APPLICATION NO. P22/V2435/FUL

SITE Land to the north of Frome Road Harwell

Campus Didcot, OX11 0FD

PARISH CHILTON

PROPOSAL Erection of two employment buildings, with

associated car parking and landscaping.

WARD MEMBER(S) Hayleigh Gascoigne

Sarah Medley

APPLICANT Harwell Science and Innovation

OFFICER Stuart Walker

RECOMMENDATION

To grant planning permission subject to the following conditions and the completed legal agreement securing offsite highway works and financial contributions towards public transport and travel plan monitoring:

- 1: Time Limit
- 2: Approved plans
- 3: Biodiversity enhancements
- 4: Biodiversity offsetting
- 5: Utility service routing details
- 6 : Sustainable drainage details
- 7: Replacement sport pitch condition survey
- 8 : Community Employment Plan (CEP)
- 9: Drainage in accordance with plans
- 10: Access and parking in accordance with plans
- 11 : Cycle parking in accordance with plans
- 12: Lighting details to be submitted to meet EZ1 zone requirements
- 13: Roof light details to be submitted
- 14 : Public Art
- 15: Completion of landscape scheme
- 16: Noise testing
- 17: Provision of replacement sport playing field
- 18: Sport playing field maintenance and management
- 19: SUDS compliance report
- 20: Ecology mitigation
- 21: Tree protection (implementation as approved)
- 22: Travel Plan compliance
- 23 : Construction Traffic Environmental Plan
- 24: Noise mitigation
- 25: No fencing to be erected without prior grant of planning permission
- 26: Heritage interpretation scheme to be submitted
- 27: Archaeological mitigation

Informative -

- 1: Biodiversity offsetting
- 2: Sport pitch technical guidance

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL

- 1.1 This application comes to Planning Committee following an objection from Chilton Parish Council.
- 1.2 The application seeks permission for a vaccine research building and a vaccine manufacturing plant with associated green infrastructure and car parking on the Harwell Oxford Campus.
- 1.3 The application site is located on land North of Frome Road, along the eastern edge of Harwell Campus that adjoins the Newbury Road. The site extends to approximately 3.98 hectares and currently comprises grassland and remnants of the old Harwell runway often used for car parking. In addition, there is a grass playing pitch on the north part of the application site used by campus employees for informal sport and recreation. The European Space Agency building is located to the northwest of the site. The application site and wider campus are situated within the North Wessex Downs AONB. A site location plan is attached at **Appendix** 1.
- 1.4 Harwell Campus is allocated in the development plan for employment generating purposes. It is already home to many scientific, research and development and high technology firms and part of the campus (including the site for this proposal) is designated as an Enterprise Zone.
- 1.5 The proposal will contribute to the UK's national scientific infrastructure by facilitating vaccine development and manufacturing capability. It is therefore of national importance.
- 1.6 The development comprises two buildings:
 - A manufacturing facility with a floorspace of 9,509m² (GEA) and maximum height of 13.04m, comprising two elements – a single storey office space and two storey manufacturing hall.
 - A research and development building with a floorspace of 4,173 m² (GEA) arranged over two storeys with a maximum height of 11.68m comprising office space and laboratories.
- 1.7 Both buildings are of a contemporary design, with structural glazing and curtain wall sections. Externally the buildings are arranged with an open space in between complemented by associated landscaping, cycle storage (114 spaces) and 134 car parking spaces (inc. 30 with access to EV charging infrastructure and seven accessible spaces) proposed to the east side of the buildings, with a secure service yard to the west.
- 1.8 The detailed plans are attached_at <u>Appendix</u> 2 and all plans and supporting technical documents accompanying the application are available to view online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

1.9 The proposal has been amended along with further supporting information to address technical comments received on archaeology, drainage, trees, landscape, ecology, and the replacement of the sport playing field.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1 A summary of responses received to the original proposal and to the amendments is below. All comments received can be seen in full online at www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Chilton Parish Council	 March amendment – Objection Chilton Parish Council (CPC) objects to the planning application but continues to support the concept of development on the Harwell campus. The reason for rejecting now is the recently uploaded transport assessment fails to demonstrate the following: The impact from increased traffic volume upon the three ingress/egresses to Chilton Field and Chilton village Impact upon bus service access to the village and community.
	 February amendment – No objection: Continue to be concerned on traffic and are seeking to have another meeting with the campus. Heavy construction traffic must come via the A34. Has the British Legion been consulted as the annual stone service in June will be greatly impacted.
	 Original submission – No objection, but raise concern on: Increase in traffic generation Travel Plan is not ambitious PV panels should be installed on roofs No EV charging is shown Noise survey should be undertaken when school is open Construction plan will be required to mitigate any problems for Severn Road residents
Harwell Parish Council	February amendment – No objection: Subject to new sports pitches being made available as per the plans. Comments on historical interest still apply.
	Original submission – Objection: Loss of sport facilities Loss of green space Site of historical interest D Day memorial stone will be affected Site is disconnected from rest of campus

Residents	 23 February amendment – one letter of comment: In reviewing the latest plan, it is accepted that the proposed full-size football pitch meets the standard of Paragraph 99 (b) of the NPPF. It is now equivalent provision in terms of quality and quantity, in a suitable location. It would not seem sensible, however, to adopt a condition that does not require that the new playing field be made available until the new building is occupied. The lack of suitable provision in the interim period would create the same problems caused by the original proposal that removed the playing field from use entirely. Planning conditions should be included to ensure
	that the new playing field is available at the earliest opportunity and before the old playing field is made unavailable. But if this is impractical, the gap in coverage should be as short as possible.
	7 February amendment – 18 letters of objection raising the following issues:
	 Loss of sports pitch Two 5 aside pitches are not an adequate replacement to comply with paragraph 99(b) of the NPPF.
	 Loss of heritage assets Previous comments on loss of heritage assets still stand. The site may not be formally registered as such, but that does not mean the site is not important. Only a small part of the former RAF runway remains, and it should continue to do so.
	 In addition, the historically important and unique catapult is likely to be lost permanently as part of this application.
	- There is an annual commemorative service at the memorial stone at the end of the runway, attended by many, both military and civilians. They always turn to the runway to honour those troops who took Pegasus bridge.
	- The WWII RAF runway should be respected as a historical site. It is the last piece of British soil some men touched – do not build on it. - The WWII RAF runway should be respected as a historical site. It is the last piece of British soil.
	 Highways The transport assessment suggests employees will work three shifts over 24hrs and will be able to buy bus season tickets, but existing bus services are unreliable and only operate between 5:30 and 21:00 with a reduced service at

- weekends. Most buses also do not go near this site. Workers here will therefore drive.
- Traffic from this development will add to queuing on the A34.
- The travel plan is nowhere near ambitious enough.
- The site is remote from the main campus. A more appropriate location should be found for this development.
- The loss of green and recreational space is not acceptable.
- The site will be highly visible from the Ridgeway.
- Impact on amenity of Severn Road residents.
- There is a lack of information on how security for the new buildings will be met – will this require external fencing and overnight lighting? Will security take precedence over AONB and wildlife?
- The CEMP does not acknowledge that the perimeter road is the only means of access for Severn Road residents.
- Noise and light pollution need to be minimised.

Original submission – 22 letters of objection raising the following issues:

- Loss of sports pitch.
 - It is very disappointing to see this area built on without suitable mitigation of the pitch.
 - The existing facilities at the site are in full use by the local and business community. The site serves as a recreational ground for numerous clubs ranging from juniors to seniors, school children, employees, and residents.
 - Proper consideration of the North Wessex Downs AONB Management plan has not been undertaken in terms of use of this area for recreation.
 - The area left to the north is unusable for a replacement recreation ground as it is undrained and not maintained.
 - The proposal is contrary to the NPPF as it does not provide replacement facilities.
 - There is a growing demand for more pitches on the campus not less.
 - If approved, this will set a precedent to loss more facilities.
- Loss of heritage assets
 - There is no reference in the application to the fact that one of the buildings would be built over the remaining section of the runway from which aircraft took off to support the D-Day landings.

	 The end of the runway must be considered a non-designated heritage asset and preserved. The proposal will destroy the remains of the catapult pit and arms Loss of trees Loss of greenfield site / impact on amenity There are plenty of other brownfield sites on the campus that should be developed first. This will be an eyesore on the entrance to the campus. Design of buildings are industrial and will do nothing to enhance the appearance of the campus in such a prominent location.
Harwell Laboratories Recreational Association	We continue to object as the proposed 5 aside pitches are not replacement pitches that are equivalent to the existing facilities.
	 Original submission – Objection: We strongly object to the loss of the sports ground. The field has been in use since 1946 and is in use almost daily. The loss goes against government policy on sport field provision. This application is the latest in a steady erosion of sport facilities on the campus over the last 20 years. It is our view that the current and planned expansion of the campus should result in additional and wider range facilities, not less. We therefore request an area equivalent or better in size to the existing to be made available.
Chilton Primary School	 We object to the proposed building on this land, as it will be a loss of sporting playing facilities. As a school we encourage our pupils to take part in sporting activities and in fact are very proud of our past sporting successes. Whilst we are very fortunate to have a wonderful outside area, our school playing field is not suitable for playing competitive football matches, due to the less than flat terrain. Over the last 4/5 years to continue to allow our children to represent Chilton Primary School in competitive football matches (local Vale of White Horse Boys and Girls leagues) we are very grateful to be able to use the playing field facilities at Harwell Campus and to invite other schools to play football against us. It is a short walk from Chilton primary

	 School, if there is to be a smaller pitch on the far side(if this is suitable) this will mean a longer walk to it ,pass the proposed building and along a major road. The school would then have to consider risk assessing the area. As the cost of replacing the school field would be prohibitive, if there are no longer any football pitches, Chilton School would then be forced to withdraw from any future competitive football fixtures. Ultimately, denying the school children to take part in their much-loved sport.
Highways England	 Impact analysis of the strategic road network indicates that without mitigation the proposal will have unacceptable safety impact on the A34 northbound slip on the Chilton Interchange west roundabout. Proposed mitigation is shown is shown in drawing FAHC-BSP-ZZ-XX-DR-D-0001 P017 and has been subject to engineering evaluation. The principle of the scheme is acceptable to National Highways. We are satisfied that subject to the provision of this scheme the residual cumulative impacts of the development will not be severe and any unacceptable impacts upon highway safety can be mitigated in accordance with the NPPF. Original submission – Holding direction: The supporting technical specification for the traffic impact assessment is still being produced by the Applicant's Transport Consultant and we are, alongside OCC, engaged with the applicant. Based on the above, there are several outstanding items relating to the proposals which the applicant needs to address prior to a planning consent. In the interim we ask that the application is not approved, so that we can work with the Applicant to satisfy our requirements and provide our formal
Oxfordshire	recommendation to you.
County Council	February amendment – No objection subject to: • S106 contributions
- Transport	An obligation for a S278 / S38 agreementSuggested planning conditions
	Original submission – Holding objection:

	The applicant has not been able to fully demonstrate their impact upon the highway network and further modelling is required.
Oxfordshire County Council - Archaeology	March amendment – No objection, subject to conditions: • The applicant has now submitted an updated archaeological desk-based assessment from MOLA, this was requested to appropriately consider further the significance that can be attached to the buried remains of a unique experimental catapult structure present on the application site, and the resultant impacts of proposed development on that significance. This further study identifies the remains of the former catapult structure to be of high historical value with further potential to retain evidential value relating to its construction, operation, and final executed design. In view of the level of significance identified and concerns that the archaeological remains recorded on the site could be of potential national importance, additional consultation with Historic England, including their specialist military advisor, has been recommended. • Historic England have subsequently confirmed that whilst they consider the remains of the catapult structure to be of high significance, this significance falls just short of fulfilling their requirements for the recorded archaeological remains of the catapult to be considered nationally important. They acknowledge that the impact of the development would result in both a high level of loss and harm to the significance of the catapult remains, albeit identify that such resultant harm and loss could be appropriately mitigated through the implementation of its detailed record in advance of development and a programme of public outreach, this to provide heritage benefits and to include the creation of an interpretation area within the site post construction and the marking of the location of the former catapult using studs within the development at ground level, as understood to have been offered by the applicant. Such a programme of archaeological recording works and public outreach/interpretation as appropriate should accordingly be secured by conditions attached to any planning permission that is granted. • Based on th
	recorded catapult structure and their specialist military advice, we defer to their assessment and conclusions as to the importance that can be

- attached to the recorded archaeological remains on the site in this regard.
- We therefore concur with Historic England that, should planning permission be granted, the applicant should be responsible for the implementation of a staged programme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken in advance of and during the period of construction, this to provide for a full detailed record of the structural remains of the catapult, this equivalent to a Level 4 historic building survey (HE 2016), and any features/deposits associated with its construction and use, and to secure an appropriate programme of public outreach and heritage benefits as proposed by the applicant.

Original submission – Holding objection:

- There is currently insufficient evidence to fully understand the impact of this proposed development on recorded heritage assets as required by section 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) of the NPPF.
- As such, the desk-based assessment should be updated to provide for an appropriate assessment of the significance of the known catapult remains, placing them within their regional and national context, and to enable a fully informed understanding of the impact of proposed development on that significance.
- This updated archaeological desk-based assessment will need to be submitted before we can provide further advice.

Historic England

March amendment - Comment:

- buried remains of an experimental catapult for accelerated launching of aircraft. The massive concrete remains were built in 1939-40 and are part of a structure known as the RAE (Royal Aircraft Establishment) Mark III. It has high historical value as an evolutionary dead end in wartime aeronautical research. The remains have high potential to provide further information about how the catapult was built and operated. We advise that the significance is high but falls just short of national importance (i.e., of equivalence to a scheduled monument).
- Although the applicant aims to remove only parts of the structure as necessary for the development, the areas to be completely or partially removed are extensive. As a consequence, little of the catapult's significance would remain.

6 6 9 6 1 1 1	Your authority should ensure that in determining this application the high significance of the heritage asset and the high predicted loss of that significance are taken into account. If your Council is minded to grant consent, the proposed programme of archaeological recording, analysis and publication, together with the heritage benefits being offered (interpretation area and marking out of the catapult at ground level), should be secured through
	appropriately worded planning conditions.

Original submission – Not consulted.

Conservation Officer

March amendment – No objection, subject to conditions:

- There are no designated heritage assets on site.
- There are two non-designated heritage assets on the site that would be lost as a result of the proposed works – the remaining eastern end of the runway and the buried remains of the catapult launch.
- Following more detailed heritage assessment, more is now known of the remains of the catapult structure that survives below ground to the north side of the south-eastern end of the former runway. I defer to County Archaeology and Historic England on how they would prefer for the remains of the catapult structure to be recorded.
- The remains of the runway itself form a focal point for this aspect of local history and the sites former use. Reference to the alignment of this part of the airfield survives in the Frome Road. At the eastern end, outside the application site, a memorial stone marks the take-off of troops stationed at Harwell on the night of 5 June 1944 in preparation for the D-Day Landings. The war memorial forms an important tangible link to the site's military history. The memorial is enhanced by its position at the end of the remaining runway. This will be lost by the proposed development.
- The remaining area of runway is not of particular special interest. It has been compromised in recent years with the addition of tarmac to form a car park over 50% of the remaining area. It is not of sufficient interest to warrant its preservation as existing, but it is acknowledged the removal would change the way in which the memorial seems to have been designed to be experienced. The application proposals will erode the last of the airfield connection. The memorial is not listed, and the airfield remains are not designated. They do have some local interest,

- but this is communal historic interest rather than architectural and would be in part preserved by the memorial which would be unchanged.
- The Site Clearance Plan annotates the whole area as tarmac car park and does not differentiate between the remaining areas of concrete runway and tarmac car park which has been built over the top. The submitted assessment of the site so far does include a record the former runway across the site and notes its link to the existing memorial. The proposal plans would site the new Research and Development building over much of the remaining runway area, notably the area that currently forms the view along the historic alignment of the runway as experienced from the memorial outside the site. The building itself would follow this alignment, being informed in part by Frome Road which itself follows the alignment of the runway. Interpretation and landscaping changes could be made here to make a clearer reference to the former runway and link to the memorial.
- I note that Historic England have recommended that specific interpretation is provided as part of the application. Far greater interpretation in the area of the former runway could be provided that notes not only the catapult structure but the last remaining area of runway and the site's wider role during WWII. A condition to secure appropriate interpretation should be added to any grant of planning permission and it should include provision to include the role of the whole application site, not just the catapult.
- The wording on the memorial itself marks the end of the runway so there remains a physical record near the site of its existence but this is outside the application site and the applicant's responsibility and as such, reference within the red line of the runway would also be welcomed.
- In conclusion, I suggest that any condition to agree on site interpretation for the remains of the Mark III Catapult structure are expanded to include wider reference to the former use of the site and the end of the remaining area of runway that links directly to the D-Day Memorial marker outside the application site. This would ensure not only that the nationwide military significance of the asset on site is marked but also the important local role the area played.

Original submission – Not consulted.

February amendment – No objection, subject to conditions: Countryside Officer The applicant has provided lighting details which show that the external lighting proposals along the southern boundary are unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on European protected species, at a species level. Subject to these external lighting details being secured with planning conditions, I have no objections to this element. Conditions to secure: - Ecological mitigation (construction working methods) - Biodiversity enhancements (bat boxes, bird boxes, habitat piles, etc.) - Biodiversity offsetting (12.32 habitat units) Original submission – Holding objection: The only outstanding matter that requires addressing is the potential for lighting to impact bat commuting and foraging behaviour, notably along the southern boundary. I recommend that detailed lighting proposals are produced for these area(s) to enable a view to be taken as to whether surveys are required to establish impacts on European protected species. Environment February amendment – No response. Agency Original submission – Comment: We regret that the Thames Area Sustainable Places team is unable to provide a detailed response to this application. We are currently only providing bespoke responses to the highest risk cases. We have checked the environmental constraints for the location and have the following guidance: The proposal is for commercial development and the environmental risks in this area relate to: Groundwater Protection – the site lies on secondary aquifer. **Groundwater Protection** - if infiltration drainage is proposed then it must be demonstrated that it will not pose a risk to groundwater quality. We consider any infiltration SuDS greater than 3m below ground level to be a deep system and generally not acceptable. All infiltration SuDS require a minimum of 1m clearance between the base of the infiltration point and the peak seasonal groundwater levels. All need to meet the criteria set out in our Groundwater Protection publication. In addition, they must not be

constructed in ground affected by contamination.

	 Potential Polluting Activities - businesses have a duty to ensure they do not cause or allow pollution. We have publications available to help. Pollution is when any substance not naturally found in the environment gets into the air, water, or ground. Other Consents- we also have a regulatory role in issuing legally required consents, permits or licences for various activities. We have not assessed whether consent will be required under our regulatory role and therefore this response does not indicate that permission will be given by the Environment Agency as a regulatory body.
Oxfordshire County Council – Lead Local	February amendment – No objection: • The conditions required by the South and Vale
Flood Authority	drainage team are acceptable to the LLFA and our objection is removed.
	Original submission – Holding objection. • Further information required.
Drainage Engineer	 February amendment – No objection, subject to conditions: The drainage strategy has been revised following previous comments. Conditions to secure detailed sustainable drainage scheme SUDs compliance report construction details
	Original submission – Holding objection: • The site investigation has returned variable rates and further testing in specific locations for soakaways is required to confirm the feasibility of the strategy with calculations and drawings updated.
Thames Water	February amendment – No objection:Previous comments apply.
	 Original submission – No objection: The scale of the proposed development doesn't materially affect the sewer network and as such we have no objection. However, care needs to be taken when designing new networks to ensure they don't surcharge and cause flooding. The developer should liaise with the LLFA to agree an appropriate sustainable surface water strategy. The proposed development is located within 15m of Thames Waters underground assets, as such the development could cause the assets to fail if

	appropriate measures are not taken. An informative drawing the applicant's attention to this is requested.
Southern Gas Networks Plant Protection Team	Original submission – Comment: • Draw attention to assets in vicinity of the site.
Air Quality	February amendment – previous comments apply. Original submission – No objection: • Would welcome EV charging to be provided.
Contaminated Land	 February amendment – No further observations. Original submission – No objection: No significant contamination has been identified following comprehensive investigation. Given the absence of any significant contamination, the site is suitable for the intended development.
Environmental Protection Team	 February amendment – No objection subject to conditions: Following a review of the submitted Noise Impact Assessment for Planning report, no objection subject to the report's recommendations for mitigation being implemented and that prior to fist use of the development, noise testing is undertaken to ensure noise levels do not exceed agreed limits as stated in section 5.1, Table 6 of the report. Original submission – No objection.
North Wessex Downs AONB Board	Original submission – No response.
Landscape Architect	 23 February amendment – No objection, subject to conditions: No Landscape Objection to the amendments, they have addressed my concerns, with regards to continuity between drawings, cycle parking access and the football pitch area provision. I note that the applicant has suggested using a Condition to deal with the issue of Roof Lights. With regards to the submitted Lighting Design Illumination Impact Profile Feb 2023, the principles stated in this document are not those reflecting the agreed approach to light Harwell Campus. There is an expectation that E2 is used in this area of the site although adhering to E1 would be preferable. The use of E3 is not appropriate, Harwell Campus is in

- the AONB and a known source of light pollution in the AONB landscape.
- There is a document called Artificial Lighting Development and Assessment Framework, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, dated Jan 2016 by The Hoare Lea Lighting, and the principles in this document with regards Environmental Zones are still valid and should be applied to the site. Paragraph 6 is relevant to this site. Similarly, at the periphery of the site future development would seek to adhere to an E1 classification. However, the E2 classification would remain at the eastern edge of the site due to the presence of existing street lighting although future development could seek to adhere to the E1 classification.
- The submitted Lighting Design Illumination Impact Profile Feb 2023 report will need to be updated to reflect appropriate Lighting Environmental Zone as per the Artificial Lighting Development and Assessment Framework report for its AONB location but this can be covered by condition. There is also no detailed lighting plan indicating the location of lighting columns submitted as part of the application, this also will need to be covered by condition.

Original submission – Holding objection:

- No in principle objection however, currently the plans are not coordinating, the northeast drainage pond is not illustrated on the plans and there are a few issues with regards to the roof lights and paving materials.
- A condition will be required to control lighting.
- The site area will impact on the existing sports pitch partially located on the northern section of the site.
- Amendments are required.

Forestry Team

March amendment – No objection, subject to conditions:

- The Tree Protection Plans have been updated to add additional fencing to trees adjacent to the route of the proposed foul drainage which is welcomed.
- Some utilities are now shown on the Tree Removal and Protection Plans, but it is not clear from the information submitted whether these are all proposed, all existing or part existing and part proposed. Some of the routes could potentially impact on trees. This matter could be addressed by condition to secure the information prior to the commencement of works.

 A condition should be attached to secure all tree protection measures set out in the submitted Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement.

23 February amendment – No objection subject to conditions:

- I have the following comments regarding the sports pitch. I would not have any objections to the proposed tree removal required for the sports pitch. This would require the removal of some of the semi mature horse chestnut trees that are shown as having low arboricultural quality when assessed in accordance with BS 5837.
- An amended tree protection plan is required to ensure the protection the retained trees adjacent to the pitch. Planting of replacement trees should also be secured to mitigate the loss of the chestnuts that will be removed.

7 February amendment – Holding objection:

 The applicant has submitted amended plans including a Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement JSL4566_780 B dated 30 Jan 2023. The amended plans and Arboricultural Report have addressed many of my previous comments. However, amendments are still required to the Tree Removal/ Protection Plans.

Original submission – Holding objection:

- The trees to the South, East and South of the site are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.
- The submitted arboricultural report does not appear
 to assess the impact of drainage works shown in the
 FRA. The proposed Infiltration Basin appears to be
 located within the root protection areas of the
 adjacent trees to the East and is likely to require
 relocating to prevent root damage. The Proposed
 Foul drainage is proposed to the South and passes
 close to the trees protected by TPO.
- In addition to updating the Impact Assessment, the Tree Protection Plans will require amending to ensure that the adjacent trees are protected in accordance with BS 5837 during installation of the drainage works. The routes for all utilities should also be provided and included within the Arboricultural Report to ensure that they are designed to avoid tree root protection areas.
- A levels plan should also be submitted to demonstrate that the levels in the root protection

	 areas of trees to be retained will remain as existing and not be lowered or raised. The above matters should be addressed before this application is determined.
Sport England	 23 February amendment – No objection, subject to conditions: Revised drawings showing a full-sized pitch which meet exception 4 of our playing field policy and paragraph 99 (b) of the NPPF. Conditions will be required to secure and ensure the replacement facility is delivered in a timely manner.
	 7 February amendment – objection: I have reviewed the information submitted and have consulted with the County FA/FF. We are concerned that there is still a loss of playing field land which is not being replaced as there is a need for the playing field/ playing pitch. Our objection will be removed if the area of playing field – the area where the grass has been maintained as shown above, is replaced, thus meeting our planning policy exceptionE4 and the bullet point b of paragraph 99 in the NPPF
	 Original submission – Objection: The proposal prejudices the use, or leads to the loss of use, of land being used as a playing field or has been used as a playing field in the last five years It is not considered to accord with any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or with Paragraph 99 of the NPPF.
Thames Valley Police Design Advisor	February amendment – No objection. Original submission – no response.

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 P22/V1746/PEJ - Advice provided (16/09/2022)
Construction of a circa 10,000 sqm life science building.

P99/V0960/CC - Approved (19/08/1999)

Remediation (Clean up) works on an existing disused facility amounting to temporary engineering operations (including the removal of some waste material) and erection of temporary weather protection structures.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 As the site is in a sensitive area (the AONB) and the site exceeds 0.5ha, a screening opinion has been issued in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (and as amended in 2018). The proposal is not considered EIA development.

5.0 MAIN ISSUES

5.1 The relevant planning considerations are the following:

- The principle of development
- AONB and visual impact
- Design
- Landscaping and trees
- Flood risk / drainage
- Contaminated land
- Air quality
- Traffic and highway safety
- Ecology and biodiversity
 - Designated sites
 - Habitats
 - Protected species
 - Biodiversity net gain
- Heritage assets
 - The catapult
 - The runway
- Sports pitch
- Public art
- Community employment plan
- Financial contribution requests
 - Community Infrastructure Levy
 - S106
- Pre-commencement conditions

5.2 The principle of development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.

- 5.3 The development plan for this proposal comprises the adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LPP1) and the Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LPP2). There is no neighbourhood plan covering the site.
- 5.4 The site is situated within Harwell Campus, a strategic employment site, which is safeguarded for employment use in line with Core Policy 6 and Core Policy 29 of LPP1. The campus is also allocated for development by Core Policy 15

of LPP1, which is complemented by Core Policy 15b of LPP2. The policy takes a permissive stance to new commercial development at the campus. The principle of the proposal is therefore acceptable.

5.5 **AONB and visual impact**

The site lies within the North Wessex Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 places a statutory duty on the local planning authority to have regard to the purpose of conserving or enhancing the natural beauty of an AONB.

- 5.6 Policy CP44 of LPP1 sets out that high priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB, and planning decisions should have regard to its setting. The NPPF seeks to enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing these valued landscapes (paragraph 174) and confirms great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of such areas (paragraph 176).
- 5.7 The landscape architect has confirmed that there are no specific landscape concerns with regards to Landscape and Visual Impacts. It is considered that the rural character and amenity of existing views and the natural beauty of the AONB landscape would all be conserved, including views from the Ridgeway. The proposed heights of the buildings at approximately 13.1m and 11.7m are acceptable for this area of the campus and it is considered that the visual impact of the proposed buildings on the character of the area and the wider AONB landscape would not be harmful and would conserve the natural beauty of the AONB.
- 5.8 The landscape architect however has raised concern regarding external lighting and the use of rooflights and the impact this could have on the AONB due to light spill. Light pollution from roof lights can be mitigated by using glass with a < 0.3 visible light transmission for roof lights and this can be secured through a planning condition. Further details on external lighting to ensure a lighting institute environmental zone 1 (EZ1) is achieved can also be secured by condition to preserve dark skies and tranquillity of the North Wessex Downs AONB.
- 5.9 The proposed development is therefore considered acceptable in terms of the landscape and visual impacts and is considered to conserve the natural beauty of the AONB. The proposal complies with policy CP44 of LPP1, and to paragraphs 174 and 176 of the NPPF.

5.10 Design

Core Policy 37 of LPP1 requires new development to be of a high-quality design that is visually attractive, and the scale, height, massing, and details are appropriate for the site and surrounding area. Core Policy 38 of LPP1 sets out the requirement for Masterplans and Design and Access Statements to accompany strategic and major development proposals. The Council's Joint Design Guide provides further guidance on how to achieve high quality, well-designed commercial and employment areas, and states that the layout of new employment areas should take a landscape and biodiversity-led approach.

- 5.11 The proposed development is acceptable. The buildings are considered to sit comfortably within the site, with parking located around the perimeter of the buildings and extensive landscaping around the periphery of the site to visually soften the development and integrate the development into its surroundings.
- 5.12 The design of the proposal is considered to make a positive contribution to its surroundings, with attractive contemporary design, form, scale, materials, and colour, together with the landscape treatment and the relationship of the buildings within their environment.
- 5.13 Policy CP40 of LPP1 seeks to encourages developers to incorporate climate change adaptation and design measures to combat the effects of changing weather patterns in all new development. The Design and Access Statement sets out the sustainability measures have been incorporated within the design: highly insulated (mineral-wool core) and air-sealed wall and roof systems, photo-voltaic array-ready roofs, roof lights and windows carefully designed to introduce daylight to deep-plan spaces in order to reduce artificial lighting needs and canopies/ overhangs to provide solar shading to glazed areas and to reduce glare.
- 5.14 Overall, the proposed development is acceptable in terms of the design and layout. The proposal is therefore considered compliant with policies CP37, CP38 and CP40 of LPP1 and the council's Joint Design Guide.

5.15 Landscaping and trees

Policy CP44 of LPP1 seeks to ensure that key features, such as trees and hedgerows, that contribute to the nature and quality of the landscape will be protected from harmful development and where possible enhanced.

5.16 The proposed landscape scheme as amended is acceptable, and the landscape architect and tree officer raise no objection to the proposal. The proposal is compliant with policy CP44. The landscape architect has requested further details on external lighting. This can be secured by condition. Tree protection and further details on utility routing can also be secured by condition to address the latest comments from the tree officer.

5.17 Flood Risk / Drainage

Policy CP42 of the LPP1 seeks to ensure that development provides appropriate measures for the management of surface water as an essential element of reducing future flood risk to both the site and its surroundings.

5.18 The site is located within Flood Zone 1, which is the most appropriate zone for this type of development in fluvial flooding terms. The drainage engineer and LLFA raise no objection, subject to drainage design elements being secured by condition to ensure the proposal is complaint with policy CP42.

5.19 Contaminated Land

Policy DP27 of LPP2 sets out measures to ensure land affected by contamination is appropriately remediated and mitigated. A preliminary risk

assessment and Ground Investigation Report have been submitted. No potential sources for land contamination have been identified that could present a risk to the development and it is not considered that any further contaminated land assessments are necessary. The proposal is compliant with policy DP27.

5.20 Air Quality

Policy DP26 of the LPP2 seeks to ensure all new development adequately considers air quality. The proposal involves the provision of 30 electric vehicle charging bays, and the submitted Travel Plan sets out ways in which sustainable methods of transport will be promoted. These measures aim to reduce car driver trips, which minimise any impacts associated with air quality.

5.21 Traffic and Highway Safety

Policy CP33 of LPP1 actively seeks to ensure that the impacts of new development on the strategic and local road network are minimised, to ensure that developments are designed in a way to promote sustainable transport access and to promote and support improvements to the network that increase safety and improve air quality.

- 5.22 Policy CP35 of LPP1 promotes public transport, cycling and walking and together with policy DP17 of LPP2 requires proposals for major developments to be supported by a Transport Assessment (TA) in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) guidance. Policy DP16 of LPP2 requires evidence to demonstrate that acceptable off-site improvements to highway infrastructure can be secured where these are not adequate to service the development.
- 5.23 Local concern has been raised on traffic generation. National Highways and OCC as Highway Authority also originally objected to the proposal. Analysis carried out in relation to other recent planning applications on the campus has indicated capacity constraints at the A34 Chilton Interchange where potential queuing on the A34 mainline has been identified which could result in unacceptable impacts on highway safety.
- 5.24 To alleviate issues along the A34, a partial signalisation scheme has been designed in consultation with OCC and National Highways, along with improvements to the west roundabout on the interchange. The proposed improvements have been subject to a stage 1 Road Safety Audit and both OCC and National Highways accept these highway improvements are acceptable to mitigate the development's impact on the local and national network and can be secured via a S106 legal agreement, which the applicants have now entered in to.
- 5.25 The proposal provides appropriately for access, parking (vehicle and cycle) and manoeuvring within the site. A travel plan to encourage sustainable travel has also been submitted to support the application. The proposed car parking and cycle parking provision are considered acceptable and comply with OCC's newly adopted parking standards. It is reasonable and necessary to secure these by condition to ensure they are available for use at the point of first use of the buildings.

5.26 In summary, the information within the TA Addendum, together with the additional commentary provided by applicants in response to concerns raised by Chilton Parish Council, demonstrate that the proposed scheme with the inclusion of mitigation measures agreed in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and National Highways will not have a severe impact on the highway network. Such mitigation addresses the concerns of the parish council. With the imposition of appropriate conditions and the S106 to secure mitigation, the scheme can be made compliant with Policies CP33, CP35 and CP37 of LPP1, Policies DP16 and DP17 of LPP2 and the NPPF. As such officers consider there are no reasonable grounds to withhold permission on highway matters.

5.27 **Ecology and Biodiversity**

Policy CP46 of LPP1 requires development to avoid losses in biodiversity and actively seeks net gains. The site is not covered by statutory or non-statutory designations and comprises hardstanding, grassland, with scattered trees and species poor hedgerows.

- 5.28 The site is supported with a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) that reports on the findings of ecological surveys undertaken in 2022. It recommends mitigation, compensation, and enhancement.
- 5.29 Designated sites
 Adverse impacts on nearby designated sites are unlikely.

5.30 Habitats

The habitats on site are not considered to be a constraint to development. The grassland present does not meet the definition of a priority habitat and boundary tree lines are being retained and enhanced. Semi-improved neutral grassland, with some calcicole influences, is however present onsite. Whilst this is not a constraint, as per the NPPF or CP46, it is habitat type that is more ecologically valuable that needs to be offset.

5.31 Protected species

The site offers suitable habitat for commuting and foraging bats, particularly on the southern boundary, due to the presence of the woodland edge immediately offsite. As such, obtrusive lighting in this location could have adverse impacts on bats.

5.32 The countryside officer originally advised that detailed lighting proposals were not provided and depending on the level of light spill expected along this boundary, additional ecological survey effort may be required. The applicant has since provided lighting details which show that the external lighting proposals along the southern boundary are unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on European protected species, at a species level. Details of external lighting can be secured by condition to ensure the offsite woodland edge would not be subject to harmful levels of light spill.

5.33 Biodiversity net gain

The supporting biodiversity metric assessment has concluded that the proposed development will result in a notable net loss of biodiversity, quantified at -12.32 habitat units (c.37%). Policy CP46 sets out that where development results in the loss, deterioration or harm to habitats or species of importance to biodiversity, these will not be permitted unless measures can be provided (and secured though planning conditions) that would compensate for the adverse effects likely to result from the development. In this case, this will require offsetting to achieve compliance with Policy CP46, which is acceptable and can be secured by condition.

5.34 Overall, the countryside officer raises no objection to the proposal subject to conditions for lighting, offsetting, and onsite biodiversity enhancements. These conditions meet the relevant tests and are required to ensure the proposal is compliant with policy CP46.

5.35 **Heritage assets**

Policies CP39 of LPP1 and DP36 of LPP2 state that proposals for new development that may affect heritage assets must demonstrate that they conserve and enhance the special interest or significance of the heritage asset and its setting. Policy DP39 of LPP2 sets out the Council's approach to the conservation and enhancement of Scheduled Monuments, nationally important archaeological remains and other non-designated archaeological sites.

5.36 There are no designated assets or Scheduled Monuments within the site or settings of assets in the vicinity that could be affected by the proposed development. However, there are the remains of a concrete catapult pit constructed by the RAF in the late 1930s to house a prototype pneumatic catapult system designed to assist bomber aircraft take off, along with elements of the former runway. Both the experimental catapult and runway are considered a non-designated heritage asset.

5.37 The catapult

The structure, below ground, originally consisted of a 30m diameter turntable and two 85m launch trenches. Published records indicate the pit was never successfully used to launch aircraft and was backfilled in the 1950s by UKAEA, after it was used as a transit store for radioactive waste materials. In 2002, UKAEA investigated and subsequently remediated / restored the catapult pit and infilled it with clean material. Notwithstanding, the catapult has high historical value as an evolutionary dead end in wartime aeronautical research.

5.38 Although the applicant aims to remove only parts of the structure that are necessary for the development (Carter Jonas Technical Note 17/3/23), the areas to be completely or partially removed are extensive. They are set out on Drawing 116C, Existing Catapult Retention Plan. Half of the turntable pit would be completely lost together with long sections of the two arms. Other parts of the arms would lose parts of their sides but retain the base. This high level of loss means that very little of the catapult's significance would remain and there would be a high level of harm to the undesignated remains.

- 5.39 In response, the applicant is offering to create an interpretation area within the site so that staff and visitors can understand the history of the catapult. It is also proposed to mark out the location of parts of the catapult within the development at ground level, using studs. Drawing 2271-EXA-ZZ-ZZ-DR-L-00190/P01 shows these proposals. Historic England welcome the offer of these heritage benefits which can be secured through planning conditions, with details confirmed and agreed with the Oxfordshire County Archaeological Service.
- 5.40 Historic England have confirmed the catapult structure is of higher significance than is assessed in the desk-based assessment (medium significance) but falls just short of being of national importance. The applicant has confirmed they are prepared to re-excavate and expose the entire catapult structure so that it can be fully recorded. The County Council's Archaeology Team have provided advice on the appropriate level of archaeological recording, and this is set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation which is the subject of a recommended condition. With a full recording exercise confirmed, the loss of fabric can be fully justified and / or minimised to ensure the development would be acceptable from a heritage point of view to comply with Policies CP39 of LPP1 and DP36 of LPP2.

5.41 The runway

Local concern has been raised on the loss of the former runway and the impact of the nearby war memorial. Officers acknowledge that the last area of the former runway would be lost by this proposal, and this would change the way in which the memorial seems to have been designed to be experienced and would erode the last of the airfield connection. It is however considered that retaining the remaining area of runway is of limited value when balanced against the benefits of the development. The airfield was built over agricultural land, cottages, and barns during a time of national need and had a very temporary existence being replaced shortly after by scientific research buildings and has been extensively altered since WW2. Its use is well documented through public records on the history of Harwell and reference to the alignment of this part of the airfield survives in the Frome Road and the memorial itself.

5.42 The memorial is not listed, and the airfield remains are not designated. The conservation officer has advised that whilst they do have some local interest, this is considered communal historic interest rather than architectural and would in part be preserved because the memorial is unchanged. Officers therefore do not consider the retention of the runway on heritage grounds could be justified. Notwithstanding, the conservation officer has commented that on site interpretation could be used to make clearer reference to the former runway and link to the memorial. This can be secured by condition.

5.43 Sports pitch

Policy DP34 of LPP2 confirms development of existing leisure and sports facilities will only be permitted where it is shown to be surplus to requirement, or the loss is replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of scale, quantity, and quality in a suitable and accessible location.

5.44 Much local concern has been received regarding the loss of the playing field. In response the applicant initially provided a proposal for two 5 aside pitches to replace the existing 11 aside pitch on land to the north of the application site, which is in their control. Following further comments from Sport England this was rejected and it is now proposed to replace the existing with like for like on the land to the north of the application site. This can be secured by condition and meets the requirements of policy DP34 and paragraph 99(b) of the NPPF.

5.45 **Public Art**

Policy DP20 of LPP2 seeks all proposals for major development to provide public art. A condition is attached to secure public art provision on site.

5.46 Community Employment Plan

Policy DP11 of LPP2 requires all new development proposals to demonstrate how opportunities for local employment, apprenticeships and training can be created and seek to maximise the opportunities for sourcing local produce, suppliers, and services, during both construction and operation. A CEP has been submitted and agreed with the council's economic development team.

5.47 Financial contribution requests

Paragraph 57 of the NPPF advises that planning obligations should only be sought where they meet all the following tests:

- I. Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
- II. Directly related to the development
- III. Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development
- 5.48 Policy CP7 of LPP1 provides that development will only be permitted where the necessary physical infrastructure and service requirements to support the development can be secured.

5.49 Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted in September 2017 and implemented in November 2017. CIL is a levy charged on new development in the district; the money raised will be used to fund infrastructure and support growth. The site is not CIL liable.

5.50 S106 Legal Agreement

OCC has requested a financial contribution of £19,815.33 towards public transport services, a public transport subsidy for staff who will occupy the proposed development and a contribution of £2,379 for travel plan monitoring to encourage sustainable modes of travel to and from the campus. This has been secured through a S106 agreement which has now been completed and signed.

5.51 **Pre-commencement conditions**

In accordance with S100ZA(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (a), the pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the applicant. A full list of the proposed conditions is attached at **Appendix** 3.

6.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The application has been assessed on its merits, against the requirements of the adopted Local Plan 2031 Part 1 and Part 2 and the National Planning Policy Framework. All relevant consultations have been undertaken and all responses received have been fully considered.
- 6.2 The principle of new commercial development at Harwell Campus is supported by the provisions of the Vale of White Local Plan 2031. The proposal is not considered to be harmful to the landscape character of the area, the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs AONB, highway safety, flood risk or to ecology and biodiversity. Regard has been had to the impact on non-designated heritage assets and the need for an appropriately detailed programme of archaeological recording, analysis and publication. Subject to terms of the completed S106 and the recommended conditions, the application accords with local and national planning policy and should be approved.

The following planning policies have been taken into account:

Development Plan Policies

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 1 (LPP1) Policies:

CP01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CP03 - Settlement Hierarchy

CP06 - Meeting Business and Employment Needs

CP07 - Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services

CP15 - Spatial Strategy for South-East Vale Sub-Area

CP29 - Change of Use of Existing Employment Land and Premises

CP33 - Promoting Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

CP35 - Promoting Public Transport, Cycling and Walking

CP37 - Design and Local Distinctiveness

CP38 - Design Strategies for Strategic and Major Development Sites

CP39 - The Historic Environment

CP40 - Sustainable Design and Construction

CP42 - Flood Risk

CP43 - Natural Resources

CP44 - Landscape

CP45 - Green Infrastructure

CP46 - Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity

A Regulation 10A review (five-year review) for Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) has been completed. The review shows that five years on, LPP1 (together with LPP2) continues to provide a suitable framework for development in the Vale of White Horse that is in overall conformity with government policy.

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031 Part 2 (LPP2) Policies:

CP15A - Additional Site Allocations for the South-East Vale Sub-Area

CP15B - Harwell Campus Comprehensive Development Framework

DP10 - Ancillary Uses on Employment Land

DP11 - Community Employment Plans

DP16 - Access

DP17 - Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

DP20 - Public Art

DP21 - External Lighting

DP23 - Impact of Development on Amenity

DP24 - Effect of Neighbouring or Previous Uses on New Developments

DP27 - Land Affected by Contamination

DP28 - Waste Collection and Recycling

DP34 - Leisure and Sport Facilities

DP36 - Heritage Assets

DP39 - Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

Neighbourhood Plan

There is no neighbourhood plan covering the site.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

Joint Design Guide SPD 2022: The Joint Design Guide sets out design principles to guide future development and encourage a design-led approach to development.

Developer Contributions – Delivering Infrastructure to Support Development SPD 2017: The Developer Contributions SPD was adopted on 30 June 2017 and provides guidance on how planning obligations will work alongside CIL to deliver the infrastructure needed to support development in the Vale.

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken account of in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application, the council has had regard to its equality obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990
- Community & Infrastructure Levy Legislation
- Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010
- North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan (2019 2024)

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