in the lines of the proposed buildings; and.
- the need to provide connectivity between Birmingham city centre and the adjacent area of Digbeth.

The layout has been designed to take into account the aforementioned factors and to minimise the impact on these features, and also from a sustainability perspective provide the most efficient use of the land available for the development.

The full range of architectural plans at full scale are not reproduced with this ES but are provided in the main planning application package which can be consulted at Birmingham City Council planning offices.

### 3.2.1 Phase 1 (2009)

Full Planning Consent was granted on 21/8/09 (Ref C/00295/09/FUL) for a mixed use development of the larger Beorma Quarter site comprising:

- 123-143 Digbeth;
- 3-5 Park Street; and
- 81-93 Allison Street and adjoining land.

The three phase development comprised refurbishment of the Digbeth Coldstore building, 135-136 and 137 Digbeth, façade of 138 & 139 Digbeth and construction of three new blocks including a 27 storey tower to provide shops, offices, restaurant and café, business space, residential and exhibition space, together with an energy centre using an aquifer thermal energy storage system (ATES), basement parking and creation of new landscape areas. Phase

1 included the refurbishment of the Coldstore and the erection of a new Office Building C on the site of Hennesseys PH.

In addition, Listed Building Consent was issued on 21/8/09 (Ref C/00296/09/LBC for works to the Phase 1 Digbeth Coldstore including the demolition of the engine room & boiler house and alterations to the building to include repair of the roof; opening up bricked up windows, new windows to all elevations, new elevation to Orwell Place, removal of timber and cork lining to internal walls, partial removal of floor to levels 1 & 2, insertion of lift, servicing duct, toilet and stairs.

Conservation Area Consent was granted on 21/8/09 (Ref C/00297/09/CAC) for retention of the Digbeth Coldstore (excepting the engine room and boiler house to the rear), the retention and refurbishment of the main, front sections of 135-136 and 137 Digbeth (locally listed buildings) and the retention of the façade to 138-139 Digbeth (also locally listed). All other buildings have been, or will be, demolished to allow the comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of the site to assist with the regeneration of the Digbeth Millennium Quarter and the creation of new public realm. In respect of Phase 1, this allowed the demolition of the engine room & boiler house to the rear of the Coldstore, the ancillary Coldstore buildings and Hennesseys PH.

On 17/08/12, BCC granted permission (Ref 2012/02937/PA) to extend the time for the implementation of the 2009 full planning approval (Ref C/00295/09/FUL) involving the mixed use redevelopment of the wider Beorma Quarter site by 5 years.

### **3.2.2 Phase 1 Extended (2012)**

In response to tenant demand, Salhia Investments (Birmingham) Ltd (SIBL) submitted further applications in 2012 for a restaurant/nightclub use in the ground floor & basement of the Digbeth Coldstore and an up to 112 bedroom hotel within an extended Building C. Of necessity, this involved increasing the area of the Phase 1 site in order to accommodate the hotel building.

Full planning application (Ref 2012/02104/PA) was subsequently approved on 17/08/12 for revisions to proposals for an extended Phase 1 of the Beorma Quarter comprising selective demolition, conversion and refurbishment of the Digbeth Coldstore to provide a nightclub (*sui generis* use) and/or a restaurant at basement level; a restaurant and/or retail and/or offices at ground floor level; with business space on the upper floors.

The application also proposed the construction of an extended "Building C" to provide an up to 112 bedroom hotel with retail on the ground floor, all with associated hard & soft landscaping works.

The accompanying Listed Building Consent application (Ref 2012/02105/PA) was approved on 24/05/12. Externally, this involved replacement of the slate roof, the opening up bricked-up windows in the Digbeth elevation and the insertion of new steel-framed windows. Also, new glazing & doors to the Orwell Place and Coldstore Court elevations, repairs to the brickwork and the replacement of damaged rain water pipes. A new terrace with retaining wall, ironwork screen and steps to Coldstore Court was also added. Internally, the works comprised removal of the basement & second floor; the underpinning of the existing basement walls; and the insertion of new floors at basement and second floor levels. Raised access floors were also to be inserted on top of the retained first and third floors. Finally, two new lifts & two new stairs flights of stairs were to be introduced.

### **3.2.3 Phase 1 Extended, Minor Amendments (2013)**

On 09/05/13, BCC resolved to grant approval (Ref 2013/02433/PA), subject to a Deed of Variation in respect of the 2012 s106 Agreement, for minor amendments to extended "Building C", fixing the number of hotel rooms at 108. The main amendments comprised:

- adjustments' to the hotel floor levels & fenestration;
- omitting the office accommodation to be built over the hotel in the 2012 approval;
- adequate provision for mechanical & electrical services such as water tanks and air handling units;
- details of interim and permanent external landscaping;
- details of interim and permanent external lighting;
- changes to the previously approved design of bat and bird boxes (Ecology Report); and
- proposals for an interim Heat Pump to serve the Coldstore prior to the introduction of the ATES system in Phases 2 & 3.

## **3.3 Phases 2 & 3 Development Proposals**

Phases 2 & 3 of the Beorma Quarter development as now proposed (and which is the subject of this updated EIA and ES) will cover some 0.6275 hectares and comprise elements from three existing buildings *i.e.* the locally-listed Grade A 135-136 Digbeth, the locally-listed Grade B 137 Digbeth and the locally-listed Grade B 138-139 Digbeth and three new blocks (2, 3A & 3B). These are arranged in such a way so as to:

- respond to Phase 1 of the development and the principles of the established masterplan to complete the restoration of the built edge of the urban block bounded by Digbeth, Park Street, Well Lane and Allison Street;
- respond to the constraints imposed by the remnants of the original burgage plots and the Hersum Ditch alignment;
- create an appropriate setting for the locally-listed buildings that form part of the proposals, as well as the adjacent Grade II listed Digbeth Coldstore, the other nationally listed buildings in the immediate vicinity and the site's Conservation Area context;
- ensure the visual impact in short, medium and long distance views is appropriate in terms of the retention of views of major buildings, key vistas and the Birmingham skyline;
- improve pedestrian, cycle and vehicular movement through and around the site; and
- create an attractive, active and publicly accessible hard-landscaped amenity space, Orwell Place, at the heart of the development.

The proposals envisage the retention and refurbishment of the main sections of locally-listed Nos 135-136 Digbeth (Grade A) and 137 Digbeth (Grade B) and their conversion to retail use (circa 470 sqm). It is also proposed to retain the main Digbeth street facade in respect of the locally listed Nos 138-139 Digbeth (Grade B) – the BVSC building, as per the 2009 approval, and this is incorporated into the design of Building 2.

The breakdown of the proposed development is as follows (note that all areas are approximate gross external areas and the planning application should be consulted for definitive figures).

### **3.3.1 Building 2**

At the corner of Digbeth and Park Street and directly opposite St Martin's Church, the Bullring and the iconic Selfridge's department store, comprises a 30 storey tower with 154 private apartments (13,531 sqm) split over the upper 18 storeys. This is located above a double height 12th floor plant space; 11 storeys of B1 office space (circa 18,181 sqm); ground level office and residential lobbies, back of house & servicing areas; and A1 retail and/or A3 restaurant space (circa 679 sqm). It is envisaged that a plant basement (circa 2,220 sqm) below the footprint of the building will serve not only Building 2 itself, but also the locally-listed Digbeth buildings, the Coldstore and Buildings 3A & 3B. A double-height passage cuts through the ground floor plan to provide pedestrian access from the corner of Park Street and Digbeth to the newly formed public square, Orwell Place. As identified in 4.3, the Digbeth frontage to the

building incorporates the retained facade of the existing Grade B locally-listed 138-139 Digbeth.

The proposed form of Building 2 is driven by a desire to vertically express the social and geological histories of the site. The setting out of the building's primary facades & cut-backs along a north-east to south-west axis are generated by the positions of the site's original medieval burgage plot boundaries. In terms of material, these primary walls are finished in sandstone on lower levels and reconstituted stone with a sandstone finish on upper levels, referencing the fact that the building sits on the eastern edge of the Birmingham Sandstone Ridge, and appearing as though the rock is drawn up from the ground as it hits the ridge fault line which dissects the Beorma Quarter development (running under the Coldstore, Orwell Place and in-between buildings 3A and 3B). At high level, the stone is partially veiled by a single-glazed external skin over-sailing Park Street that encloses private winter gardens to the apartments. The remaining facades, on the north-west to south-east axis, infill the voids between the sandstone-faced spines, and are formed in a high performance curtain wall glazing system, with the addition of vertical aluminium solar-shading fins to the south-west facing elevation.

### **3.3.2 Building 3**

Fronting on to Well Lane, is made up of three elements. The first element 3A, adjacent to Building 2, comprises a 14 storey tower section with 69 private apartments (circa 5,633 sqm) sitting above a retail unit (circa 336 sqm). The form of this building is a spatial response minimising overlooking from the adjacent tower and focusing vistas out over Birmingham. The materials for Building 3A reference both the 'futuristic' Selfridges building and the historic dynamism of the water which rises along the ridge fault line below. Two-tone aluminium panels are complimented by expressing the floor plates in matt grey panels. A living wall sits both sides of the lower levels providing privacy to residents over looking Orwell Place. The second element, building 3B, comprises of 10 storeys of B1 office space (circa 5,218 sqm) with its entrance on Allison Street. Continuing the site-wide expression of the ridge fault line, this element is clad in terracotta referencing the mudstone on which it sits. A portion of the rain screen profile extends across the glazed areas of the façade, forming terracotta louvres for solar shading. The third element comprises 4 No live/work units (circa 528 sqm) situated between 3A and 3B on Well Lane. Each two storey unit is faced in brick, responding directly to the opposing street frontage.

The main planning application package should be consulted for fully detailed design plans for the development. In the case of any discrepancies between the scheme details presented in the ES and those presented in the Planning Application, those in the Planning Application shall prevail.

## 3.4 Design Principles

### 3.4.1 Design, Materials and Contribution to Urban Context

The design of the buildings and the site has been developed in response to the following criteria:

- The juxtaposition of the site in relation to existing, planned or anticipated neighbouring developments.
- The connection of the buildings to road links and public transport in the wider area creating a balance between the development, access and the environment.
- The provision of a connection the adjacent city centre of Birmingham and with Digbeth through the design and layout of the development.
- The legibility of functions within the building from the public realm.
- The use of form, detail and materials to create visual interest and to respect the archaeological interest of the site.
- The creation of environments which are welcoming to pedestrians (site workers, site residents and visitors).
- The provision of security by the use of overlooking, lighting, and the avoidance of uncontrollable spaces.
- The use of a consistent palette of materials of high standard throughout the development.

### 3.4.2 Detailed Design

The development has been designed to optimise the site area and respond to the above criteria:

- The development's design and integral landscaping, including the widening of the adjacent Digbeth pavement, tree planting along Digbeth and the creation of attractive hard-landscaped spaces and pedestrian link route within the site, are intended to the enhancement of the City's environment.
- The new buildings have been designed to reflect the historic medieval burgage plot layout along Digbeth and the Hersum Ditch boundary between the original town and manorial park with the 30 storey tower reflecting the burgage plots in both plan and elevation.

- The layout and design of the various buildings and spaces provide a variety of form and architectural interest, varying building heights with heights stepping up towards Park Street/the Bullring/Selfridges and active ground floor frontages.
- Through the design and orientation of the three new buildings a publically accessible, hard landscaped amenity space has been created in the centre of the development, to be known as Orwell Place.
- Listed and locally listed buildings at the site have been retained/conserved ensuring the long-term usage of these buildings, as well as enhancing the currently rundown character of the Digbeth-Deritend-Bordesley High Street Conservation Area in which the site is located.
- The ground floor of buildings consist of lobbies and retail spaces to attract people into the site.
- Improvement has been achieved in terms of level pedestrian access to the site from both the city centre and Digbeth.
- Various material options were investigated to maximise the landmark qualities of the building.
- The 30 storey tower has been carefully located and designed so as to contrast with the form of the iconic Selfridges department store to the north whilst avoiding the blockage of views of the Rotunda, St Martins Church and the Digbeth Coldstore looking north along Digbeth.
- The tower is intended to act as a destination marker as it signifies the end of the approach into the City Centre from the south east along the A41 Bordesley High Street – Deritend - Digbeth corridor.
- The location of the tower on the south side of Park Street (and the former Queensway “concrete collar”) signifies the spillage of City Centre uses (and the building types that accommodate them) out from the once constricted City Centre and into Digbeth, as required by emerging BCC policy.
- The tower is considered to be in accordance with the evolving Birmingham Big City Plan prepared by Urban Initiatives which recommends the expansion of the City Centre to the south, to include the Beorma Quarter, and a relaxing of the current CRZ restrictions on tall buildings.

- The tower (*Figure 3.3*) is intended to signify the regeneration of Digbeth and provides a design benchmark for future development within the Digbeth Millennium Quarter and the wider Eastside Initiative area.



**Figure 3.3:** *Visualisation of Proposed Scheme (View from Park Street)*

### **3.4.3 Access**

The site is well served by, and is adjacent to, substantial road and public transport links. The development will be accessed as follows:

- **Car and motorcycle access** – The car parking and motorcycle spaces for the site will be situated in the basement and accessed from Allison Street on the eastern boundary of the site.

- **Pedestrian and cycle access** – Pedestrians and cyclists will be able to access the site from both Allison Street to the east and off Digbeth to the south west via improved access points, notably Orwell Passage. In terms of pedestrian and cycle provision, the proximity of the site to local highways and pathways offers an opportunity for accessibility by non-car modes to be secured. Additionally, the site is well served by public transport, notably bus and rail services, the site itself being serviced by a number of bus stops located off Digbeth, again offering an opportunity for accessibility by non car modes to be secured. The pedestrianised core of the development will avoid conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and cars at the site. Access for those with disabilities, as well as carers with prams and buggies, has been considered to enable these users accessibility into and through the retail spaces. Parking for the disabled will be located in the basement as close to lifts as feasibly possible. Further detailed discussion of the detailed design and access of the development are provided in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the main planning application.

#### **3.4.4 Sustainability**

The new buildings will aim to achieve high standards of environmental design as part of a sustainability agenda for the whole of the site. The design of individual buildings is respectful of orientation, materials specification and energy management strategy, so as to demonstrate responsible environmental design principles. The provision of heat energy and cooling via a Ground Source Heat Pump system is also a key facet of the sustainability credentials of the proposed development. This is discussed further in the Sustainability Statement, which is reported separately to the ES but provided with the main planning application.

### **3.5 Site Management**

The site will be managed by a property management company, who will be responsible the maintenance and control of issues such as:

- Site Drainage
- Roadways Management and Maintenance
- Landscape and Environmental Management
- On-site waste management
- Buried Services
- Security

- Community Liaison

In addition a Tenants Handbook will be produced and agreed with the Local Authority that will set the conditions of operation on the site for commercial and residential tenants and spell out the site's environmental charter. This will include legislative compliance requirements such as controlling nuisance such as noise and odours, and sustainability provisions such as adhering to waste management principles (promoting recycling and recovery).

The energy demands for the development will be controlled via the energy centre which will be managed by a specialist energy firm.

### 3.6 Alternatives to the Proposed Development

Fundamentally, two alternative approaches exist for the application site: (i) to retain the site in its current form and condition (*i.e.* the 'do nothing' approach) or (ii) to undertake redevelopment to provide enhanced and optimised use of the site as an urban mixed use development (*i.e.* the 'do something' approach). It is considered that the 'do nothing' approach will result in the continued steady decline in the economic viability and usability of the site and continue to present a visually degraded environment. Furthermore, lack of intervention in the listed buildings would enhance their risk of degradation and loss. As such, the "do nothing" approach will provide no contribution to, and actively detract from the proposals to provide connectivity between Birmingham city centre and Digbeth.

Due to the poor state of a number of the site buildings and the underutilisation of the site as a whole, if the proposed development does not take place, the opportunity to provide a key gateway between the relatively run down area of Digbeth and the thriving city centre of Birmingham may not be possible. Additionally, the resultant loss of employment and provision of affordable housing to the area would be unfortunate as the potential for the site is so significant.

If the site were to remain viable then it would likely be subject to further deterioration of redundant buildings, one of which is grade II listed, and would remain underutilised, being of little or no benefit to the environment and the vision that the Local Authority has for the area with respect to improving the Digbeth area and providing a link between the city centre and Digbeth.

When considering the 'do something' approach, consideration has been given to whether the proposed development offers the most appropriate development solution for the site. The development does not conflict 'in principle' with Birmingham City Council's aspirations for the site, and it is considered that other forms of development with alternative land uses would be inappropriate given the urban setting and the site's juxtaposition between Digbeth and

Birmingham City Centre. Consideration has also been given as to whether the mix of uses proposed offers the most appropriate solution, or whether another mix is more appropriate. Further discussion of this issue is contained within the Planning Statement in Volume 1 of this Application, but fundamentally the mixed use development makes efficient use of the site, and provides a balance between the proposed commercial (office and retail) and residential uses of this city centre development.

In terms of assessing alternative sites for such development, whilst there are other plots that may have been available in the wider area, this site is unique insofar as it is the first geographic land parcel beyond the regenerated elements of the city centre in this zone which is suitable for redevelopment and in need of redevelopment given its run down state. It constitutes a key visual aspect of the approach to Birmingham City Centre along this route and is supported by traffic and public transport connections and accessibility. Strategically the site provides a key link to the city which can only be effective if suitably redeveloped in accordance with local requirements and sensitivities and adopting appropriate design standards and uses.