

Agenda Item 37.

| Application Number | Expiry Date | Parish | Ward |
|--|--|-----------|-----------------|
| 231837 | EXT | Shinfield | Shinfield South |
| Applicant | University of Reading | | |
| Site Address | Gateway 4 Plot Thames Valley Science Park Shinfield RG2 9LH | | |
| Proposal | Full planning application for the proposed erection of a new Gateway building containing offices for creative industries (including film, television and ancillary support uses) and ancillary café with associated landscaping. (Application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment and is a potential departure from the Local Plan) | | |
| Type | Full | | |
| PS Category | 1 | | |
| Officer | Christopher Howard | | |
| Reason for determination by committee | Major application | | |
| FOR CONSIDERATION BY | Planning Committee on 11 th of October 2023 | | |
| REPORT PREPARED BY | Assistant Director Delivery & Infrastructure | | |

SUMMARY

The application seeks full planning approval for a predominantly three storey building with a plant room above that would support the function and activities for the Shinfield Studios campus (located to the east and west of the site). The building would be located on the Gateway 4 plot on the allocated Science Park which has planning approvals under refs: O/2009/1027 and 163609. This established the principle of development within the area and the site was identified for employment use both within the Core Strategy and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD). The vision for the Science Park and planning policies relevant to it envisaged an employment space that comprised research and development, laboratories and high tech uses together with ancillary and related uses. It is noted that these policies were developed over 10 years ago and the type of employment offer has changed over this period from what was being envisaged at that time of the adoption of the Core Strategy.

In terms of background, the main application for Shinfield Studios was approved in 2021 under planning ref 211841 and this included the land for phase 2 of the Science Park. This provided permanent permission for a temporary facility on land south of Cutbush Lane but also larger campus to the north of Cutbush Lane. Work is well underway to deliver the facility and phase one of the northern campus is now operational. The application did originally include a post production facility on land to the east of the Eastern Relief Road directly adjacent to the Science Park / Hawthorn / Easter Relief Road roundabout but this element was withdrawn due to concerns over its impact. The Section 106 agreement did however require the applicant to submit an application for the facility at a future date as the post production cinema was intended to serve dual use as a community cinema on weekends which weighed in favour for the purpose of the planning balance (please refer to the report for 211841 for further information).

The current application has revised the location of the post production facility to the proposed site on the Thames Valley Science as referred to as the Gateway Four plot. The facility would be located on the broad footprint of a building that currently serves as workshop (Workshop T4) to support the filming activities at the main studio campus.

The workshop has temporary consent under 210387 although there is a concurrent application under consideration to relocate the workshop to the wider studio campus under application ref: 231561.

The proposed building is cut into a gentle slope and has a maximum height of 23m when taken from the lowest point of the land. The maximum height does however include a small plant room on the roof of the main building which is located well within the perimeter of the facility so this element would not be significantly visible from directly outside of the site at ground floor level. Taking this into account the facility is predominantly 19.3m in height for the main accommodation. The building, although higher than the adjacent main Gateway building, is considered to represent an appropriate transition from the entrance gateway buildings to the larger studio buildings.

Internally, the building would be split over five stories with the plant room above. The building would mostly serve as office space to support the main campus, however, it also includes a two screen post-production screening cinema which combined have 100 seats. The main use of the cinema spaces would be for editing film and media content to support the activities for the wider site. It can however also potentially be used for community use on weekends as required by the Section 106 agreement pursuant to the planning approval for the main site, unless an alternative facility is provided. There is further ancillary accommodation within the building including a café area, reception space and plant and circulation space. The total external floor area would be 7,552sqm with internal space totalling 7,061sqm.

The site would be accessed off the Eastern Relief Road (ERR) through the Science Park link which has been delivered. The full application for the main site approved under ref: 211841 included parking for the facility which is well distributed around the Studio campus. There is also blue badge parking available adjacent to the building.

The application has been brought forward as a full planning application rather than a reserved matters submission for the extant Science Park planning approval as the nature of use and form of the building are outside the parameters of the existing consent.

The application is before the Planning Committee as it is a major development that is recommended for approval. Whilst it is acknowledged that in policy terms, in principle the facility would not be fully compliant with Core Strategy policy CP16 and MDD policies TB13 and SAL07, the proposal needs to be considered with regards to the circumstances of the applicant and a planning balance should be made. For the reasons set out in the report, in this instance, there are special circumstances associated with the delivery of the facility when considering the development plan as a whole that do not undermine the overriding objectives of policies CP16, TB13 and SAL07. These include the employment benefits and inward investment that the facility will deliver and the extent to which TV production can help foster innovation that can have wider benefits for sets, filming and post production activities. The new building will help support these activities for the wider studio campus, clustering the activities on one main site and cement Shinfield Studios as a centre that specialises in film and media production that will benefit the borough and wider region. The design of the building is considered to be high quality complementing the business park while the building will meet BREEAM "Excellent" standard, therefore be a high performance building in terms of its sustainability.

The development would not have a significant detrimental impact on the character of the area or the landscape setting. The location of the site together with the activities within the facility when taking into account the established allocation of the site for employment would not cause significant harm to existing residents. In addition, the proposal would be above minimum policy requirements for sustainability. It is also acceptable in terms of traffic, highway safety and flood risk.

The recommendation is that the application is approved subject to conditions outlined below and subject to completion of the s106 agreement.

PLANNING STATUS

- Adjacent to Strategic Development Location (SDL) as identified on the Core Strategy (South of the M4 Strategic Development Location SPD)
- Infrastructure Delivery and Contributions SPD
- Within 7km of the Special Protection Area (SPA)
- Mineral consultation zone
- Replacement Mineral Local Plan
- Thames Valley Science Park
- Potentially contaminated land consultation zone
- Gas pipe consultation zone
- Area of archaeological potential
- Nuclear Consultation Zone
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Listed buildings located to the south east
- Local Plan Update Submitted Sites
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones
- AQMA 2004

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the three tiered recommendation as set out in Appendix 1.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is extensive planning history for the South of the M4 SDL which is summarised on application ref: 210055 and 211841. For ease of reference, the applications that relate directly to the site are summarised below. Outline and full applications are shown in **bold** and reserved matters are shown in plain text

| Application ref | Description | Outcome |
|------------------------------------|---|----------------------|
| Science and innovation park | | |
| O/2009/1027 | Outline application for phase 1 development of Science & Innovation Park (Access to be considered) plus full application for the construction of access road foot and cycle ways M4 overbridge and associated works including landscaping and engineering works plus erection of boundary wall and fence adjoining Shinfield Road/Access Road. Part demolition and reformation of facade of Stable | Approved 27/10/10 |

| Application ref | Description | Outcome |
|------------------------|--|---|
| | Buildings at Lane End Farm and demolition of existing farm buildings. | |
| RM/2015/0630 | Reserved Matters application pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2009/1027 for the development of phase 1A of proposed Thames Valley Science Park comprising the construction of a gateway building and all associated landscaping and ancillary works plus temporary car parking arrangements – Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered. | Approved 26/08/15 |
| 162841 | Reserved Matters in relation to the development of Phase 1b of the proposed Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP) for a new cancer treatment centre, all associated landscaping, access and ancillary works | Approved 8/12/18 |
| 162818 | Reserved Matters application for the car park for phase 1 of the Science Park | Approved 8/12/18 |
| 163609 | Outline planning application for Phase 2 of the Thames Valley Science Park comprising up to 57,110 sqm research and development and innovation floor space (with occupancy restricted by a Gateway policy) inclusive of up to 5,711 sqm of amenity and supporting uses and an energy centre (all matters reserved except access to the site). | Approved 06/07/18 |
| 173287 | Reserved Matters application pursuant to Outline Planning Consent O/2009/1027 (as extended under planning permission 152330) for the development of phase 1 of Thames Valley Science Park, comprising the construction of building 2 of the gateway building and all associated landscaping and ancillary works, plus temporary car parking arrangements - Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale to be considered. | Approved 14/02/18 |
| 210387 | Full application for the erection of Film studio stages and workshops (for a temporary period of 5 years). To include access to the site via Old House Lane / Cutbush Lane, car parking, ancillary buildings to support the use of the site and landscaping, with a workshop to be included on Gateway 4 plot at Thames Valley Science Park. | Approved 25/03/21 |
| 210210 | Full application for the erection of TV Studio Building including studio space, workshop/storage area and production/office along with parking facilities. | Approved 14th July 2021 |

| Application ref | Description | Outcome |
|------------------------|--|---|
| 211841 | Full planning permission for the Science Park Creative Media Hub comprising the erection of film stages and associated workshops and office space; and ancillary uses including equipment stores, cafe. Formation of associated access, decked and surface parking, and landscaping at the Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP). | Approved 13th December 2021 |
| 221142 | Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 211841 to allow alterations to the decked car park, office B (Sound Stage 4), office C (Sound Stage 8), workshop C/office E and workshops A, B, D and E; consolidation of ancillary plant, rotation of stage 10, modification to the extent of retaining walls and associated updates to site layout and cross sections to reflect these changes. | 20 July 2022 |
| 222317 | Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 211841 to allow alterations to Sound Studio 10, Studio 13 / Office D, Workshop D and addition of Workshop F and associated updates to site layout and cross sections. | 09 November 2022 |
| 231188 | Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 211841 to allow alterations to the Hub building and Sound Stage 14. Hub building changes are to include reduced height and adjusted footprint along with updated materials. Stage 14 is reduced in height, ancillary plant block adjusted, Elephant doors relocated, personnel doors re-located, Masonry plinth replaced with metal cladding. Plans provided to show the details of the electric substation (switch house). | 15 August 2023 |
| 231561 | Full application for the proposed relocation of Workshop T4 (to become Workshop G). | Decision pending |

| SUMMARY INFORMATION | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| For Commercial | |
| Site Area | 0.52ha |
| Previous land use(s) | Allocated as Thames Valley Science Park (with extant planning consent) |
| Proposed floorspace of each use | 7559 sqm – this is predominantly office space but in addition to this the building would contain a 100 seat post production cinema, reception and café space and ancillary plant rooms etc to support the function of the building. |
| Change in floorspace (+/-) | A net gain of 7559 sqm |

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Number of jobs created | 415 direct jobs generated from the use of the facility and 166 indirect positions created. |
| Proposed parking spaces | The construction phase will generate 240 jobs and 282 indirect positions. The parking would be provided on the decked parking area approved under the full planning application ref: 211841 – please see highways section below. |

| CONSULTATION RESPONSES | |
|--|---|
| Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue | No objection |
| Thames Water | No objection |
| WBC Biodiversity | No objection |
| WBC Economic Prosperity and Place (Community Infrastructure) | Require Employment Skills Plan contribution to be secured by S106 |
| WBC Drainage | No objection |
| WBC Environmental Health | No objection subject to conditions |
| WBC Highways | No objection subject to conditions |
| WBC Tree & Landscape | No objection subject to conditions |
| WBC Conservation | No objection |
| Berkshire Archaeology | No objection |
| Southern Gas Networks | Holding objection in respect to the potential impact on a pipeline – <i>Officer note: the location of the building is not in a location that would compromise the statutory undertakers assets. It is understood that a meeting has been held by the applicant and SGN who will withdraw their objection. This will be confirmed on the Members Update.</i> |
| National Highways | No objection |

| REPRESENTATIONS |
|---|
| Town/Parish Council: Shinfield Parish Council: Letter of support |
| Local Members: No comments received |
| Neighbours: No comments received |

| PLANNING POLICY | | |
|--|-------------|------------------------------------|
| National Policy | NPPF | National Planning Policy Framework |
| Technical Guidance to the National Planning Policy Framework | | |
| National Planning Policy Guidance | NPPG | National Planning Policy Guidance |
| Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010 | CP1 | Sustainable Development |
| | CP2 | Inclusive Communities |

| | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| | CP3 | General Principles for Development |
| | CP4 | Infrastructure Requirements |
| | CP6 | Managing Travel Demand |
| | CP7 | Biodiversity |
| | CP8 | Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area |
| | CP9 | Scale and Location of Development Proposals |
| | CP10 | Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network |
| | CP17 | Housing delivery |
| | CP19 | South of the M4 Strategic Development Location |
| Appendix 7 – Additional Guidance for the Development of Strategic Development Locations | | |
| Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 | CC01 | Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development |
| | CC02 | Development Limits |
| | CC03 | Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping |
| | CC04 | Sustainable Design and Construction |
| | CC05 | Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks |
| | CC06 | Noise |
| | CC07 | Parking |
| | CC08 | Safeguarding alignments of the Strategic Transport Network & Road Infrastructure |
| | CC09 | Development and Flood Risk (from all sources) |
| | CC10 | Sustainable Drainage |
| | TB12 | Employment Skills Plan |
| | TB13 | Science and Innovation Park |
| | TB20 | Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use |
| | TB21 | Landscape Character |
| | TB23 | Biodiversity and Development |
| | TB24 | Designated Heritage Assets |

| | | |
|---|------------------|---|
| | SAL05 | Delivery of avoidance measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area |
| | SAL07 | Sites within Development Limits allocated for employment/commercial development |
| Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan | | |
| | Policy 1 | Location of Development |
| | Policy 2 | General Design Principles |
| | Policy 3 | Sustainable Development |
| | Policy 4 | Accessibility and Highway Safety |
| | Policy 5 | Parking |
| | Policy 6 | Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands |
| | Policy 7 | Biodiversity |
| | Policy 8 | Flooding |
| | Policy 9 | Community Assets |
| | Policy 10 | Community and Sports Facilities |
| | Policy 11 | Commercial Development |
| | Policy 12 | Broadband Provision |
| Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) | BDG | Borough Design Guide |
| | SDC | Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (28 May 2010) |
| | SoM4SPD | South of the M4 Strategic Development Location Supplementary Planning Document (October 2011) |

PLANNING ISSUES

Site description / background

1. The site relates to land to the north east of the Eastern Relief Road (ERR) within the consented phase 1 Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP) campus. The site sits between the Gateway 1 building to the south and the main Science Park car park to the north with the M4 motorway beyond. As part of the phase 1 TVSP, two buildings have been delivered on site which are the Gateway 1 building that supports primarily laboratory uses and the Rutherford Cancer Treatment Centre. Supporting infrastructure has also been delivered including the access to the site, parking and landscaping. The building would sit on the Gateway Four plot which currently has a temporary workshop (Workshop T4) sitting on the broad footprint of the proposed building.
2. The TVSP was originally consented in 2010 under planning application ref: O/2009/1027 for a phase 1 parcel for the site. Further land to support the TVSP to the east of the phase 1 site was allocated within the Core Strategy for a larger site totalling around 55,000 sqm. The phase 2 application for the TVSP for much of this this land was consented in 2018 (ref: 163609). The primary use of the

Science Park was established via the Gateway Policy within the S106 pursuant to the outline planning consents. This restricted the use of the Science Park as an employment space that included research and development, laboratories and high tech uses together with ancillary uses. The ethos behind the Gateway Policy was further defined by Policy CP16 and Policies TB13 and SAL07 of the MDD.

3. The wider phase two Science Park land to the east of the site on the has however recently been approved for a studio campus under planning approval 211841. This comprises of stage buildings, offices workshops and ancillary buildings and hardstanding to support the use. The construction activities to deliver this facility are well underway and the first phase of the campus to the north of Cutbush Lane has recently been brought into use. The campus, when complete, will foster innovation for the creative industries and provide a leading site for the production of content for TV, films and media activities. The post production cinema space and supporting office space will help to cement Shinfield Studios as a significant hub for film and media production.

Description of Development:

4. The application is for a five-storey building to serve as office space to support the main campus, however, it also includes two post-production screening cinemas which have a combined total of 100 seats. The main use of the cinema would be for editing film and media content post filming but it also could potentially be used for community use on weekends as required by the Section 106 agreement pursuant to the planning approval for the main site. There is further ancillary accommodation within the building including a café area, reception space and plant and circulation space.
5. The building would be located on the phase 1 TVSP land on the footprint of the temporary workshop T4 to the east of the campus. The proposed building is sits on a plateau that has been cut into a gentle slope which was been delivered to accommodate the workshop. The building would have a maximum height of 23m when taken from the lowest point of the land. This however includes a small plant room which is set well within the main roof of the building so would not be significantly visible from ground floor level directly outside of the site. The building is therefore predominantly 19.3m in height for the main accommodation. Internally the accommodation would be spread over five stories with a plant room above. The total external floor area would be 7,552sqm with internal space totalling 7,061sqm.
6. The main access to the site would be from the Eastern Relief Road (ERR) via the Science Park / ERR / Hawthorne Roundabout onto the internal Science Park Link (South Avenue) – all of which have been delivered.
7. The full application for the main studio complex was approved under ref: 211841. This included parking for the proposed building and this is closely related to the facility. There is also blue badge parking available adjacent to the building. As such, the significant majority of the infrastructure to serve the facility has been delivered and effectively the site is a serviced parcel.

Background to need for facility / Economic benefits

8. In terms of the need of the studios, there has been an exceptional increase in demand for high end television production over recent years. This has in part

fuelled by a shift in how these services are delivered to the consumer with an increase in accessibility for on demand services. The increase in demand has been recognised in the Governments Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future White Paper (2017) and referred to in footnote 42 of the NPPF. The White Paper specifically makes reference to the contribution that the Creative industries (which include the media sector) can make to the UK economy. These industries are growing at twice the rate of the wider economy and generates 5% of the total annual economic output. The Creative Industries over the past five years have grown at the fastest rate of any other sector. This growth has however generated pent up demand for further studio space.

9. The NPPF also support clustering of industries and the application should be read in the context of the wider studio campus being delivered at present to the east and south of the site. All of these facilities are within easy walkable distances to the proposed building and the proposed building will support the function of the wider site.
10. It should also be noted that the applicant also has a strong link to the University of Reading who have their own established Department of Film, Theatre & Television and the provision of the studios in this location will aid collaboration between the University and the end user.
11. In respect to staff numbers, there would be around 415 direct jobs 166 indirect positions created from the use of the building and these will support the other roles generated on the wider campus. The use of the building would generate a combined Gross Value Added¹ (GVA) figure of around £28.6 million per annum. In addition, there would be jobs generated through the construction phase creating 240 jobs and 282 indirect positions. This would equate to a combined GVA figure of £42.7million.
12. Taking both the construction and post occupation employment potential, the proposed use of the site which will be a crucial anchor to support the wider film studio campus would deliver significant vocational opportunities. In addition, the site could potentially act as a catalyst and anchor for further employment provision locally should subsequent developments be forthcoming and considered acceptable in planning terms.

Principle of Development:

13. As advised, the studio would be sited entirely on land that is designated for the delivery of employment space and associated buildings / infrastructure on the TVSP. This is identified both in terms of policy and further established through the planning history. The proposal therefore needs to be assessed against the Gateway Policy of the Science Park as enshrined in the S106 planning approval for phase 1 and 2 of this site, policy CP16 of the Core Strategy and policies TB13 and SAL07 of the MDD. These restrict uses on the Science Park to *inter alia* predominantly innovation and research and development. This also places a high emphasis on collaboration between industry sectors.
14. When examining the rationale behind locating a Science Park on the TVSP land, this appears to stem from the former regional spatial strategy and regional

¹ Gross Value Added is the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy

economic strategy and was identified in the 2009 South East Plan under policy WCBV2. This was carried forward in the Local Plan policies which allocated the site and identified the use. Policy CP16 envisaged that around 55,000sqm of land could be identified at the TVSP site. Policy CP16 envisaged that the entire 55,000m² of floorspace would be delivered by the end of the plan period i.e. 2026. Uptake has however lagged well behind these predictions and to date, only around 10,000m² of space has been delivered solely on the phase 1 site. The result of the pandemic is likely to drive the requirements for office space down further nationally. This clearly would likely have impacts on the marketability and need for more narrowly defined employment space at the Science Park.

15. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed TV studio use is not one that is envisaged by policies CP16 TB13 and SAL07 together with the Gateway Policy, the media and film industry, by the way in which it functions and end products / programmes that it produces has some aspects in common with innovation and research uses as there is a degree of uniqueness to each production.
16. The submitted planning statement identifies the technology that will be used to serve the function of the building and the latest technologies would be used for media production. Although it is acknowledged that the use of these products does not equate specifically to innovation, the application of the technology offers opportunities for further enhancement and refinement of the products. The sector also fosters innovation for set props together with the production and post production aspects of filming. This encompasses a wide range of collaboration of different skill sets through the wide range of employment uses which was envisaged by the science park policies.
17. The building will also serve a function with regards to collaboration. The University of Reading have an established department dedicated to film theatre which offers opportunities for collaboration together with wider stakeholders such as Henley Business School. The University also have a relationship with Digital Catapult UK who are the UK's leading advanced digital technology innovative centre. They seek to accelerate the adoption of new and emerging technologies to drive regional, national and international growth for businesses across the economy.
18. It is therefore considered whilst the media sector was not specifically defined in the policies governing the site, the nature of the sector has a degree of synergy with the innovation and collaboration aims of the policies. In addition, it is acknowledged the aspirations and policies governing the site were written some time ago and the economic sector has moved on since this point in time, as recognised in the Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future White Paper (2017). Given that this is referred to in footnote 42 of the NPPF it is capable of being a material consideration in the decision making process. In these circumstances, a planning balancing exercise should be undertaken and consideration needs to be made regarding the merits of the proposal, the main policies governing the use of the site and the development plan as a whole.
19. It should be noted that policy 1 of Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (which was adopted following the adoption of the Core Strategy and MDD) supports development within settlement limits and adjacent to these where the benefits of the development outweigh its adverse impacts and in this case the site sits

entirely within the settlement limit as defined by policy 1. Since the Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan is the most recent policy document, this can be seen as the most up to date planning policy for the area. Policy 11 of the Neighbourhood Plan supports employment use and the definition of innovation within this is less defined than that in the MDD. The Parish have been consulted for this application and they stated that they support the application.

20. The application should also be read in conjunction with national planning policy. Section 2 of the NPPF outlines three interdependent objectives regarding sustainable development and promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The objectives set out in paragraph 8 are:

- a) *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) *an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.*

These principles are broadly echoed by policy CP1 of the Core Strategy.

21. The NPPF puts a high emphasis on the weight that should be applied to support business need, the wider opportunities for development and innovation. Footnote 42 of the NPPF refers to the Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future White Paper (2017) and this identifies the Creative Industries (which includes film, video games and TV) as a sector that the Government are keen to develop given the 5% GVA contribution that it makes to the economy as a whole. Whilst the White Paper is not adopted planning policy, it sets out the governments agenda for growth and as advised, there is a link to this in the NPPF.

22. The NPPG Housing and economic needs assessment also places a high emphasis on policy support for different forms of employment use. This recommends clustering certain industries which include digital and creative industries to support collaboration, innovation, productivity and sustainability. It also recommends that:

policy-making authorities will need to develop a clear understanding of such needs and how they might be addressed taking account of relevant evidence and policy within Local Industrial Strategies. For example, this

might include the need for greater studio capacity, co-working spaces or research facilities.

23. The NPPF and NPPG set a clear indication of the expectations we will need to consider at this stage. The application for the main studio facility was accompanied with a letter of support from the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP who have an advisory role on the occupants of the Science Park and they endorsed the long term objectives for the provision of studio space within the Science Park.
24. Wokingham Borough Council updated the Community Vision for the borough is to be 'A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business' and is underpinned by the Vision for Wokingham Borough as set out in the Core strategy. This therefore places a high emphasis on delivering employment within the borough. The council also have an advisory role on the occupants of the Science Park and this form of use is supported generally by the Council at a corporate level given it brings employment and investment to borough.

Principle of development conclusion

25. As outlined above, whilst the proposal does not strictly accord with the terms of policies CP16, TB13 and SAL07 together with the Gateway Policy, there is arguably a degree of innovation and collaboration associated with the use of the site for predominantly office space and a post production facility. It should be acknowledged that the policies governing the use of the Science Park were set out at a point in time and in terms of the economy, there has been significant changes since then which is reflected in Government thinking and published practice guidance. The main thrust of the policies governing the use of the Science Park was, consistent with the former regional spatial strategy, to support its function as a Science Park in order to meet an identified need for universities and business to align to stimulate growth in the Thames Valley Region. Arguably there is an element of synergy with the Science Park policies with regards to innovation and collaboration associated with the media sector and the use of the building can be restricted by condition 3. Given that the LEP strongly supported the wider site who fed into the original Science Park vision and taking into account the development plan as a whole and the fact the Council has already agreed to alternative appropriate uses on the Science Park for the reasons set out in the planning balance section of the report, the proposal is considered acceptable on balance and would not result in harm to employment within the borough or wider area.

Layout, Design and Landscaping

26. Core Strategy Policies CP1, *Sustainable Development* and CP3, *General Principles for Development* requires high quality design that respects its context. This requirement is amplified by MDD LP Policies CC03, *Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping* and TB21, *Landscape Character* and South of the M4 SPD which requires development proposals to protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure, retaining existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporating high quality - ideally native – planting as an integral part of any scheme, within the context of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment.

27. Core Strategy policy CP19 sets out the concept rational for the design parameters for the South of the M4 SDL and these are outlined in further detail in Appendix 7 of the Core Strategy. This states that:

a) *Development in a series of locations around the periphery of the three villages is required. This approach should consider the relationship between the current built areas and the open countryside. Opportunities to form new edges to the existing villages exist, allowing a managed transition between urban and rural.*

28. Policy 2 of Shinfield Parish Plan sets out general design principles and requires that development is complementary to the built environment surrounding the development site and layouts should acknowledge existing landscape constraints. Policy 6 is concerned with trees, hedgerows and woodland in new development and sets out a landscape led design approach with retention and appropriate buffers to existing important vegetation.

29. Further design guidance is provided by the South of the M4 SPD in section 4. Design principle 3 is concerned with character and states that there should be diversity and distinction in the SDL which should be enhanced through the application of character typologies. In addition, the Borough Design Guide sets out overarching principles for development and sets out guidance in section 7 in regard to non-residential development.

30. In regard to the detailed design of the building, the South of the M4 SPD recommends that the existing built form should be used to inform the design which is echoed by the Shinfield Parish Plan policy 2. Overarching principles are also provided by the Core Strategy, MDD DPD and Borough Design Guide.

31. With regards to layout, the building is broadly rectangular in shape with the main entrance oriented to the south east. The main public access to the building would be from the main studio campus and has good circulation space outside it within Collegiate Square which was delivered for the Gateway building to serve the Science Park. Vehicular access would be via the ERR / Science Park Roundabout that leads directly into the phase 1 campus. There is a large multistorey car park located within easy reach of the building to the north of the site and further surface parking within the main studio campus which is also closely located. Blue badge spaces are available directly outside of the building. The layout is shown in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Site Layout / Access – the site would be accessed by the Eastern Relief Road and South Avenue via the existing Science Park infrastructure that has been delivered. The existing workshop T4 is shown on the footprint of the proposed building. The Gateway building is shown broadly to the north of this.

32. The position of the building means that it needs to pay regard to the surrounding context. This demands a high-quality form of design and it is essential that the facility integrates successfully with the existing Gateway 1 building together with the surrounding built form. The detailed layout of the building is shown in Figure 2 below:

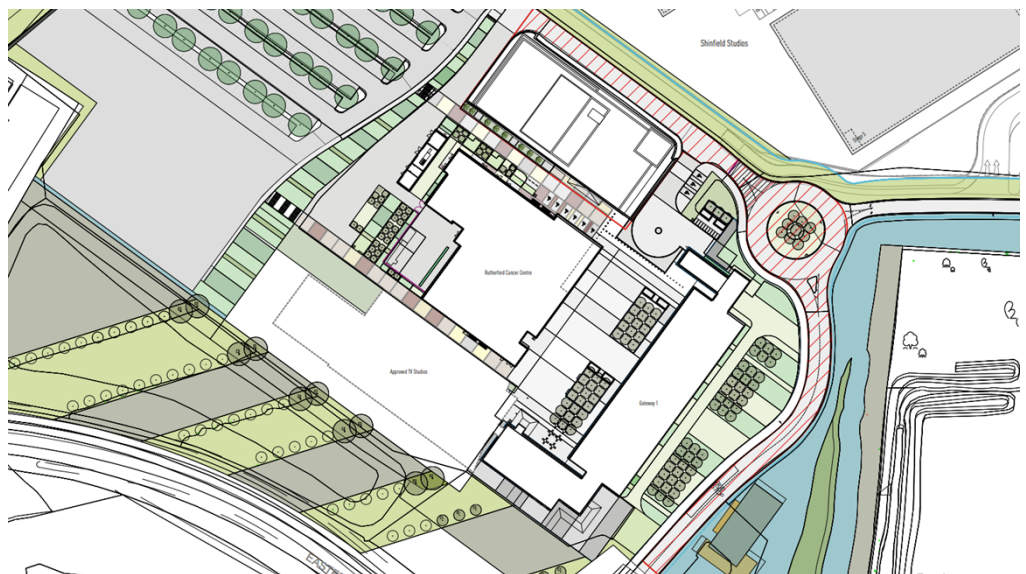


Figure 2: proposed site layout.

33. For the detailed design of the external appearance of the building itself, the applicant has fully considered the context of the surrounding built form. This has been achieved through the use of a high-quality design approach and materials that help it to sit well with the existing Gateway 1 building, Rutherford building and main studio complex. The main entrance of the proposed facility is emphasized by the use of curtain glazing which extends through and above the main roof slope as shown in Figure 3 below. The mass of the building is further broken up by the use of an orange / brown metal cladding which acts as a ribbon around the building. This provides design interest for the facility and the use of this together with the curtain glazing, works well together to break up the massing whilst at the same time complementing the existing built form. The material for the ribbon also has variety in terms of the widths and heights of these. Furthermore, some of these are perforated which pays regard to the design approach used for the Gateway 1 building. Dark grey cladding has been used in areas above and below the ribbon.



Figure 3: Proposed front elevation of the building taken from the internal Science Park roundabout. This shows the main glazed entrance and the ribbon of detailing above the first floor. The building sits well in the context of the Rutherford Building shown on the left.

34. The overall design approach in terms of the form of the building, height and proposed materials allows for the building to integrate with the wider site as shown in Figure 4 below:



Figure 4: Image showing the building located in the foreground and how it integrates with the Gateway 1 building to the left and the consented TV studio building in the background.

35. With regards height and the impact on the landscape associated with the proposed building, the building would have a maximum height of 23m although this includes the plant room which is set well within the roof slope as shown in Figure 4 which would not be particularly visible when viewed directly outside the site. Below the plant room, the majority of the building would be 19.3m high which is approximately 4m higher than the Gateway 1 building. These heights are considered acceptable when taken in the context of the wider studio complex that is being delivered to the east of the site and the extant permission for a studio building on the Gateway 2 plot to the west under planning approval ref: 210210.
36. This together with the existing built form on the site reduces the impact of the building on the landscape. The Landscape Officer supports the approach and raises no objections in terms of the proposed on-site landscaping and the impact of the building on the wider area.

Design conclusion

37. Whilst it is acknowledged the scale of the building is large and greater than the existing buildings, through the careful use of materials and landscaping, it is considered that a building of this scale can be accommodated without resulting in harm to the appearance of the local area. The building would sit in an established employment site which has undergone significant changes over the past decade or so, most notably the delivery of the wider studio campus. When taking this into account, the building would sit well within this context. The overall design approach for the building is of high quality and in accordance with advice provided by the NPPF, policies CP1 and CP3, Policy 2 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan together with the South of the M4 SPD and Supplementary Planning Guidance and is therefore acceptable. The building would therefore not have a significant detrimental impact on the character of the area but would in fact enhance the area.

Residential amenity: the impact upon existing neighbouring properties

38. Core Strategy policy CP3 requires that new development should be of a high quality of design that does not cause detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. Policy 2 of the Shinfield Parish Plan seeks to ensure that new development does not harm existing residential amenity. Separation standards for new residential development are set out in section 4.7 of the Borough Design Guide.
39. The nearest residential dwelling to the application site is located on the Littlebrook estate some 200m to the south west across the ERR. The level of separation is sufficient together to overcome any significant issues with regards to overbearing, loss of light or overlooking concerns. The remaining dwellings in the area also have further separation distance to the which overcomes any significant concerns.

Residential amenity – noise

40. With regards to noise associated with the end use of proposal, as the building is an office building, this would not cause any significant harm. Noise associated with traffic for the operation of the building would be reasonably sporadic and the principle of access for the Science Park was established for the outline planning consent.
41. Whilst it is acknowledged that during the construction phase there would be a greater level of noise and activity on the site, the relationship with the surrounding dwellings together with a Construction Environmental Management Plan means that these can be limited and would be temporary in nature. Therefore it is not considered that construction would cause significant harm. The construction route would be through the Science Park and via the ERR which are established routes for construction of other local sites such as the British Museum and Shinfield Studios.
42. On this basis and given the relationships and relatively isolated nature of the site in respect to other residential development, it is considered that the use of the building and construction of it would not result in any significant harm to the amenity of the existing residents and is in accordance with policies CP1 and CP3 and supplementary planning guidance. Hours of operation of construction and use of the building will be controlled by conditions 3 and 4.

Sustainable Design and Construction

43. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption. MDD policies CC04, CC05 and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010) also emphasise this. Policy 3 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan also echoes these principles.
44. The proposed building incorporates PV panels on the roof where possible and air source heat pumps which generates a 23% carbon reduction which is above the requirement of policy CC05. The building has also been designed to meet BREEAM Excellent rating as shown by the submitted pre-assessment. These measures will be secured by condition 22.

Community engagement

45. The applicant has sought to reach out to local residents and stakeholders including the Parish council through a newsletter drop and a community engagement event at the Parish Council offices. The form of consultation is considered acceptable for the scale of the development and where possible comments that have been put forward have been incorporated into the design of the building or further clarification has been provided.

Access and movement

46. The NPPF seeks to encourage sustainable means of transport and a move away from the reliance of the private motor car. Core Strategy policies CP1, CP4, CP6 and CP10 broadly echo these principles and indicate that development should mitigate any adverse effects on the existing highway network. The applications are accompanied by a Transport Assessment (TA) which assesses the impact of development in respect to the site itself and wider highway network including the South of the M4 SDL.
47. Policy 4 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan requires development to provide good accessibility by car, cycle and foot and ensure highway safety. Encouragement of use of public transport is also promoted. Policy 5 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan sets out parking standards.

Site Access

48. Access to the site would be from the ERR / Science Park / Hawthorne roundabout via South Avenue and through the phase 1 Science Park site both for the studio servicing area and parking for the facility. Both the access road and parking facilities have been delivered in full for the delivery of the Science Park and the wider studio site.

49. Sustainable travel

The site is well served by existing infrastructure for sustainable forms of travel. A bus stop is provided adjacent to the Gateway 1 building which is around a 100m walk to the proposed building. This is served by the South of the M4 Public Transport Strategy which will have an increased level of service as further housing is delivered in the SDL. This provides good connectivity of the site to central Reading and some of the surrounding villages.

50. For pedestrian and cycle access, the site is well served by upgraded and new facilities including a 3m wide cycle lane on the ERR which leads to the M4 overbridge. There is good connectivity to Shinfield centre via Hawthorn and Cutbush Lane and in addition, upgrades to pedestrian links have been made to Lower Early via Cutbush Lane east. Cycle parking has been provided with 40 spaces provided to allow for any community use of the facility should this be brought forward. This will be secured by condition 8.
51. Shinfield Studios has an overarching travel plan which has been previously agreed and this will be secured by condition 9.

Access and movement - Site layout / Parking

52. In terms of car parking, the application for the main studio campus took a comprehensive approach given that the facility was envisaged at a future date. This means that there will be 1382 parking spaces provided within the site; much

of this is provided in a multistorey carpark within easy reach of the facility. There is further surface car parking which is being delivered on the main campus, again this within close proximity to the proposed building. Cycle parking is provided to the rear of the building in secure storage and there 7 blue badge spaces provided within the main parking areas and directly adjacent to the facility. The parking provision has been assessed agreed with by the Highways Officer and the strategy is considered acceptable with the level of parking informed by other comparable established studio sites such as Pinewood and Shepperton.

Flooding and Drainage

53. Core Strategy Policy CP1 and MDDL Policies CC09 and CC10 establish that new development should avoid increasing and where possible reduce flood risk (from all sources) by first developing in areas with lowest flood risk, carrying out a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) where required and managing surface water in a sustainable manner. These requirements are reinforced by the South of the M4 SPD Design Principle 1c(ii) which requires provision of a comprehensive system for water management, which takes account of existing features and includes proposals for effective sustainable urban drainage (SUDS), measures to avoid flood risk and new ponds. Policy 8 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan echoes these principles and looks to retain existing watercourses in new development.
54. The site is entirely in Flood Zone 1 where the risk of flooding is low and all uses, including less vulnerable uses which the building is considered to be classified as for the purposes of the sequential test are appropriate.
55. The application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessments which assess the impact of flooding on the application site. This identified flood risks across the whole site and propose measures to manage surface water runoff including the 1 in 30 year and 1 in 100 year storm events (+40% for climate change).
56. The Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage strategy propose measures on site have been assessed by the council's Drainage Officer. They have raised no objection to the proposed package of measures in terms of the impact to existing neighbouring residents and future occupiers of the site subject to condition 21. On this basis the proposals are considered acceptable.

Ecology

57. Core Strategy Policy CP7, carried forward by MDD LP Policy TB23, requires appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value. Policy 7 of the Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan seeks mitigation and measures to enhance biodiversity. Design Principle 1b of the South of the M4 SPD (i-ii) is concerned with protection of ecological habitat and biodiversity features, together with mitigation of any impacts that do arise. The application for the temporary workshop has already secured 10% biodiversity net gain which is considered acceptable given that there has been very limited time between the temporary permission and this application and the site area is broadly similar.

Heritage

58. Policy TB24 of MDD LP policy seeks to ensure that development conserves and, where possible enhances the important character and special architectural or historic interest of listed buildings. The nearest listed building to the development

site are Lane End Farmhouse and Cutbush Manor located some 500m and 250m from the site respectively.

59. The Conservation Officer has assessed the application and raises no objections with regards to the impact on the listed buildings or their setting.

Archaeology

60. Core Strategy Policy CP3 and MDD LP Policy TB25 require the archaeological impact of development to be taken into consideration. The application includes an archaeological assessment which has been reviewed by the Archaeology Officer and no further action is required with regards to archaeology since the works in respect to this was undertaken for the existing phase 1 buildings.

Planning balance

61. When considering the planning balance, the decision maker needs to take in to account the extent that development plan policies are material to an application for planning permission and the decision must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. As advised above, there will be considerable benefits that will be delivered through the granting of the planning permission and very limited adverse impacts. These are identified below and the degree of weight that should be applied is identified.

Benefits

62. The site is located within a sustainable location and is within the South of the M4 SDL boundary. Significant improvements have been delivered through the ERR, South of the M4 Public Transport Strategy and access to the Science Park. This means the facility can be delivered with minimal disruption to the local road network and therefore local residents. These together with connections to a variety of transport modes to the wider region and Heathrow Airport means that the site is well served in terms of access. The sustainable nature of the site and existing infrastructure means that modest weight should be afforded to support the proposal.
63. The development would bring investment and significant employment opportunities will be generated through the construction and delivery of the facility. The proposed development would provide considerable job opportunities for the local community and wider area. For the occupation phase, the facility could potentially generate a direct GVA figure of £19.6 million per annum and an indirect £9 million which respectively equates to 415 full time jobs and 166 indirect positions. The construction phase is also envisaged to generate a combined GVA figure of £42.7 million. Delivery of the facility will enable job creation which will be sustained in the long term. Substantial weight should be applied to the benefits that the facility could deliver both through job creation and the positive impact on the wider economy.
64. Government guidance published within the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment that relates specifically to the digital and creative industries is to encourage a cluster based approach for these sectors and encourages policy making to provide land for a need for greater studio capacity (Paragraph: 032 Reference ID: 2a-032-20190722). The facility would meet this objective as it would add resources that would further support the wider site. It is acknowledged

that this section of the PPG applies to policy making rather than decision taking which could infer that only limited weight should be afforded to it for determining a planning application. In this case however, given that the building would support the activities of the wider site that are currently being delivered, this underpins the clustering of activities which should be taken into account. This also chimes well with the cluster based approach that was encouraged for the relevant Science Park policies. On this basis, moderate weight can be afforded to the benefits that the building would deliver through supporting the activities of the wider campus.

65. The proposed building would deliver above policy requirements for sustainability both for the building design and renewable energy which echoes the principles that have been established on the wider site. Given the gains, moderate weight can be applied to the sustainability strategy.
66. The post production facility will allow for community use which may be delivered on the site. The applicant is also committed to potentially deliver these facilities elsewhere through the updated S106 in the Shinfield Parish should a more suitable location be identified. These when delivered, will provide a key community facility. For the purpose of the planning balance for the main site, weight was afforded and therefore this should not be double counted for the current application although the level of weight was downgraded from moderate to limited to reflect that a building was not identified. Given this application identifies a suitable site or revises the commitment to provide facilities within Shinfield Parish and taking into account the previous submission for the wider site, limited to moderate weight can be afforded to the community benefits that the delivery of this facility will provide.

Impacts of the proposal

67. The proposed development fails to strictly accord with the requirements of policy CP16 of the Core Strategy and TB13 of the MDD insofar the studio supported use is not specifically defined within these policies. These policies relate specifically to employment use and for the purposes of the local plan making, the economic sector is arguably the sector that moves at the fastest pace. As such, the evolution of these changes is extremely difficult to predict. The policies were drafted at a point in time which in terms of the economy, has changed considerably since their inception and over the past few years, the media sector has outperformed any other sector of the economy. The thrust behind the Science Park policies was to secure high end employment use on the site that is sustainable. Whilst the studio use may be a lesser degree of innovation than was envisaged for the Science Park, as outlined, the media sector does nurture significant and meaningful technological changes and the proposed use can feed into these. In addition, the studio space will deliver on collaboration which was also one of the ambitions of the Science Park policies. Film studios generally tend to create further craft industries which supplement the main use in the local area.
68. The building will therefore deliver employment on the site which is sustainable and given that the studio facilities on the wider Science Park site have been approved, the use in this location is considered acceptable. On this basis, when taking into account the implementation of the wider site, very limited weight is

applied to the impact of the proposal on the policies governing the use of the Science Park.

69. The development will have a visual impact on the landscape and results in built form that will be evident in terms of the character of the area. Through considering the impact of the building on the wider area and applying a high-quality design for the facility together with consideration for the materials will however reduce the impact. The building would fit with the gateway vision for the buildings as envisaged by the outline planning permission for the Science Park. Development in this location has also been established for over a decade and therefore some form of built form is expected on the site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the building would be higher than the maximum building heights for the Science Park outline planning consent, this is considered acceptable and it is noted that the Landscape Officer raised no objections. The context of the area has also changed with the sider delivery of the studio buildings. On this basis, only limited weight should be applied with regards to the landscape and character of the area.
70. For traffic impacts, the trip generation and wider highway implications have been considered as part of the Transport Appraisal and these are acceptable. The internal access road has been delivered as has the ERR and overbridge as part of the housing growth and for the early phase of the Science Park. As such, the parcel is effectively fully serviced with appropriate parking. Therefore, limited weight should be applied to the highway impacts.
71. With regards to the construction phase of the development, it is acknowledged that there will be a degree of noise and disturbance associated with this. The construction activities will however be mitigated by the measures outlined the CEMP. Since the principle of development has been previously established, limited harm would be associated with the construction activities.
72. Finally, in terms of listed buildings, the Conservation Officer has assessed the application and raises no objections in terms of harm to these assets together with their setting. Very limited weight should be applied to the impact on these.

Benefits / Impacts summary

73. Overall, as outlined above, there are benefits and impacts that are associated with the development, namely investment and employment. It is however considered that the benefits associated with the development would outweigh any the harm to the character of the area. The package of mitigation measures will deliver social and environmental enhancements and the facility itself will deliver economic benefits both through construction and upon occupation.
74. Having regards to policies CP16, TB13 and SAL07, whilst as outlined the proposal is not strictly in accordance with these, some aspects of the studio use maintain a degree of the intentions of the policies and the facility would support the wider campus. In addition, the building will deliver long term sustainable employment of a nature that has limited impact on neighbouring amenity when compared with heavy industrial uses. This together with the change in the employment landscape since the adoption of the polices and support of the LEP for the wider studio campus weigh in favour for supporting the application.

75. The design of the facility is considered to represent high quality development; this together with some marginal gains above policy requirements in terms of the environmental credentials of the schemes also support this conclusion. The facility could also provide a local community facility should this be used for weekend film screening for residents and this commitment has been secured through the S106.

76. Whilst the application was advertised as a potential departure from the Local Plan, given the considerations outlined above, it does not undermine the plan as a whole and therefore is not considered to depart from the main objectives of the relevant policies.

CONCLUSION

When weighing up the overall impact of the facility it is considered that the proposal will bring substantial economic and thereby social benefits. In addition, the sustainability measures will assist in reducing the environmental impact of the development and will deliver further enhancements. These together with a sound design approach will outweigh any significant harm to the area or neighbouring amenity. Whilst the application is not considered to strictly comply with the objectives of policies CP16 and TB13, an exception to these can be made by virtue of the issues discussed above. The proposal is not considered to undermine the development plan as a whole.

The application can therefore be recommended for approval subject to the conditions outlined above and legal agreement.