

APPLICATION NO.	P22/S0211/FUL
APPLICATION TYPE	FULL APPLICATION
REGISTERED	17.1.2022
PARISH	CULHAM
WARD MEMBER(S)	Sam Casey-Rerhaye
APPLICANT	UKAEA
SITE	Main Gate Culham Science Centre near Clifton Hampden, OX14 3DB
PROPOSAL	Construction of replacement entrance facility, including security hut and associated parking and landscaping.
	(As amended by Archaeological Desk Based Assessment dated February 2022 and amplified by Phase 1 Desk Study dated November 2021 received 22 March 2022, Master Plan received 13 April 2022, Heritage Assessment received 27 April 2022 and Biodiversity Impact Assessment received 17 May 2022 and Section Plans and site plan accompanying Highways Note and email from agent received 29 June 2022 and revised planting plan received 3 August 2022)
OFFICER	Paul Bowers

1.0 **INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 This report sets out the officer’s recommendation that planning permission should be **granted** having regard to the material planning considerations and the development plan.
- 1.2 Culham Science Centre (CSC) is situated approximately 2.75 miles to the east of Abingdon, 4.5 miles north of Didcot and 5.5 miles south of Oxford.
- 1.3 The CSC now forms a key part of Science Vale and the Oxfordshire Knowledge Spine and is one of the largest employment centres in the county (covering approximately 80 hectares). Employment levels at CSC have been stable and in excess of 2,000 for many years and, in recent years, with a growing community of commercial science and technology enterprises and the broadening of the UKAEA’s portfolio, employment levels have started to rise.
- 1.4 The site of the planning application covers the entrance to the wider site and can be identified in the location plan attached at **Appendix 1** to this report.
- 1.5 This application is one of three separate planning applications which cover the gateway entrance area to the south of the Culham Science Centre site.

This application specifically seeks planning permission to replace the existing entrance facility which currently incorporates a nursery and the existing gatehouse building, there is also a security hut and a barrier.

The remainder of the application site is mainly laid to hardstanding for car parking. There is a small section of established trees in the southwest of the site. To the north of the site boundary is an established tree line and amenity grassland.

- 1.6 The two other relevant applications are for the replacement of the nursery building to the north of the application site – application reference P22/S0207/O which was granted outline permission on the 7 September 2022 and the other application reference P22/S0209/FUL which relates to the infrastructure works associated with the gateway area.

The latter application remains undetermined as it relates to the final configuration of the HIF road connecting to the Golden Balls roundabout bypassing Clifton Hampden which has yet to be determined in a separate application with Oxfordshire County Council.

- 1.7 Whilst the proposed development does not rely on the other applications for associated infrastructure and the nursery, all three applications are designed to work together if permission is granted for each individual application.

- 1.8 The development the subject of this application seeks planning permission for the following elements;

- A Main Gate building, comprising a 2-storey structure with flat roof hidden behind a parapet with a gross internal area of 625m²;
- A single storey garage/storage building, ancillary to the Main Gate building with a gross internal area of 92m² and a further 28m² for plant;
- A single storey bin store measuring 17m³;
- A single storey, flat roofed security hut measuring 11.5m²;
- A radial landscaped area with pedestrian and cycle links;
- 35 car parking spaces, plus 3 disabled car parking spaces and 3 electric vehicle car parking spaces; and
- Cycle storage for up to 20 bicycles.

- 1.9 The main gate building also provides for exhibition and conference spaces in addition to the main reception where people are ‘checked in’ to the site. Conferences and exhibitions already occur at the site, but the purpose of this development is to provide a single dedicated facility outside of the perimeter security fence that surrounds the entire site.

- 1.10 Reduced copies of the plans accompanying the application are attached as **Appendix 2** to this report. All the plans and representations can be viewed on the council’s website www.southoxon.gov.uk under the planning application reference number.

2.0 **SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS**

2.1 **Culham Parish Council** – The parish council submitted a set of joint comments to this application and P22/S209/FUL that relate to the infrastructure works. They object for the following reasons;

- Surprised that the applications have been submitted before the HIF road has been granted by OCC.
- The number of parking spaces is too high.
- Excessive lighting (this relates to lighting in connection with the P22/S209/FUL).

Clifton Hampden Parish Council – Object to the application (joint comments with those for P22/S209/FUL) for the following reasons;

- They believe both applications are dependent on the HIF road scheme and are therefore premature.
- Concern about the loss of trees. Support comments made by Fullamoor Farm House.

Third party representations – 2 x objections covering the following concerns to the application as submitted and in its amended form;

- The application(s) are premature and should be withdrawn.
- Concern about the impact of the development on the setting of the Grade II listed farmhouse at Fullamoor Farmhouse.
- Concern about the status of the master plan and piecemeal applications.
- Unclear where the HGV's will park when entering the site.
- Parking for the meetings in the entrance building appear to be inadequate.

SGN Plant Protection Team – No objection but draws applicants' attention to pipe network.

CPRE (Rights of Way) – Object on the basis of the number of car parking spaces and the impact of light pollution.

OCC Archaeological Services – No objection but recommend conditions that require a written scheme of investigation to be submitted for approval and then once approved a condition that requires a staged programme of archaeological evaluation be submitted and approved.

OCC Highways – No objection on the basis that the 35 spaces will replace existing parking being removed by redevelopment proposals and subject to conditions relating to the submission of details of car parking, cycle parking facilities and a construction traffic management plan for further approval.

OCC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions relating to a surface water drainage scheme to be submitted and approved.

SODC Countryside Officer – No objection subject to condition that requires details of the faunal enhancements stated in the supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal shall be submitted to and approved in writing.

SODC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions.

SODC Forestry Officer – No objection to the application in its amended form and subject to conditions relating to landscaping and tree protection.

SODC Conservation Officer – No objection.

SODC Contaminated Land – No objection subject to conditions relating to investigation and remediation.

3.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

3.1 [P22/S0207/O](#) - Approved (07/09/2022)

Outline planning application for construction of replacement nursery with all matters reserved except access.

[P21/S2982/PEM](#) - Advice provided (10/11/2021)

Proposed development of a new entrance/main gate building at Culham Science Centre. Proposed floorspace of between 1,000-9,999m².

[P17/S0973/FUL](#) - Approved (21/04/2017)

Extension to Nursery.

[P14/S2303/FUL](#) - Approved (11/09/2014)

Erection of a new building for use by the existing children's nursery.

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 The development is over 0.5 hectare of industrial estate development. However, it is within a site which is previously developed for industrial uses. In terms of the indicative thresholds for EIA the site is not new industrial development, and it does not exceed 20 hectares. An EIA is not required.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Development Plan Policies**

South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) Policies:

DES1 - Delivering High Quality Development

DES10 - Carbon Reduction

DES2 - Enhancing Local Character

DES3 - Design and Access Statements

DES4 - Masterplans for Allocated Sites and Major Development

DES5 - Outdoor Amenity Space

DES6 - Residential Amenity

ENV6 - Historic Environment

ENV7 – Listed buildings

ENV9 - Archaeology and Scheduled Monuments

ENV1 - Landscape and Countryside
ENV12 - Pollution - Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)
ENV3 - Biodiversity
STRAT1 - The Overall Strategy
STRAT8 - Culham Science Centre
TRANS5 - Consideration of Development Proposals

5.2 Neighbourhood Plan

The application site spans both Clifton Hampden and Culham parish boundaries.

Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Plan –

The parish council has started the process of gathering evidence and engaging with the local community. This is to give the plan a direction and draft policies that will form the neighbourhood plan.

Clifton Hampton designated their neighbourhood area on 26 September 2014, which at the time followed the parish boundary. However, a change in the parish boundaries in 2015 has resulted in a small section of the Clifton Hampton neighbourhood area being within Culham Parish Council. In 2020, Culham Parish Council submitted an application to designate their neighbourhood area encompassing their entire parish. In order to achieve this, the designated Clifton Hampden neighbourhood area boundary needed to be amended to enable Culham Parish Council to designate their whole parish. The plan no weight at this stage of development.

Culham Neighbourhood Plan –

Culham Parish Council is working on a neighbourhood plan which has recently been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council. The publicity period on the draft plan concluded on Wednesday 7 September 2022. An examiner has been appointed to carry out the examination on the plan. At this stage the plan has limited weight in decision making and the relevant policies within the plan to this development are as follows;

- CUL5 – Design code for Culham
- CUL6 – Local heritage assets
- CUL7 – Nature recovery and climate change
- CUL8 – Sustainable travel
- CUL9 – Zero carbon buildings
- CUL10 – Light pollution

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide 2022

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

5.5 Other Relevant Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

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

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 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.

Development which is not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In the case of this application South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) comprises the development plan and the policies within it must be assessed in relation to the material considerations relevant to this proposal.

6.2 The main planning considerations to consider in relation to this development are as follows;

- **The principle of development.**
- **Impact on the character of the area and the wider landscape.**
- **Heritage impacts.**
- **Transport impacts of the development.**
- **Impact on drainage.**
- **Impact on archaeology.**
- **Impact on trees.**
- **Impact on ecology.**
- **Carbon reduction.**

6.3 The principle of development.

Policy STRAT8 of the SOLP relates specially to Culham Science Centre.

It states that proposals for the redevelopment and intensification of the Culham Science Centre will be supported where it does not have an unacceptable visual impact particularly on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and the registered parkland associated with Nuneham House.

The policy goes on to say that the site will deliver a net increase in employment land, a net gain in biodiversity and confirms that the site is now removed from the Oxford Green Belt. A masterplan is being prepared that will inform future phasing and development on the site.

The removal of the site from the green belt is in recognition of the strategic importance of the site at a regional, national and global level.

This is a permissive policy which seeks to ensure that this site fulfils its full potential and allows for the redevelopment of the site on a major scale. This is a key objective of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035.

- 6.4 The application seeks to create a new main gate entrance to the site along with a dedicated building and associated parking outside of the secure perimeter fencing for meeting and exhibitions – activities which already occur on the site.

This proposal is associated with the long-term objectives of the wider Science Centre. Given the overall thrust of policy STRAT8, I am satisfied that the principle of this development is compliant with that policy and acceptable.

The subsequent sections of this report will consider the detail of this proposal and the wider impacts.

- 6.5 **Impact on the character of the area and the wider landscape.**

SOLP Policy ENV1 relates to landscape and countryside. The policy seeks to protect South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas from harmful development and states that development will only be permitted where it protects and where possible enhances features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscape with particular emphasis on things like trees, habitats, landscapes, waterscapes, cultural heritage, topographical features, areas of cultural and historic value and important views.

The policy goes on to state that development which supports economic growth in rural areas will be supported provided it conserves and enhances the landscape, countryside and rural areas.

- 6.6 In considering this issue Policies DES1 and DES2 of the SOLP are also relevant in my view which seeks high quality development and enhancement of local character.

Policy CUL10 in the neighbourhood plan relates to the impacts of light pollution and is also relevant but carries limited weight at this stage.

- 6.7 The application site includes land which already contains buildings in connection with the main reception and security aspects of the Science Centre and also a nursery building along with an area of car parking.

This is to be replaced with a larger building that is of a unique design to provide a focal point at the entrance. A new area for car parking and associated landscaping is also provided. This is all contained within the area of land bound by the access route around the perimeter road outside of the main secure fencing.

- 6.8 The new building will be taller and more prominent than the existing main gate building. It's circular design and use of materials will make this a modern and focal building which is, in my view, in keeping with an entrance to a site of this size and significance in terms of the wider landscape. It will also be seen in the

context of the larger buildings beyond the entrance within the site which in my view mitigates its height and overall scale.

- 6.9 The overall visual impact of the proposed development when compared to the existing situation will be greater than the existing building however it is contained within an area of previously developed land at the entrance to the site. Although requested as part of the suggested ecological condition a condition to require details of any lighting scheme is considered necessary to reduce the overall impact of the development on the wider landscape.
- 6.10 This development will be clearly visible and given its location, will be prominent at the entrance to this facility. However, in my view the scale, siting and design of the building and the area forward of the existing structures at Culham Science Centre which provide a backdrop to this development I am satisfied that in terms of the overall landscape impact and character of the area that this development does not create material harm.
- 6.11 Overall, I am satisfied that the wider landscape impacts and the design and appearance of the building in the context of the rest of the site are in line with policies STRAT8, ENV1, DES1 and DES2 of the SOLP.
- 6.12 **Heritage impacts.**

As part of the application process we have to consider the potential impact on the following historic assets;

- Nuneham House GII* Listed country house set in wide landscape overlooking the Thames.
- Carfax Conduit GI listed building and Scheduled Monument (SM) within the grounds of Nuneham House
- Nuneham Park Registered Park and Garden (RPG) GI listed landscape extending from Nuneham House and its grounds to the north, from the Village of Nuneham Courtenay, south to the northern boundary with Culham Science Centre.
- Nuneham Courteney Village Conservation Area and listed houses (all GII)
- Culham Station GII* Brunel railway building
- Culham Station Overbridge GII carries Station Road over
- Fullamoor Farmhouse GII listed house south of the A415 and south of the Culham Science Centre
- Wittenham Clumps SM large landscape feature with significant views across much of the county
- Clifton Hampden Conservation Area and the listed buildings within it.
- Courtiers GII listed house in the north-eastern part of Clifton Hampden village.

- 6.13 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that :

In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any [functions under or by virtue of] any of the provisions mentioned in

subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

Section 72 (1) must also be considered alongside relevant policies contained in the NPPF.

The NPPF requires that in determining applications LPA's should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of the heritage assets and putting them to viable use consistent with conservation, the positive contribution that conservation deals with the impact of a proposed development on the "significance" of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 199 of the NPPF requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

This is followed through into the development plan by Policy ENV6, ENV7 and ENV8 of the SOLP.

It is also covered in the emerging Policy CUL6 of the Culham Neighbourhood Plan. At this stage however that policy carries limited weight.

- 6.14 The Conservation Officer has walked through Nuneham Park, Clifton Hampden village, along the footway from Culham village to Clifton Hampden, the Wittenham Clumps and parts of The Ridgeway to the south-west where the existing buildings can be seen. It is clear that the greater impact of these proposals is to the heritage assets closest to the application site and experienced within their direct wider setting. The main historic assets that would be impacted by the proposals are Culham Station, the listed Station Overbridge and Fullamoor Farmhouse.
- 6.15 Culham Station and Overbridge are both focussed on the GWR mainline to Oxford that passes to the west of the Science Centre and the application site. The buildings have a specific relationship to the railway here and are difficult to discern even from the higher ground of the A415. The application proposals would not change this important historic relationship or contribution made by the setting of these assets to their significance and as such I am satisfied there would be no harm to the listed station structures.
- 6.16 Fullamoor Farmhouse is a grade II listed multiphase house dating from at least the C17 with substantial C18 and C19 phases still legible. It is situated due south of the application site with its primary frontage facing south over the historic farmland that extends towards the River Thames. The building has limited north facing design features where it historically related to the farmyard in that location. Now long since removed, the ancillary farm buildings sat

between the house and the turnpike road. The application site is situated on the land to the north that was historically part of the wider farmland to Fullamoor although this relationship has been considerably eroded by the wartime development of the land north of the A415 turnpike road for use as an airfield and now used as a centre for scientific research. Both the historic open character of the farmland to the north and intervisibility with the farmhouse have been lost. The application site is no longer in agricultural use and has a very different character to the historic use. Additionally, the site is visually screened by intervening planting on the Culham Science Centre site and within the grounds of the listed building.

- 6.17 The existing structure is a single storey building that extends to the west of the main access from the A415 and is surrounded by hard surfacing for car parking. The proposed new building occupies a much smaller footprint but is a two-storey structure. The new building is set further into the site to the north of the existing entrance with hard surfacing for parking reduced immediately around the building. In principle the conservation officer has no objection to the proposed new entrance building. The structure, although taller than the existing, will not have a greater impact on the setting of heritage assets identified above subject to suitable mitigating replacement planting which will be covered by a landscaping condition.
- 6.18 Lighting is considered to be an important issue and needs to be considered carefully in the context of heritage impacts. This can however be achieved through a sensitively designed scheme and as mentioned above such a lighting scheme is proposed as part of the recommended conditions.
- 6.19 Overall, it is both my opinion and that of the conservation officer that the proposed new building will result in minimal impact to the setting of Fullamoor Farmhouse and how it is experienced. Although the new building will intensify the use of this area from the existing, it will not harmfully alter the way in which the listed building is currently experienced in its wider context. The proposal is considered to accord with Policies ENV6 and ENV7 of SOLP.
- 6.20 **Transport impacts of the development.**

With respect to highway safety matters the advice from Central Government set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is as follows:

Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe.

The term severe is locally interpreted as situations, which have a high impact, likely to result in loss of life, or a higher possibility of occurrence with a lower impact.

Policy TRANS5 of the SOLP seeks to ensure that development does not harm highway safety and provides for sufficient parking and turning areas.

- 6.21 The applicant has confirmed that the proposed Main Gate Building will not employ any additional staff to those who already work at the existing entrance building and that existing staff will therefore simply be relocated to the new building.
- 6.22 The additional floorspace is to allow future, infrequent events to take place in the building. The applicant states that the events will typically take place at off-peak times, and these events already occur on site inside the secure perimeter, (and only several times per year).
- 6.23 During the course of the application Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) requested additional information that provides clarification on the existing number of parking spaces for the main gate building and if additional spaces are proposed, justification for the additional spaces.

A technical note 'Response to OCC Planning Consultation Comments - Culham Science Centre Main Gate, Nursery and Infrastructure Planning Applications' (June 2022) by BSP) has been submitted by the applicant and provides this requested clarification.

- 6.24 A total of 35 parking spaces are proposed to the south of the building including three disabled parking bays and three EV charging bays.

The applicant proposes a total of 20 cycle parking spaces located to the south west of the proposed to the main gate building. OCC consider the number of cycle parking spaces proposed acceptable.

The proposed 35 car parking spaces would replace the existing parking spaces to the south (17) and east (18) of the existing reception building being removed by the redevelopment proposals. No additional spaces are therefore proposed as part of this application.

- 6.25 Additional information was also requested on the events that will take place in the new exhibition building in terms of the number of visitors, frequency and times of the events. It has been confirmed that these events already take place at the Science Centre and will therefore be relocated to the proposed main gate building. The applicant has confirmed that the events will be infrequent and generally held outside of peak hours.

On the basis that these events already take place at the Science Centre no additional vehicle movements are expected to be generated by the proposed development.

- 6.26 OCC (highways) have considered all of the information in the application and the additional information that has been submitted and confirm that they have no objection to the proposed development. This is subject to conditions that require the applicant to provide a detailed plan showing the exact position and size of the 35 car parking spaces, details of cycle parking facilities and a construction traffic management plan that should be submitted to the council and approved in writing prior to the commencement of development.

In conjunction with these conditions, I am satisfied that the development will accord with Policy TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

6.27 Impact on drainage.

Policy EP4 relates to matters of flooding and states that the risk of flooding will be minimised through;

- i) directing new development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding;
- ii) ensuring that all new development addresses the effective management of all sources of flood risk;
- iii) ensuring that development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere; and
- iv) ensuring wider environmental benefits of development in relation to flood risk.

Policy INF4 of the SOLP relates to water resources and requires that all new development proposals must demonstrate that there is or will be adequate water supply, surface water, foul drainage and sewerage treatment capacity to serve the whole development.

6.28 The County Council as the lead flood authority have commented on the scheme after considering the application in detail. They have no objection to the development but have requested that two conditions be applied that require details of a scheme for surface water drainage and to ensure that the development is SUDS compliant. I consider these conditions are necessary and they form part of this recommendation to ensure compliance with policies EP4 and INF4 of SOLP.

6.29 Impact on archaeology.

Policy ENV9 of SOLP states that development must protect the site and setting of Scheduled Monuments or nationally important designated or undesignated archaeological remains.

Applicants will be expected to undertake an assessment of appropriate detail to determine whether the development site is known to, or is likely to, contain archaeological remains. Proposals must show the development proposals have had regard to any such remains.

6.30 The application site is located in an area of archaeological interest and potential as identified by a desk based assessment undertaken by Cotswold Archaeology and submitted by the applicant.

The report concludes that the application site has a potential to contain archaeological remains of prehistoric and/or later date that would be impacted by development.

Whilst the application site can be seen to occupy an area of recorded cropmark enclosures, assessment concludes that there is currently no indication that heritage assets of such significance will be present as to preclude the principle of development given that previous development is likely to have resulted in a degree of past truncation or disturbance of archaeological deposits. The County Archaeologist agrees with this conclusion.

6.31 The County Archaeologist has recommended that, the applicant should be responsible for ensuring the implementation of a staged programme of archaeological investigation to be maintained during the period of construction. This can be ensured through the proposed planning conditions set out in section 8.2 of this report and thereby ensures compliance with Policy ENV9 of the SOLP.

6.32 Impact on trees.

Policy ENV1 of the SOLP states that South Oxfordshire's landscape, countryside and rural areas will be protected against harmful development. Development will only be permitted where it protects and, where possible enhances, features that contribute to the nature and quality of South Oxfordshire's landscapes, in particular trees (including individual trees, groups of trees and woodlands), hedgerows and field boundaries.

6.33 The proposed development will require the removal of 4 trees shown as T46, T47, T104 and T107 on the Arboricultural Impact Plan. 3 of the trees have been categorised as having moderate arboricultural quality and 1 of low arboricultural quality. The species of trees proposed for removal are London plane, lime, horse chestnut and field maple. The majority of these species are large canopied and long lived and therefore the mitigation planting to replace them should be of an appropriate species selection to provide long term benefits.

6.34 The proposed planting plan shows adequate mitigation for the trees being lost and the number and type of replacements are considered acceptable by the forestry officer. Conditions are proposed which seek the protection of the trees shown to be retained and also a condition which requires the landscaping to be carried out as per the submitted plan. The condition will ensure compliance with Policy ENV1.

6.35 Impact on ecology.

Policy ENV2 of the SOLP seeks to avoid adverse impacts on ecological receptors (protected species, priority habitat, designates sites, etc.). Where adverse impacts are predicted, development must meet the tests outlined under the policy to be acceptable

Policy ENV3 of SOLP relates to biodiversity. The policy concludes by stating that planning permission will only be granted if impacts on biodiversity can be avoided, mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated fully.

Emerging Policy CUL7 relates to nature recovery and climate change. It is relevant to this issue but carries limited weight at this stage.

- 6.36 This application is supported by a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) and arboricultural impact assessment (AIA).

The supporting PEA has concluded that the buildings and trees on site, to be impacted by the development proposals, are not suitable to support roosting bats. Impacts on other species are considered to be avoidable with sensitive working methods. The habitats on site are not considered to be a constraint to development.

- 6.37 The applicants have also provided a biodiversity metric which has demonstrated that the development complies with Policy ENV3 with a small net gain in biodiversity as a consequence of this development.

- 6.38 The council's ecologist has suggested a condition that requires details of external lighting to ensure that an ecologically and environmentally sensitive external lighting scheme is secured for the development. In addition, a condition is also proposed which seeks to ensure that the faunal enhancements stated in the PEA shall be submitted for approval to the council prior to the development coming into first use.

In conjunction with these conditions the development will accord with Policies ENV2 and ENV3.

- 6.39 **Carbon reduction.**

Policy DES10 requires that non-residential development to meet BREEAM excellent standard and if the proposal was in excess of 1000 square metres achieve at least a 40% reduction in carbon emissions compared with a code 2013 Building Regulations compliant base and that this reduction is to be secured through renewable energy and other low carbon technologies.

Emerging Policy CUL9 in the neighbourhood plan states that all development must be 'zero carbon ready'. At this stage however this policy carries limited weight.

- 6.40 Conditions are therefore proposed that require the development to be built in accordance with the details set out in the energy statement and also demonstrate that the building has achieved BREEAM Excellent standard before it is occupied. In conjunction with these conditions the proposal will accord with Policy DES10.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The development proposes a new main gate, exhibition building and parking area. The new building is circular and modern in form but is acceptable as a focal building at the entrance to this site with the backdrop of the existing science centre buildings.

The development does not result in an increase in the number of vehicular movements to the site and the parking provision is a replacement for spaces within the site itself.

The development will not cause a harmful impact to the setting of the heritage assets and in conjunction with the proposed conditions will ensure adequate mitigation and protection to trees and ecology.

Overall the development complies with the development plan.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 That planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions;

8.2 Standard conditions –

1 : Commencement 3 years – Full Planning Permission

2 : Approved plans *

Prior to commencement conditions –

3 : Archaeological Watching Brief

4 : Implementation of Programme or Archaeological Work

5 : Tree Protection (Detailed)

6 : Surface water drainage works (details required)

7 : Plan of Car Parking Provision (specified number of spaces)

8 : Cycle Parking Facilities

9 : Construction Traffic Management (details required)

10 : External Lighting - scheme to be approved

11 : Contaminated Land - Linked Conditions

Prior to occupation conditions -

12 : Contaminated Land - Linked Conditions

13 : Surface Water Drainage

14 : Wildlife Protection (mitigation as approved)

15 : Landscaping implementation

16 : Sustainable Design Features - as approved *

17 : Confirmation of BREEAM Excellent standard

Compliance condition -

18 : Materials as on plan and design and access statement

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