

Appendix C – Pre-Application Meeting Minutes (10 and 26 September 2024)



Meeting notes

Manor Farm Pre-Application Meeting with Slough BC

Project: Manor Farm, Slough

Date: 10 September 2024

Location: Microsoft Teams

Time: 10:00 – 11:00

Attendees:

Alex Harrison (AH)
Ben Amey (BA)
Daniel Ray (DR)
Neetal Rajput (NR)
Imran Agha (IA)
Tom Newton (TN)
Dominic Moore (DM)
Tim O'Reilly (TO)
Yasin Chhabu (YC)
William Bellman (WB)
Musa Chowdry (MC)
Ed Sargent (ES)
Liz Bryant (LB)
Sasha Gordon (SG)
Amanda Chong (SC)
Isaac Butler - Davies (IB)
Ed Wheeler (EW)
Phil Murphy (PM)
Laura Field (LF)

From:

Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Tritax
Tritax
Tritax
Corgan
Colliers
EDF
EDF
Bryant Landscape
Quod
Quod
Pegasus
SLR
Quod
Quod

1 Presentation

Action

- 1.1 The Tritax consultant team presented an overview of the pre-application proposals, in particular highlighting the Green Belt and LVIA baseline assessments undertaken, and key planning considerations including the change in emphasis in 'grey belt' as part of the draft revised NPPF and the economic benefits of the scheme.

2 Feedback

- 2.1 AH stated that in his view the approach to justify the development hadn't progressed much since the first pre-application submission. AH commented that he did not agree the development was not 'inappropriate', and suggested that no additional information had been provided to assist the Council comment on the Very Special Circumstances (VSC) case.
- 2.2 Furthermore, AH commented that in his view the revised NPPF did not help the applicant's case as the starting point was still that the scheme was 'inappropriate' development.



- 2.3 PM disagreed with AH's summary of the policy context and the suggestion that matters had not developed since the previous pre-application application engagement. In the context of the current NPPF, PM referred AH back to the pre-application material submitted and the slide deck presented which acknowledged that the development was 'inappropriate' and by definition harmful to the GB. As a result, PM went on to explain the tests set out in NPPF para 153 ie one needed to understand the value of the existing GB against the defined purposes, the harm arising to the GB (and any other harm) as a result of the development, and then assess whether VSC existed to outweigh that harm.
- 2.4 PM explained that in this instance the value of the existing GB land was low in part due to the existing industrial uses on site – which was fully evidenced in the Green Belt baseline work that had been submitted with the pre-application pack, and reinforced through appeal decisions in respect of Parcel A and land immediately to the north.
- 2.5 Given the low value of the existing GB land, PM explained why the proposed development would result in limited overall harm to GB purposes and openness, with reference to the submitted LVIA baseline work.
- 2.6 PM explained the urgent need for this nationally important infrastructure, the significant economic benefits that arise, the absence of alternative sites, the reduction in transport movements, and the environmental and landscape benefits that would act as compelling VSCs to more than outweigh the limited GB harm.
- 2.7 In the context of the emerging revisions to the NPPF, PM explained that the effect of revised para 152 was to mean that the proposed development would be classed as 'appropriate' development (rather than 'inappropriate' development) as it:
- utilised grey belt land (ie previously development land or Green Belt with limited value)
 - there was a demonstrable local and national need for the development; and
 - delivered improved to existing green spaces (as per para 155).
- 2.8 On this basis the revised NPPF would not require VSCs to be demonstrated – PM noted that this was the conscious intent of the new Labour Government.
- 2.9 PM concluded that regardless of whether the current or revised version of the NPPF were applied – there was a compelling case to grant planning permission.
- 2.10 In the context of that explanation, and assuming the current NPPF, PM asked for the Council's view on the VSC case set out in the submitted pre-app material.
- 2.11 NR requested additional information on how the scale of the economic benefit outlined might be felt at a local level – NR explained that Members would be keen to draw things back to tangible benefits to Slough. Quod SE to pick this up in ongoing work eg apprenticeships, etc.
- 2.12 NR asked for clarity on network capacity given the extent of known constraints. TO confirmed that grid connections had been secured and that it would not impact the local network. As the pre-application proposals include a battery storage facility

SG/AC



alongside the data centre, the proposals contribute to the grid which would improve local resilience. Full details would be included in the planning application.

2.13 DR stated that further information would be beneficial to understand how the data centre works, particularly in the context of water usage and any concerns that may arise from Thames Water. PM explained that this was not a concern and details could be provided with the application.

PM

2.14 DR explained that Members were very familiar with business rates retention, and suggested details be provided identifying what specific proportion might be available for the Council.

SG

2.15 DR suggested that the case emphasise the importance of the Slough Availability Zone (SAZ), especially in the context of the Strategic Gap policy, noting the previous rail freight terminal decision. PM explained that the pre-app submission included these details, and it would be covered in the formal application submission.

2.16 DR noted that the East of the Borough was likely to be a focus for Grey Belt discussions given the perceived quality of the GB. DR emphasised that the Council would expect a thorough application that addressed all the policy tests.

2.17 Tritax confirmed that the proposals would be for a hyperscale data centre, as opposed to a co-location facility.

2.18 The meeting discussed the potential range in job numbers depending on the occupier and type of Data Centre proposed, with SG noting that national employment calculation assumptions were from 2010 and didn't reflect up-to-date data centre operations. It was agreed Quod would provide a more precise expectation on job numbers for the application.

SG

2.19 DR suggested the applicant engage with Colne Valley Regional Park (CVRP) to establish if there are landscape initiatives that can be supported. Quod to further research.

PM

2.20 DR suggested the applicant may wish to investigate complementary sustainable uses to supplement the pre-application proposals, eg. sustainable farming that might draw benefit from the heat/power. Tritax to consider.

Tritax

2.21 In the time available, BA offered 4 transport comments - 1) desire for improved pedestrian crossings linking to bus stops; 2) improved footways around adjacent bus stops; 3) main vehicular access might need an island to reduce risk of right turn movements; and 4) modifications may be required to the roundabout access to the south for the BESS to accommodate flows.

SLR

2.22 In respect of the 4th point, EW explained that this is an emergency access only and as such the concern was not relevant.

2.23 It was agreed that a separate Highways meeting would be arranged for matters to be discussed in detail. It was agreed that AH/Quod would arrange.

PM/AH

2.24 AH confirmed that at this stage he had no significant design related comments, other than consideration of whether the DC building should be spun 180 degrees



so that the main entrance presented itself as you view and/or approach the building.

YC

2.25 Whilst further testing was required, AH thought the height/mass seemed acceptable, noting that it was similar to the 2004 data centre decision on land to the north. AH noted that the height might have some impact on GB openness, and PM commented that this was managed by the extent of vegetation and therefore limited views from the west.

2.26 DR confirmed that SBC would seek good quality design as part of the scheme.

2.27 DR confirmed that recently Historic England have looked closely at building heights in the Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) and Slough Town Centre, on the setting of Windsor Castle and the Great Park. DR advised that the applicant may wish to consider covering this in a Heritage Impact Assessment. DR referred to a Mandatory Design Code for the SPZ with details on materials and colours.

YC

2.28 AH reserved comment on the ASA until a full assessment is available. AH agreed to send details of any sites he thought should be specifically considered in the ASA.

2.29 Colliers confirmed that the ASA is influenced by power capacity, timing and connection availability, to meet demand as part of critical national infrastructure. WB confirmed that both elements are linked to the same grid connections and hence are inter-related.

2.30 NR confirmed that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) were bringing out new guidelines re airport safeguarding including information on heights/cranes etc. NR would share details once available.

NR

2.31 NR suggested the applicant consider entering to a PPA if additional officer input and bespoke meetings (eg design, heritage, landscaping, air quality, noise etc) are required. PM agreed to consider

PM

2.32 AH flagged that if 185 full time equivalent jobs were being created more than 50 car parking space may be required. SLR to consider.

EW

2.33 PM confirmed that the applicant is aiming to submit the application at the end of the year.

2.34 It was agreed that PM would circulate minutes to record the discussion, which SBC would review and confirm that they represented an accurate representation of the meeting.



Manor Farm Pre-Application Highways Meeting with Slough BC

Manor Farm, Slough
Microsoft Teams

Date: 26 September 2024
Time: 10:30 – 11:30

From:

Alex Harrison (AH)
Ben Amey (BA)
Ed Wheeler (EW)
Mike McCullough (MM)
Laura Field (LF)

Slough Borough Council (SBC)
Slough Borough Council (SBC)
SLR
SLR
Quod

- 2.35 Transport Scoping was also shared with TFL and NH. NH have provided some minor comments and requests for clarifications, this included construction traffic for the battery storage given operational will be very limited.
- 2.36 SLR are working through a footway scheme to the north of the access to the bus stop location.
- 2.37 Scheme as a minimum would restore the road markings.
- 2.38 SBC reiterated the request for further measures to enforce the proposed left in, left out junction. SLR advised that increasing the splitter island could cause an issue for HGV access. SLR suggested an overrun as an option. SBC queried the effectiveness of such a measure.
- 2.39 Provision of a 'keep-left' island on Poyle Road is sensible to avoid vehicles from the north undertaking a right turn. SLR to update plan to consider options.
- 2.40 Vehicle tracking to be undertaken for an HGV on the Poyle Road / Colndale Road / Hilton Way roundabout to demonstrate that an HGV can undertake the required manoeuvres.
- 2.41 SBC would be happy to review the amended access arrangements in advance of a submission.
- 2.42 Transport Assessment to explain how the emergency access to the battery storage is controlled.
- 2.43 Available TRICS sites for data centres are smaller than the emerging scheme (largest data centre on TRICS is 16,000sqm). SLR could consider a comparison in terms of staff numbers increasing in line with floor area. SBC suggested considering surveys of comparable data centres to provide trips data for the site. SLR confirmed a robust approach with current sites as there is uncertainty at this stage of the final occupier. SBC agreed this approach.
- 2.44 Parking – TA to avoid any reference to B8 uses. Sufficient parking should be provided for use, noting not too high a provision due to Green Belt impact and the desire to avoid unnecessary parking.



- 2.45 SBC expect that via the planning permission there would be land use restrictions to prevent the site being sold to a B8 operator in future and cause a subsequent issue with car parking numbers. Sui generis is vague.
- 2.46 SBC will provide information on the latest position on the Bus Gate.
- 2.47 SLR advised that NH had requested a 2021 Census sensitivity. The 2021 Census data is heavily caveated by ONS data particularly on trip generations given covid lockdown and furlough etc. Understood that 2011 data is now old and DCs are a new use. SBC preference is to use existing turning counts from The Hollies. Use data on the Hollies for Staff travel movements and own knowledge of HGV distribution trips to the Strategic Highway Network (M25).
- 2.48 Plant replacement will be via a crane, which will be accounted for as part of the internal layout drawings. This will also need to be accommodated at the site access. The site access tracking will include a standard mobile crane for information.
- 2.49 SLR to responds to National Highways pre-app response copying SBC.
- 2.50 Following this meeting the pre-application will be closed. Any additional meeting for planning will require a fee but highways queries can be shared directly to Ben Amey.
- 2.51 Quod to update drafts minutes shared from previous pre-app with Highways matters for final feedback.