

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P14/V2478/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	11.11.2014
<b>PARISH</b>	CHILTON
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Margaret Turner Reg Waite Bill Jones Michael Murray
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Rutherford Appleton Laboratory
<b>SITE</b>	C L R C, Rutherford Appleton Laboratory adjacent to Building R40, Harwell, Oxford, OX11 0QX
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Erection of new support building and office with associated plant and hard standing. Relocation of existing wind farm and Term Contractor's compound.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	Yes
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	447248/185857
<b>OFFICER</b>	Sarah Green

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## SUMMARY

- The application is for a new building on the RAL campus, and a replacement wind turbine experiment and contractors compound.
- The application is referred to committee due to parish objection
- The main issue is the impact upon the landscape, including the AONB and The Ridgeway. Officers consider that on balance the resultant impact is acceptable and would not result in significant and demonstrable harm to the wider landscape.
- The application is recommended for approval

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The site is located within the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory campus (RAL) on the Harwell Oxford Campus. A location plan is **attached** at Appendix 1. The RAL campus includes a number of large industrial and research buildings. The site is also within the North Wessex AONB and the strategic employment site allocation.

1.2 The application is referred to committee due to parish objections.

## 2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 The application is for a new facilities support building for ISIS. ISIS is a world leading centre for research in physical and life sciences. The building will be a flexible space for the development and testing of new scientific equipment. Currently there is no internal space on the campus that could fulfil this function. This will be combined with a facility for decommissioning components and completed experiments.

2.2 The building will be located in the south west of the campus adjacent to building R40. The building will have direct functional link to R40 and as such its location is based on this. The building will be sited on the existing site of the contractor compound, car park and wind turbine experiment site. As part of the proposals these will need to be relocated within the campus. This application therefore also includes a new contractor compound site and buildings, buildings for the wind turbine experiment and a new wind

turbine.

- 2.3 The support building is a contemporary building and will provide 2 large open plan areas; one for the Handling facility to process components and the other being a Test facility where accelerator and scientific instrument components can be built and tested. Over the Test facility, there will be offices over 4 floors for around 80 employees.
- 2.4 During the application amendments and additional information have been submitted to support the application. These include:
- Phase 2 contamination ground investigation report
  - Plans showing vehicular tracking of HGVs manoeuvring within the site;
  - Transport Statement
  - Copy of the Harwell Campus Travel Plan (dated August 2014).
  - Landscape and Visual Impact appraisal (LVIA)
  - Letter from Thames Water confirming no impact study or reinforcement of the public network is required;
  - Justification for the wind turbine experiment
- 2.5 Further information has also been submitted, including:
- Justification statement for compound
  - Landscape plan
- 2.6 Extracts of the application plans are **attached** at Appendix 2.

3.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

3.1	Oxfordshire County Council One Voice	<p><u>Transport</u> Amended comments following submission of supplementary information which comprised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Vehicular tracking of HGVs manoeuvring within the site;</li> <li>- A written summary of the operational characteristics including; confirmation that there will be no additional generated traffic; and justification for the proposed reduction in car parking provision;</li> <li>- A copy of the Harwell Campus Travel Plan (dated August 2014).</li> </ul> <p>No objections subject to conditions</p> <p><u>Archaeology</u> No objections</p> <p><u>Local member – Stewart Lilly</u> No objections</p>
	North West Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit	<p>Holding objection – would like supply or confirmation of the following: Confirmation that EIA submitted That a full LVIA is requested Contact is made by the applicant to the AONB unit to discuss content of LVIA Further details about processes within the building are supplied Location/height of the wind turbine should consider work</p>

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 22 April 2015

	undertaken by AONB unit (Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Turbine Study 2006 and Landscape Character Area Assessment 2002)
Thames Water Development Control	<p>Identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the application. The receiving sewer may not have sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the calculated net foul flow increase from the proposed development. Thames Water request that an impact study be undertaken to ascertain, with a greater degree of certainty, whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure, and, if required, recommend network upgrades. Would like a grampian style condition imposed preventing development commences until drainage strategy and/or off site works approved.</p> <p>Further to the submission of drainage strategy directly to them the applicant, they are satisfied that the network can accommodate the development.</p>
Landscape Architect - Vale of White Horse	<p><u>Original comments</u> Expect a Landscape and Visual Appraisal to accompany development of this size, to have informed the layout and design. Little proposed mitigation planting. Relocation of contractors compound extends the landscape and visual impact of the proposal eastwards</p> <p><u>Additional comments on amendments/additional information</u> Do not go far enough to address main concern of extending the development to the south – spreads development onto the open interface with the AONB and reduces the important role this bund plays in reducing the impact of the large scale development behind. Hoped alternative locations would have been looked at.</p> <p>Only native trees should be in this location. Trees should be located in the proposed screening planting. The layout and form of this planting should also be looked at so that it fits with the landscape character of the area. The proposed linear form of the planting is not appropriate.</p>
Forestry Team (Vale of White Horse)	No objection subject to tree protection condition and landscaping condition.
Health & Housing - Contaminated Land	Further to the submission of the phase 2 report, no objection
Health & Housing - Env. Protection Team	No objection
Countryside Officer (South Oxfordshire & Vale of White Horse)	No objection subject to conditions on scheme of mitigation of habitat survey and method statement for deposition of excavated soils

Vale of White Horse District Council – Committee Report – 22 April 2015

Drainage Engineer (Vale of White Horse District Council)	No objection subject to drainage condition
Chilton Parish Council	<p><u>Original comments</u> Holding objection – site is located on outermost uphill south western side of the campus, right on the built sites edge and thus visually very prominent. The design, although not unattractive in an urban/industrial setting, makes no concession to this conspicuous location on the rural side of the Campus and there is no soft landscaping provision on the Ridgeway side of the site. The Council would like to see a condition included for this soft landscaping. It should be completed during the planting season following completion of the development to avoid harm occurring to the new plantings and use a mix of native broadleaf and evergreen saplings of not less than 6m height plus a shrub understorey. The colour of the cladding should be changed from bright blue to a dark green or grey to make it less obtrusive.</p> <p><u>Additional comments on amendments/additional information.</u> No objections</p>
East Hendred Parish Council	<p><u>Original comments</u> “East Hendred Parish Council is concerned about the level of information available for this application. On this basis East Hendred Parish Council supports the comments made by the North Wessex Downs AONB, which we have received a copy of, seeking a holding objection until further information is available.”</p> <p><u>Additional comments on amendments/additional information.</u> “East Hendred Parish Council has concerns about the impact of the new Support Building on views from the AONB, in particular from the Ridgeway. The North Wessex Downs AONB requested a landscape assessment to address the impact of the building on views from within the AONB, notably from the Ridgeway car park in East Hendred parish, which has now been completed. While the assessment describes the impact of the Support Building as 'moderate', this does not address the cumulative impact of the many buildings under construction and proposed for the Harwell Campus of which this is just one. Some low hedgerow screening is proposed, but the Parish Council objects to this application unless taller vegetation screening and/or more appropriate fascia and roofing materials (eg green roofs) are mandated planning conditions.”</p>

4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 [P11/V0478](#) - Approved (27/05/2011)

Situate mobile office in existing contractors compound

[P07/V1028](#) - Approved (08/08/2007)

Erection of a building to be used as a composter for materials created on site

[P02/V1740](#) - Other Outcome (31/12/2002)

Hardstanding for storage of existing containers and materials.

[P02/V1706](#) - Approved (05/12/2002)

Erection of a portakabin.

[P99/V0367](#) - Approved (07/05/1999)

Wind Concentrator - Scientific instruments to assess performance of wind turbine and supporting structure.

[P97/V0576](#) - Approved (05/06/1997)

Full planning permission for the retention of a wind turbine tower 18m high.

[P92/V0825](#) - Approved (26/03/1992)

Retention of wind turbine tower.

[P88/V2115](#) - Approved (14/12/1988)

Erection of a wind turbine tower and propellor on land adjacent to the Brown car park area behind the Themis mound. Rutherford Appleton Labs, Wind energy site.

[P86/V0874](#) - Approved (22/01/1987)

Retention of a wind turbine tower 18 metres high.

[P83/V0812](#) - Approved (20/07/1983)

Erection of a wind turbine tower 18 metres high.

## 5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

### 5.1 Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011 policies;

DC1 - Design

DC5 - Access

DC6 - Landscaping

DC9 - The Impact of Development on Neighbouring Uses

NE6 - The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

DC8 - The Provision of Infrastructure and Services

E10 - Key Business Sites

E7 - Harwell Science and Innovation Campus

### Draft Local Plan 2031 Part 1 policies;

CP6 – Meeting business and employment needs

CP37 – Design and local distinctiveness

CP33 – Promoting sustainable transport and accessibility

CP35 – promoting public transport, cycling and walking

CP44 – Landscape

CP46 – Conservation and improvement of biodiversity

The draft local plan part 1 is not currently adopted policy and this emerging policy and its supporting text has limited weight as per paragraph 216 of the NPPF. Greater regard therefore is to be given to the NPPF in line with paragraph 14 and where relevant, the saved policies (listed above) within the existing Local Plan.

### National Planning Policy Framework, 2012

### Planning Policy Guidance, 2014

### New Design Guide, 2015

Section 9 – commercial/employment areas

Other documents

North Wessex AONB: Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2002)

North Wessex AONB: A study of Landscape Sensitivities and constraints to wind turbine development March 2006

**6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The main considerations are the following:

**6.2 Principle**

Policy E7 allows for new business development or redevelopment for business purposes at the Harwell Science and Innovation campus, subject to proposals meeting the travel plan for the campus; meeting appropriate contributions towards transport; providing high quality landscaping; not harming the character of the area, and any external lighting having minimal impact.

6.3 The building is required to meet a need on the campus and to support existing research and science. It is within the allocated local plan strategic employment site, and as such the principle of a new building for these purposes is supported.

**6.4 Design and scale**

Policy DC1 requires new development to not adversely affect the character of the area in terms of its layout, scale, mass, height, detailing, materials and siting.

**6.5 Support building**

The building is sited adjacent to existing building R40 with which the building will have a functional link with and will share external storage space with. Its location on the campus is therefore dictated by its function. The current site is occupied by a car park, wind turbine experiment and contractor compound. The scheme will require a small amount of excavation of the mound to accommodate the required size of the building, however it will not result in the loss of open green space.

6.6 The size of the building is dictated by the functions of the building. The building will be split into 2 large open plan industrial areas, the dimensions of which are dictated by the functions and machinery required within them, overhead gantry cranes for example. The offices will be located over one half of the building, over 4 floors. The two halves will be at different levels with each half being a max of 19m in height. The chimneys would be 28m from the lowest land level and 34m to the top of the stack. Each half of the building would be 37m in width and with the roof overhang over the external storage area each side it would be 49m each side. Both halves of the building would also be slightly staggered.

6.7 The roof will be curved standing seam roof and the gable ends will be in translucent polycarbonate material with some additional clear glass elements. The overall concept is of a more contemporary feel in comparison to the more traditional block industrial buildings on the site. The use of the curved roof will help to reduce the perceived volume of the building. Overall the building is considered to be of high quality design.

**6.8 Contractor and wind turbine compound**

The new compound would provide for the contractor yard and the wind turbine experiment. The yard would be linear and would be roughly split in half between the two uses. Two single storey buildings would be sited at either end. The wind turbine one would be 8m x 6m and 4m in height and the one for the contractor would be 8.8m x

25m and would be 3.5m in height, rising to 4.8m. The building would be contemporary in design and in similar materials to the support building. In between the buildings would be the cabins, containers and skips. The design of the buildings is considered acceptable. They would be low in height and tie in with the design of the support building which is the closest building and would be seen in context with other buildings on the site. The impact upon the immediate site is therefore considered acceptable.

6.9 The impact on the wider landscape and AONB is discussed below.

6.10 **Landscape**

The site is within the North Wessex AONB and as such great weight should be given to conserving its scenic beauty (para 115 NPPF). To the south of the site is The Ridgeway National Trail, from which views across the landscape towards the campus can be obtained. Policy NE6 sets out that development will be permitted if the natural beauty of the landscape will be conserved or enhanced. Major industrial or commercial development will not be permitted unless it is proven to be in the national interest and no alternative site can be found; and all steps are taken to reduce the impact of the development on the beauty of the area.

6.11 The applicant has submitted a LVIA to support the application. The aim of this is to assess the significance of the effect of the proposed development upon the landscape character and visual amenity. It is considered that this is sufficient to consider the effects of the development and that an EIA is not necessary given the scale of the buildings and single turbine proposed.

6.12 Support building

The building is a large building on the edge of the RAL campus. By virtue of its siting, which is required to be adjacent building R40, and its size, the building will have a visual impact on views from the south of the site and from views from The Ridgeway. However the curved roof form and setting it slightly into the mound will help to reduce its volume and soften its form in comparison to the surrounding large industrial buildings. Within views across the landscape from the south, the building will be seen in the context of the other buildings on the campus and would not be an isolated building in the landscape. When weighed against the economic benefit, the change to the visual landscape character is not considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh this.

6.13 Wind turbine

The new wind turbine would be 50Kw and the met mast would be 24m high to the hub, 6m higher than the existing one which is 18m. It would be located to the south of the existing campus, outside of the existing perimeter fence. Its location has been determined by the location of the buildings and the surrounding vegetation and the effect they would have on air flow and the effectiveness of the wind turbine experiment. The wind turbine experiment is part of a nationally important project looking into an ammonia based storage system of wind generated electricity. This should be given weight in the decision.

6.14 The existing wind turbine is visible in views from The Ridgeway. Relocating the turbine would not impede views across the landscape, although it would be seen as part of these views. Although the new turbine would be higher the main campus would still provide a back drop as will the housing development to the south. Whilst the proposal will alter these views, your officers consider that it would not result in such a change that it would be significantly harmful to the landscape and AONB, and given the national importance of the experiment, this should outweigh the moderate harm that does arise.

6.15 Contractor and wind turbine compound

The compound has been located on the southern side of the mound at its base, adjacent to the new car parking area. The applicant has submitted additional justification for its location, following feedback from officers. The wind turbine buildings are required to be close to the turbine and the proposed design is at the limit of viability. The contractors compound is required to be within the secure fence line and easily accessible from the internal road system. It cannot be between existing buildings as these spaces are generally service areas. An alternative option officers suggested was perhaps further west, but that was beyond the secure fence line and in an area of known high contamination. Given this, officers are satisfied that the compound has to be located where it is proposed.

6.16 The buildings are low in height, however containers and the associated uses could easily become a visual detraction. New landscaping is therefore proposed as part of the proposals to the south to screen and mitigate against the visual impact of the compound. The plan indicates the location of the screen planting. A uniform linear screen would not be appropriate and would appear out of character with the landscape, where clumps of trees are more typical. The exact detail and form of the screen planting could, in your officers' opinion, be agreed by condition, as could the exact species of the trees proposed closer to the compound.

6.17 Officers acknowledge that the proposal will result in a visual change to the southern part of the site however the siting of the proposal has been determined by its function and relationship to other buildings on site. Officers therefore consider the location justified in this case. Mitigation planting is proposed which will reduce the impact of the proposal on the landscape. This can be ensured by the suggested condition.

6.18 **Transport**

Policy DC5 requires developments to provide safe and convenient access to the highway network, provide adequate provision for turning, parking and servicing, appropriate off-site improvements to highway infrastructure and is designed to minimise the impact of vehicles.

6.19 The vehicle access will be as existing via Road Eight within the campus. The number of car parking spaces will be reduced from 60 to 43, however the application sets out that the existing car park is under used and staff are encouraged to park outside of the perimeter and walk to the site as is typical of a campus layout.

6.20 The application anticipates that there will be around 100 new employees working in the building, all of which are already working on the campus elsewhere, therefore there will be no additional staff vehicular traffic. In terms of good vehicles there will be no changes from the present arrangements in terms of the number of vehicles using the site. Tracking drawings have been submitted to demonstrate that HGV will be able to access and egress in forward gear.

6.21 There are established public transport links between Harwell Campus and other centres such as Oxford and Didcot. A full travel plan also currently exists for the campus site to encourage alternative means of transport.

6.22 Following the submission of the additional information, the county highway officer no longer has an objection to the proposals.

6.23 **Trees**

Policy DC6 requires that developments include hard and soft landscaping measures designed to protect and enhance the visual amenities of the site.



- 6.24 The trees that are within close proximity of the proposed development are not the subject of a tree preservation order and the site is not within a conservation area. The applicant has submitted a tree survey report with this application (dated September 2014). The proposed development will require the removal of 3 individual trees and 2 groups of trees. The majority of these trees have been categorised as low quality and therefore should not be seen as a constraint to the development. The trees that are shown to be retained (T3, T4, T5), will need to be protected in accordance with BS5837 (trees in relation to design, demolition and construction), as demonstrated in the tree survey.
- 6.25 The forestry officer has no objections to the proposed development subject to a tree protection condition and appropriate landscaping.
- 6.26 **Ecology**  
The NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 6.27 The proposed new building is situated on previously developed land, most of which is of relatively low ecological value. The most significant habitat present on site is associated with the developing chalk grassland on the large mound. This habitat potentially already meets the criteria for being described as a Priority Habitat under the UK biodiversity framework and would therefore receive a degree of protection within the planning system. The proposals have only limited direct impacts on the mound however, it is proposed that the materials excavated from the site to obtain the correct levels will be deposited on the existing mound. This could have damaging impacts on the grassland habitats if not properly planned.
- 6.28 Given the size and relatively recent origins of the mound the council's countryside officer is of the view, that provided the spoil is not contaminated and is mainly chalk substrate, the spreading of spoil on parts of the mound would have not significant long term impacts on the habitats present. He has no objection to the proposals subject to conditions relating to the implementation of the scheme of mitigation in the Habitat survey and that a method statement for deposition of the excavated spoil on the mound is submitted and approved by the council. These are reasonable and are included in the list of conditions.
- 6.29 **Drainage**  
The NPPF sets out that local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere and that development does not contribute to water pollution. In their comments Thames Water stated that they had identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of this application. They stated that "the receiving sewer may not have sufficient spare capacity to accommodate the calculated net foul flow increase from the proposed development. Thames Water request that an impact study be undertaken to ascertain, with a greater degree of certainty, whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing infrastructure, and, if required, recommend network upgrades". They suggested a grampian style condition to prevent the development commencing until such strategy had been undertaken.
- 6.30 Since their comments the applicant has been in contact with Thames Water and has submitted to them information on the drainage strategy. Thames Water are now satisfied there is sufficient capacity in the public foul water network to accommodate the proposed development.

6.31 With regards to the on site drainage, the council's drainage engineer has no objection to the scheme and suggests that details of the sustainable foul and water drainage should be submitted for approval.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 The proposal would provide a new building required as part of the scientific research function of the campus and a replacement wind turbine and associated buildings, as part of a national project. The proposals will have a visual impact upon the wider landscape, including views in the AONB and from The Ridgeway. However new planting is proposed which will help to mitigate against this impact. Officers consider that the resultant impact will be acceptable and will not result in undue harm to the wider landscape. All other considerations are considered acceptable.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

8.1 **To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Commencement three years - full planning permission.**
2. **Approved plans.**
3. **Samples of materials.**
4. **Parking and turning areas in accordance with submitted plans.**
5. **Tree protection details to be submitted and approved.**
6. **Landscaping scheme, including details of the screen planting, to be submitted and approved.**
7. **Implementation of landscaping scheme.**
8. **Implementation of scheme of mitigation in habitat report.**
9. **Submission of method statement for deposition of excavated soil.**
10. **Details of any external lighting to be submitted for approval.**
11. **Submission of detailed sustainable drainage scheme.**

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