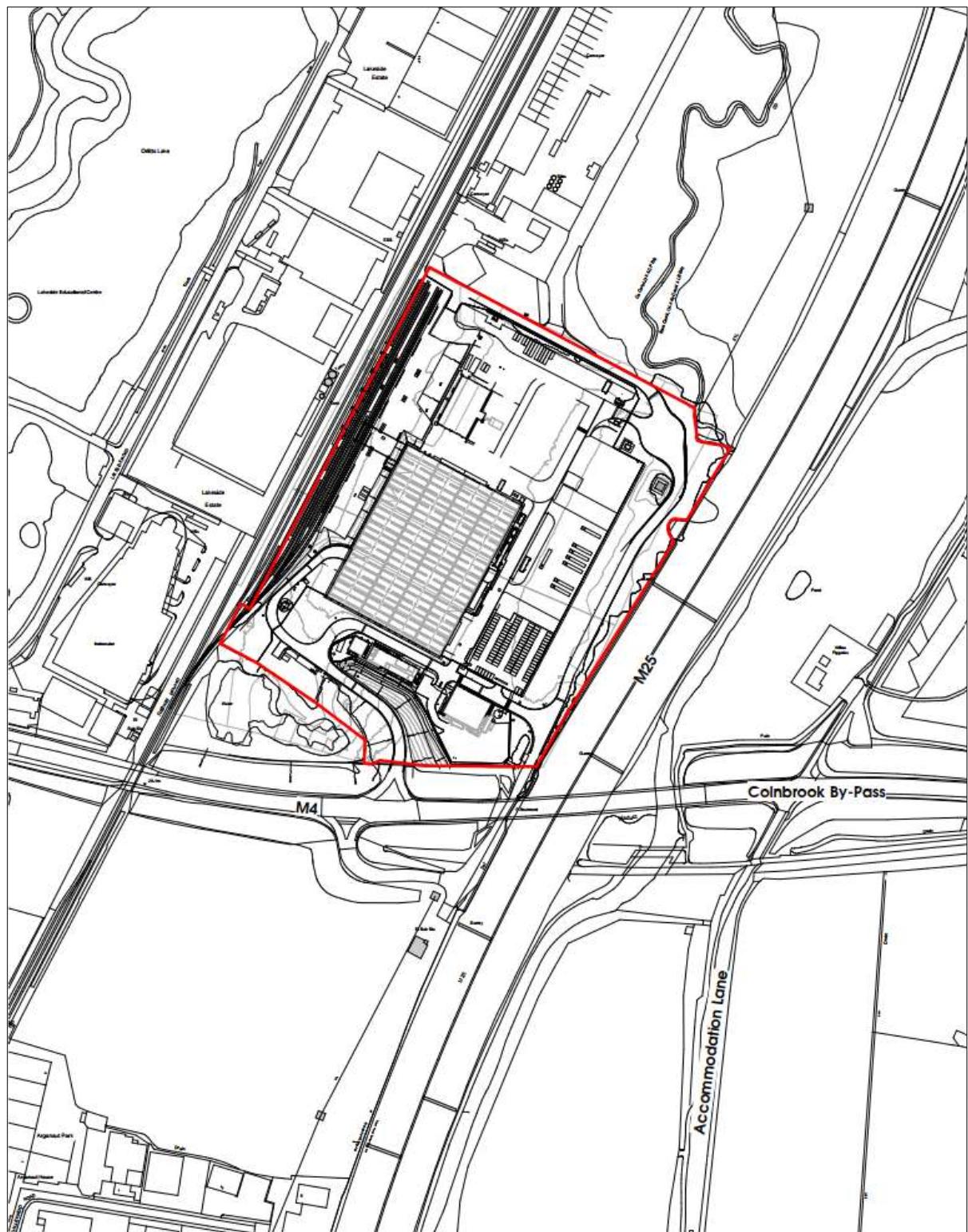


Registration Date:	23 April 2024	Application No:	P/12244/012
Officer:	Martin Cowie	Ward:	Colnbrook & Poyle
Applicant:	SEGRO (Colnbrook) Ltd	Application Type:	Major Development
		8 Week Date:	18 June 2024
Agent:	Mr Ben Cook, Stantec, 10 <sup>th</sup> Floor, Bank House, 8 Cherry Street, Birmingham, B2 5AL		
Location:	Colnbrook Logistics Centre, Colnbrook Bypass, Slough, SL3 0EB		
Proposal:	<p>Full planning application for the continued and permanent use of the site for the testing, screening, delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of Heathrow related development projects. Including the retention of existing remote goods screening centre for the secure screening of persons, goods and materials prior to their entering of Heathrow Airport and associated storage. Retention of existing rail sidings, gantry crane car and lorry parking, means of access, drainage infrastructure and boundary treatments. Demolition of two existing administration buildings followed by the construction of a single purpose-built building, the repurposing of the existing cement shed as a Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) facility, and the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme and a footpath link to the A4. Off-site highways work to include provision of pedestrian crossing to A4 and footpath connection to site (Use Classes B2 - General industry and Use Class B8 - Storage and distribution) - Amended description.</p>		

**Recommendation:** Delegate to Planning Group Manager for Approval



Application site red-line boundary

**P/12244/012: Colnbrook Logistics Centre, Colnbrook Bypass, Slough, SL1 0EB**

**SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION**

1.0 This application has been referred to the Planning Committee for consideration as the application is for a major development.

1.1 Having considered the relevant policies set out below, and comments that have been received from consultees, and all other relevant material considerations it is recommended the application be delegated to the Planning Manager:

A) For approval subject to:

1. The application being referred to the Secretary of State Housing, Communities and Local Government and not being called in.
2. The satisfactory completion of a Section 106 to secure:
  - i. Provision of new footpath link to A4 and pedestrian crossing
  - ii. Future use and maintenance of rail sidings
  - iii. Travel Plan.
  - iv. Construction vehicle routing strategy.
  - v. Financial contribution of £5,000 for Travel Plan Monitoring Fee.
  - vi. Financial contribution of £80,000 to the Colne Valley Partnership for improvements to the Colne Valley Trail and rivers.
  - vii. Annual financial contribution of £28,000 to the Colne Valley Partnership for a period of five years for countryside management to enhance the landscape in the vicinity of the site.
3. Finalising Section 106 Heads of Terms and conditions with the applicant/agent and any other minor changes.

B) Refuse the application if the completion of the above has not been satisfactorily completed by 31st October 2025 unless a longer period is agreed by the Planning Manager, in consultation with the Chair of the Planning Committee.

**PART A: BACKGROUND**

**2.0 Planning application**

2.1 The planning application seeks permanent planning permission for the retention of the Colnbrook Logistics Centre (CLC) which has been operating on-site for over 20 years following its initial temporary consent in 2001 and subsequent temporary permissions.

2.2 Subject to a positive decision and several changes proposed as part of this application, the CLC will continue to be used as a logistics, pre-fabrication, and administrative centre to specifically support the operational needs and associated construction and maintenance projects at Heathrow Airport.

2.3 The planning application is submitted in full and proposes the following key elements as:

- Continued and permanent use of the site for the screening of persons and the testing, screening, delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of Heathrow related development projects
- Retention of existing remote goods screening centre for the secure screening of persons of goods and materials prior to their entering of Heathrow Airport and associated storage
- Retention of existing rail sidings, gantry crane car and lorry parking, means of access, drainage infrastructure and boundary treatment
- Demolition of two existing administration buildings followed by the construction of a single purpose-built building
- Repurposing of the existing cement shed as a Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) facility
- Provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme
- Footpath link to the A4
- Off-site highways work to include provision of pedestrian crossing to A4 and footpath connection to site.
- Use Class B2 - General industry and Use Class B8 - Storage and distribution

2.4 Following an initial assessment of the planning application, amendments and additional information were requested from the applicant by SBC Planning Officers. This included the need to provide a footpath link to the site from the A4 and further details covering other transport related matters, the design of the new building, and the noise and air-quality assessments. Revised plans and documents were subsequently submitted to the Local Planning Authority and a further round of consultation undertaken in the updated information.

2.5 The application description was also amended to ensure that all the current and proposed land uses, structures, operations and buildings and works are included within the scope of the application.

### 3.0 **Background to existing/proposed use**

3.1 The CLC is a longstanding temporary industrial use occupying 9.78 hectares of land on the north side of the Colnbrook By-pass and just over half a mile to the north-east of Heathrow Airport. The site is located within the Green Belt, the Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London and the Colne Valley Regional Park.



*Aerial photo showing location of site*

3.2 Temporary planning permission for the logistics centre for a ten-year period was originally approved by the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions in the decision letter dated 20 November 2001 granting outline planning permission ref: P/09924/005 for Terminal 5.

3.3 Detailed planning permission (P/12244/000) for the Colnbrook Logistics Centre was subsequently granted in 2003 and considered the impact of development in relation to the Green Belt and its purposes. Its use was related to the construction of Heathrow Terminal 5 including the delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components and incorporating, *inter alia*, rail sidings, bulk powder storage facility, steel reinforcement fabrication facility, administration buildings with car and lorry parking.

3.4 Several conditions of this detailed permission (P/12244/006) were granted in 2007 to enable the use of the site for other Heathrow-related projects (i.e. not just Terminal 5) as well as allowing a limited number of night-time road movements from the site.

3.5 Temporary Planning Permission P/12244/007 was granted in 2010 extending the temporary use until 31st December 2018. More recently, in 2019 a further Temporary Planning Permission P/12244/009 extended the duration of the use up to 8th April 2024.

3.6 The site is let to Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) and is primarily utilised for the delivery, storage, screening and assembly of construction materials for Heathrow-related construction and maintenance projects occurring within Heathrow's Airport Boundary, including those which are located post-security (airside). Given the nature of the site and its proximity to Heathrow, it also screens goods for alternative airport-related uses and includes a secure passenger screening area, to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the Airport.

3.7 The site has largely remained the same during its use comprising a number of structures and facilities including operational, storage and administrative buildings, rail sidings, gantry crane, cement shed, and car and lorry parking areas. The Remote Goods Screening Centre (RGSC) including the secure passenger screening facility is accommodated within the main operational building.

3.8 HAL has advised that there is a continuing need for the Colnbrook Logistics Centre at its current location, which needs to be near Heathrow Airport with good access to the strategic road network. They state that there is a distinct lack of suitable alternative sites that could accommodate HAL's operations post-2024, and that the site will form a critical function in the future construction programmes of HAL irrespective of any possible expansion of Heathrow Airport and a third runway.

3.9 The applicant is seeking a permanent consent now given the site's longstanding and continuous use and consider that the impact of the proposed development is therefore known and acceptable. The applicant also cites Government planning guidance which highlights that the grant of temporary planning permission is typically to enable a 'trial run' or where planning circumstances are likely to change at the end of the permitted period. The guidance goes on to note that subsequent or successive grants of temporary permission are generally only justifiable where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale for doing this. The circumstances relating to the site and use haven't, as far as the applicant is concerned materially changed and in fact the alterations proposed as part of the permanent solution sought represent an improvement in relation to the facility, its appearance and condition and impact.

3.10 The application has been submitted following pre-application engagement with the Local Planning Authority over the past two years which considered the principle of the development - Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances, on-site conditions and changes including the scale/design of new buildings and landscaping and off-site enhancement and mitigation (in consultation with the Colne Valley Partnership as the site also sits within the Colne Valley Regional Park).

## 4.0 Proposals

4.1 The application proposes the continued and permanent use of the site but also seeks a number of changes/improvements to the facility and wider site as part of the submission. These include:

- the demolition of two existing temporary administration/welfare buildings and their replacement with a single purpose-built building.
- the demolition of several small temporary ancillary/storage structures.
- the repurposing of the existing cement shed as a Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) facility.
- the installation of upgraded energy efficient LED lighting and improved heating systems in all retained buildings.
- the provision of a comprehensive landscaping scheme including tree planting and ecological enhancement.
- the provision of additional and replacement car parking and cycle parking facilities.
- footpath link to the A4.
- off-site highways work to include provision of a pedestrian crossing to A4 and footpath connection to site.

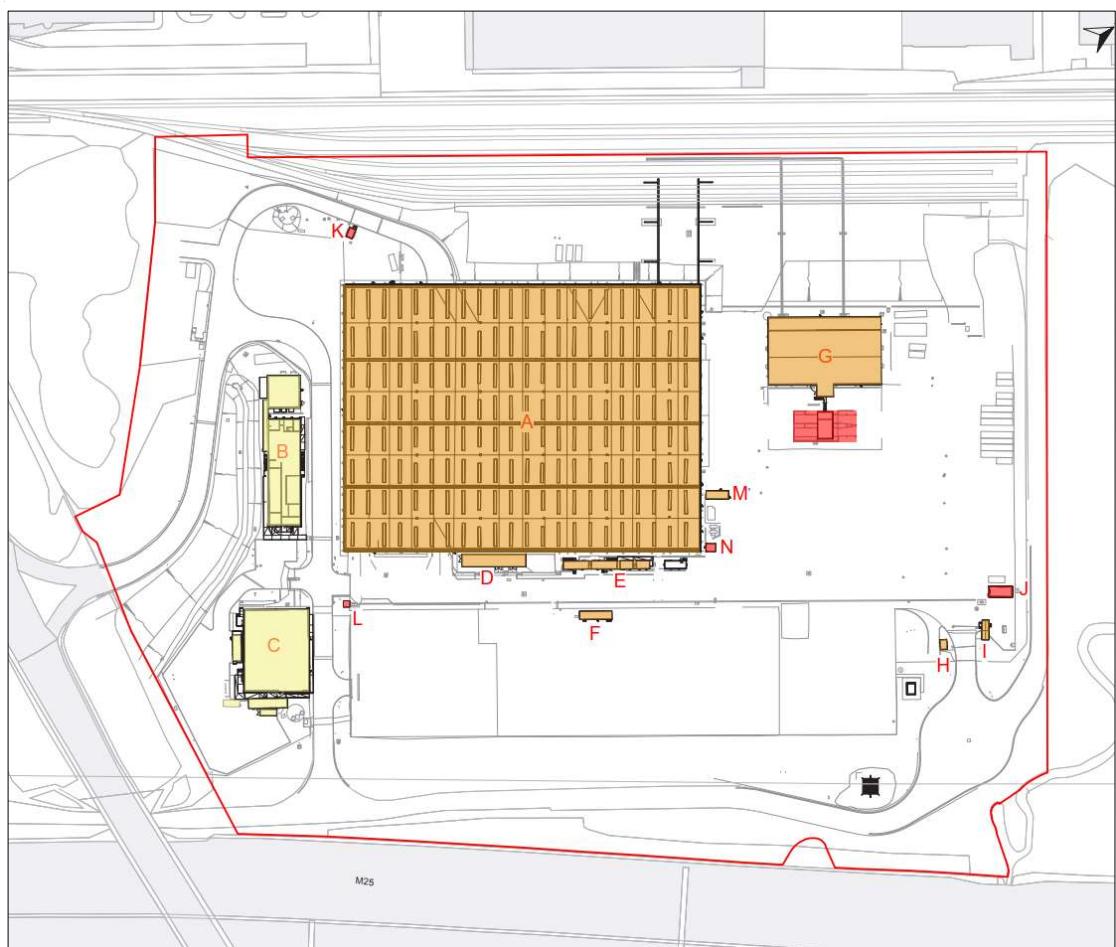


*Proposed site plan*

4.2 It should be noted that whilst not forming part of the permanent facility, due to the demolition of the existing administration/welfare buildings, temporary staff accommodation/offices will be constructed and used on-site until the new purpose-built replacement administration/welfare building is completed.

**Use and scale:**

4.3 The CLC accommodates approximately 14 buildings and ancillary structures of varying sizes with a cumulative floorspace of approximately 17,204sqm Gross External Area (GEA). The remainder of the site comprises access roads, rail sidings, car and lorry parking areas, external storage and soft landscaping.



*Plan of existing site layout – Buildings in orange to be retained, in yellow to be replaced, in red to be demolished*

4.4 The site is utilised by HAL for the delivery, storage, screening and assembly of construction materials for Heathrow Airport related construction and maintenance projects occurring within the Airport Boundary, including those which are located post-security (airside). This includes a Rapid Goods Screening Facility (RGSF), which enables 'just-in-time' delivery of critical products to Heathrow and its airlines (more than 3,000 movements per year).

4.5 As part of this overall function, the CLC also specifically serves as a consolidation facility, allowing materials and infrastructure to be amalgamated and assembled on site, prior to final onward travel to Heathrow Airport, thus reducing total vehicle movements and minimising impact to the local road network in the immediate vicinity of the airport.

4.6 Heathrow currently has 140 ongoing capital (construction) projects, in addition to ongoing maintenance works. These projects require the secure and reliable screening and storage function that the CLC provides close to the Airport. Approximately 95% of materials for the construction programme pass through the CLC for safety checks, consolidation and screening. In addition, approximately 95% of the storage on-site is used for construction-related activities and there is very little 'general storage'.

4.7 The site operates on a 24-hour basis with limited night-time deliveries and vehicle movements. The night-time deliveries are required to be made to the retail units at Heathrow Airport that can only accept deliveries when the terminals are closed to passengers at night

4.8 Current CLC operations support a core staff of 159, of which there is an approximate range of 80 to 100 shifts active per day (in a 24-hour period). 98% of the current staff are estimated to originate from local boroughs.

4.9 The site presently generates typically 300 – 650 two-way HGV movements per month (period between April 2022 and March 2023). In addition, there are approximately 1,000 two-way delivery trips by cars and van per month.

4.10 While the applicant has stated that vehicle movements will be minimised where possible, the site's continued operation will require the continuation of the previous level of HGV movements approved under the temporary permission, reference P/12244/007. This equates to a maximum of 2,750 two way and average of 2,000 two-way per month HGV movements, or a daily average of 100 two-way HGV movements. These vehicle movements are spread out over the site's hours of operation (22 hours per day and 24 hours a day specifically in respect to the RGSF) to reduce the potential associated impact on the road network.

#### **Layout and design**

4.11 The proposed layout of the CLC will largely reflect how it currently exists, and this remains critical to its function. The changes seek to consolidate and improve facilities on-site, and provide significant new landscaping, visual screening and ecological enhancements.

4.12 Vehicular access to the site will remain as existing via left in/left out slip roads on the Colnbrook Bypass (A4) in both directions. The two existing internal accesses within the site will be retained.

4.13 The site is currently only served by vehicular access. As part of the permanent retention of the facility however, the application proposes a new signalised pedestrian crossing over the A4 and footway connecting into the site adjacent the existing slip road and vehicular access.

4.14 In addition to the continuation of the use of the site as a critical logistics facility for Heathrow Airport, the proposals as previously highlighted involve a number of changes including the removal of existing buildings and structures and/or their replacement, alteration/use. The site currently accommodates approximately 14 buildings and ancillary buildings/structures with a total floorspace of approximately 17204sqm GEA. The proposed site will accommodate 10 buildings including a new permanent building, with a combined total approximate floor area measuring 17049sqm GEA. The proposed development therefore results in a net loss of approximately 155sqm built form across the site.

4.14 The specific nature, use and appearance of the key individual buildings and structures on-site, including those to be demolished and proposed are described briefly below.

4.16 - CLC main operational/warehouse building - Building A (to remain):

- Significantly the largest building at the CLC dominating the centre of the site and measuring approximately 13,597sqm GEA and 14m high (approximately equivalent to a 4/5-storey residential building). It is metal clad with access openings and a shallow ridged roofline. The power distribution building and drivers' reception facility sit along part of its eastern elevation.
- Approximately two-thirds of the area in the building is currently used for construction purposes, with bulky goods laid down and smaller ones kept on racking. Wherever possible, items are stored inside if they require protection from the weather and this decision is made when items arrive at the CLC.
- In line with good logistics practice, some 'contingency space' is left to accommodate new materials and provide manoeuvrability for vehicles that transfer them. This is typical of most managed large warehouses across the country. All material needs to be screened in line with tight security regulations imposed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Department for Transport (DfT). The corresponding screening area needs to be the size it is to allow large vehicles to pass through it.
- The Remote Goods Screening Facility (RGSF) is located within the building and performs the following key functions:
  - The RGSF screens materials for alternative airport related uses, to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the Airport. All goods screened at the RGSC go to Heathrow Airport. All items go through screening machines before they are consolidated and loaded on to lorries and secured so that no one can tamper with them before they go airside.
  - It includes a secure passenger screening area, where security sensitive detainees and their baggage/goods are screened before they are taken airside onto the aircraft. Between 400-450 passengers are screened each month.

- The screening process for secure passengers and their goods is similar to construction goods, which is why these are rationalised at the site. Given that both the screening of goods and passengers requires vehicles to escort them airside, this facility must be located close to the Airport and with limited opportunities for escort vehicles to lose sight of the vehicles carrying secure passengers.
- The building and its uses will remain and be used as existing.

4.17 - Rail Sidings and Gantry Crane (to remain):

- Forming the western boundary of the site, these were first developed as part of the Terminal 5 construction strategy to deliver as much construction material by rail as possible. These were again brought into use with the development of Terminal 2 and will again be a critical component of Heathrow Airport Limited's construction strategy for the future expansion.
- Although this infrastructure is not in use, the applicant advises that it serves an important function for major construction activity both in terms of the site preparation works and when the construction activities are underway at the Airport.
- This facility will remain as existing and safeguarded for possible future use.

4.18 - Cement building – Building G (to partly remain):

- Single-storey metal clad modular building (equivalent to two residential storeys) measuring approximately 1114sqm GEA just to the north of the main CLC building with adjoining ancillary structure (height equivalent to 3/4 residential storeys). Currently used for storage but previously had a substantial use in respect to construction activities.
- To be repurposed to house a Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DfMA) facility, to allow for the construction of items off-site from Heathrow within a secure environment, which will then be transported to the airport for installation.
- Building footprint will remain as existing and roof lights and loading bay doors for access requirements to be installed.
- The adjoining higher ancillary building will be demolished as it is surplus to the requirements.

4.19 - Integrated Test Facility (ITF) and Administration Building – Building B (to be demolished):

- Two-storey metal clad modular building sitting on western side of main CLC building, measuring approximately 1179sqm GEA.
- Provides office space, conference rooms and a data server (which acts as the back-up server for Heathrow), along with the associated requisite storage and welfare facilities including toilets, showers, and a kitchen.
- To be demolished along with the Welfare Building described below and replaced with a three-storey purpose-built building in similar position.

4.20 - Welfare Building – Building C (to be demolished):

- Single storey portacabin building to east of ITF measuring approximately 765sqm GEA with five small ancillary buildings together measuring approximately 121sqm GEA.
- Accommodates staff facilities including canteen, toilets, lockers and storage space.
- To be demolished along with ITF and Administrative buildings described above and replaced with a three-storey purpose-built building with existing site landscaped.



*Photograph of existing site from Colnbrook By-Pass*



*Photographic visual of proposed site from Colnbrook By-Pass*

**4.21 - Proposed new/replacement building:**

- New permanent purpose-built building to replace the IFT, Administration and Welfare buildings.
- Building will be three-storeys (commercial storeys) in height, measuring approximately 1968sqm GEA and be situated within the current footprint of the ITF and Administration Buildings.
- While a storey higher than the existing building it replaces, it will remain below the height of the main CLC operational building (Building A).
- Building will accommodate:
  - An upgraded data centre/server.
  - A build room/large equipment testing room.
  - An Integrated Test Facility storeroom.
  - Office replacement space.
  - A new canteen.
  - Lockers, changing/shower facilities.
  - Toilets.
  - Meeting/conference rooms

- The proposed elevations will comprise aluminium windows and a light grey industrial cladding to reflect with the existing buildings and structures on the site, with a grey brick single-storey base. The outward facing western and eastern elevations will incorporate green walls and feature cladding to soften the appearance of the building and complement the greener surrounding area.
- The building will deliver carbon and energy reductions through the inclusion of energy efficient measures and low and zero carbon technologies such as solar photovoltaic panels and air source heat pumps.
- It will achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent'.



*Photograph of existing site from main access road off Colnbrook By-Pass*



*Photographic visual of proposed site from main access road off Colnbrook By-Pass*

### **Landscaping and ecology**

4.22 The other key change associated with the proposals relate to the provision of new and additional landscaping to improve and soften the appearance of the site, screen it from key views and deliver local ecological benefits.

4.23 Enhanced landscaping is proposed along the southern and eastern perimeter of the site, separating the site and the A4 and M25 and native shrubs and trees will be planted to reinforce these existing site boundaries. A mixture of extra heavy standard trees is proposed (up to 7.5m in height) and smaller multi-stem trees circa 3-4m tall in front of the native shrub planting ensuring that they do not conflict with the overhead cables. The proposed planting will be of a sufficient scale and density to screen the car park, yard areas and retained buildings (excluding the main operational building) from view.

4.24 The wide grass verge along the eastern and northern boundaries are proposed to be seeded with a multi-purpose wildflower to improve biodiversity and a management regime put in place to improve its wildlife value

4.25 On each side of the main access road, proposed native trees are proposed within wildflower meadows in front of native planting to create a visually attractive, layered landscape. The native structure planting will include evergreen species and plants which have high wildlife value and will be allowed to grow up to 4 metres high and managed to improve biodiversity.



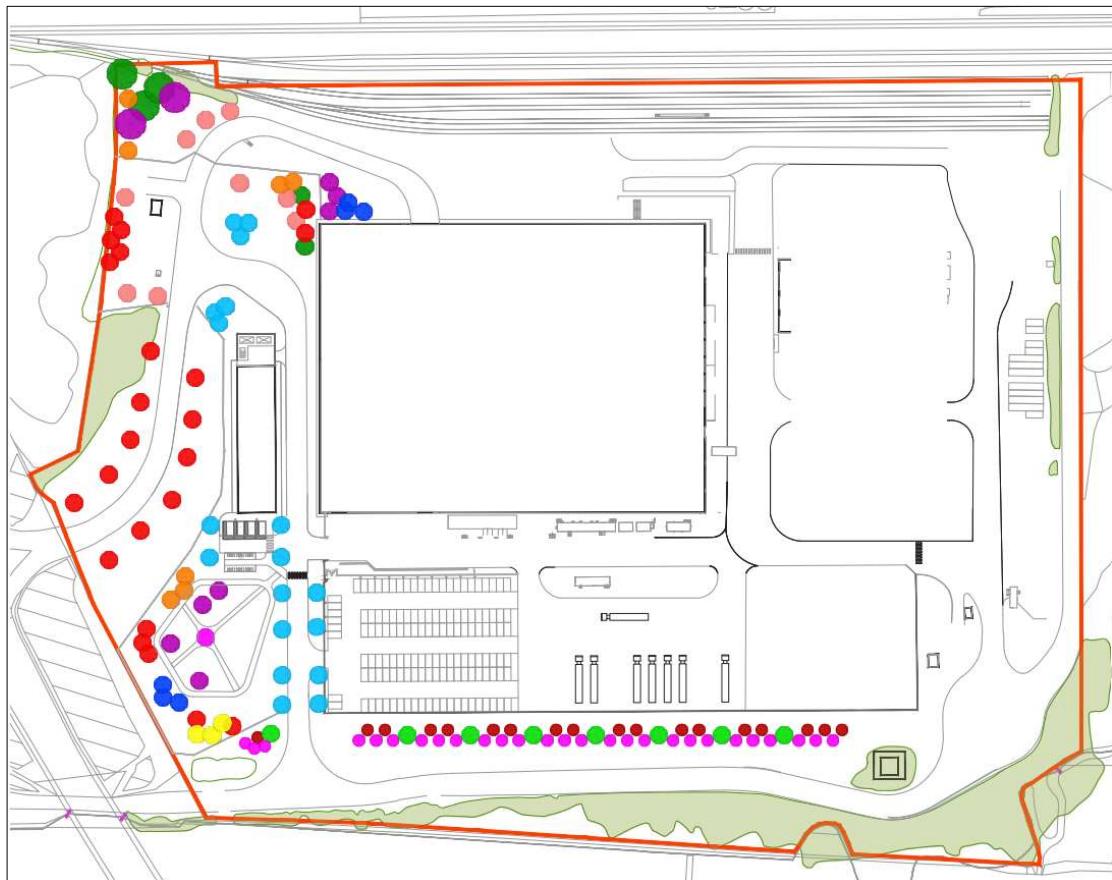
*Proposed indicative landscaping plan*

4.26 Substantial landscaping is proposed in the area currently occupied by the two administrative buildings, and ancillary structures to be demolished to enhance the setting and amenity of the site and create a 'break out' space for staff. This will be formed by informal paths, benches and tables, and areas of wildflowers.

4.27 The area just south of the main operational building on-site and enclosed by the access roads, and other underutilised areas of the site, will be planted with wildflowers and where possible trees to improve visual amenity and biodiversity.

4.28 The proposed new building will also, as highlighted previously, utilise green walls on its south and east facing elevations to enhance the appearance and ecological interest of the site.

4.29 The application indicates that the changes associated with the proposed comprehensive landscaping scheme will achieve a net gain in biodiversity significantly more than the 10% required by recent Government legislation. The proposals will enhance a range of biodiversity habitat through the provision of neutral grassland planting and native shrub planting proposed across the site, as well as the enhancement of the area towards the southern extent of the site closest to the strategic road network, and the native hedgerow planting.



*Proposed tree planting strategy – new trees in coloured dots. Existing trees/hedges/shrubs in green to be retained/managed*

### **Parking**

4.30 The site currently accommodates approximately 133 car parking spaces, with 4 disabled bays and 8 EV chargers and as per the previous application for temporary consent P/12244/009.

4.31 As proposed, the site will provide approximately 139 car parking spaces including 4 disabled spaces and incorporate more EV infrastructure to provide 20% of spaces with EV chargers.

4.32 Approximately 48 secure, covered and lit cycle parking spaces will be provided to serve the permanent use.

4.33 The HGV parking, turning and servicing areas will remain largely unchanged.

## **Lighting**

4.34 The proposed lighting for the site has been considered having regard to its setting and immediate environment and use. The existing lighting will be maintained across most of the site with revised and new lighting arrangements proposed in relation to the new replacement building, car park and footpath.

4.35 Illumination along the site's boundaries will be restricted and designed to minimise light spill, impact on natural habitats and optimise energy efficiency whilst complying with the operational and security needs of the site.

## **Drainage**

4.36 Drainage arrangements will essentially remain as existing on-site. The Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the application confirms that the existing on-site infrastructure is sufficient to meet the needs of the development longer-term, but that there is an opportunity for betterment.

4.37 In removing the existing temporary buildings and the associated hardstanding, a number of previously impermeable areas will be made permeable with extensive new landscaping. Surface water run-off rates can be restricted to a level equivalent to a greenfield site using a flow control chamber with attenuation in the form of a modular crate system, pipes and manholes.

## **5.0 Application site**

5.1 The site operates as a key construction/maintenance logistics facility for Heathrow Airport which is located just over half a mile to the south-west and has done so for over 20 years on a temporary basis. It occupies approximately 9.78 hectares of land comprising a range of industrial buildings and structures, access roads, rail sidings, car and lorry parking and external storage areas, grassland, mixed scrub and boundary woodland.



*Aerial photograph of existing site and surrounding area looking north*

5.2 The West Drayton-Poyle branch railway forms the sites western boundary, with the Lakeside Industrial Estate located on the other side accommodating a range of industrial and storage related uses including the Grundon Waste from Energy facility. Further significant industrial areas lie to the south in Poyle, across the A4 Colnbrook By-pass which sits across the southern end of the site. The M25 motorway runs parallel to the east of the site, with open land beyond extending to Heathrow Airport. An asphalt industrial use and woodland lie immediately to the north with the M25/M4 motorway junction beyond.

5.3 Whilst the site and its surrounding area is largely industrial and agricultural in nature, there are residential properties over 500m to the south in Poyle, neighbouring the industrial estates and stretching to Colnbrook.



*Aerial photograph of existing site and surrounding area looking south*

5.4 Due to the flat topography of the site and surrounding area, views are limited to the immediate vicinity. Given however the semi-urban nature of the surrounding area, views of the site for the most part are obstructed by intervening built forms. Where the site is visible, it is seen in the context of existing development, including the M4 and M25 motorways, Heathrow Airport and the large-scale commercial buildings adjacent on Lakeside Road.

5.5 The site is located within the Green Belt and the Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London as defined by planning policy, and within the Colne Valley Regional Park. Whilst the Site is located within the Colne Valley Regional Park, there are no Public Rights of Way across the site; and due to the severance created by the adjoining major transport routes and industrial and commercial development, the site is not connected to it physically.

5.6 There are no designated heritage assets located within the site nor are there any within its immediate vicinity. Approximately 1km to the south-east of the Site, beyond the M25, there is a collection of listed buildings at Harmondsworth. Approximately 1km to the south-west of the site is Colnbrook Conservation Area. The site is separated from the Conservation Area by the A4 Colnbrook Bypass and Lakeside Energy from Waste Plant with the Lakeside Industrial Estate.

- 5.7 The site falls within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding – land assessed as having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding from rivers and sea), as highlighted in the Environment Agency Flood Maps.
- 5.8 The site is adjacent to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the neighbouring borough of Hillingdon and a newly created AQMA at Brands Hill within the Borough of Slough.
- 5.9 In respect to ecological interest, the habitats present on site are widespread and of local geographical value. As highlighted by the Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) accompanying the application, bird nesting and limited reptile habitats are present on-site and whilst no evidence of either species was recorded, there is the potential for badgers and hedgehogs to utilise the on-site habitats. A preliminary habitat assessment identified that no buildings or trees on-site supported any potential roost features that could be utilised by bats. The site however, was identified to provide suitable foraging and commuting habitats for bats around the edges where there is mixed scrub and deciduous woodland, and good connectivity to the wider landscape.
- 5.10 There is one internationally designated statutory site within 6km of the site – the South West London Waterbodies Special Protection Area (SPA), two nationally designated sites, the Wrysbury Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Staines Moore SSSI and one regionally designated site, the Arthur Jacob Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The Site also falls within several Site of Special Scientific Interest Impact Risk Zones but the Proposed Development does not meet the criteria for consultation with Natural England.

## 6.0 Site History

- 6.1 The most relevant planning history for the site is presented below (most recent first):

- P/12244/014 Request for an Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion  
Under consideration
- P/12244/010 Submission of details pursuant to condition 12 (Air Quality Mitigation) of planning permission P/12244/009 dated 09/04/2019  
Condition discharged with informatics - 21 Aug 2019
- P/20367/000 Temporary logistics centre for the testing, screening, delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of Heathrow related development projects, incorporating administration buildings, rail sidings, gantry crane, cement building, and car and lorry parking. The provision of a temporary remote goods screening centre for goods entering Heathrow airport and secure screening of passengers prior to their entering of Heathrow Airport with associated storage. Means of

access, drainage infrastructure, boundary treatments, landscaping and other ancillary works. (Change in Application Description – Revised Plans and Documents Received 15/01/2019)

Approved with conditions, informatics - 9 April 2019

P/12244/007 Application to vary condition 01 of planning permission reference P/12244/000 dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 2003 (as amended) for the retention of a temporary logistics centre for the delivery storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of Heathrow related construction projects, incorporating inter alia rail sidings, bulk powder storage facility, steel reinforcement fabrication facility, administration buildings, and car and lorry parking, for a further temporary period up to 31st December 2018

Approved with conditions, informatics - 25 March 2010

P/12244/006 Variation of conditions 7, 8, and 18 of Permission P/12244 to allow use of Colnbrook Logistics Centre for Heathrow related construction projects (within the timescale of the existing consent and to enable a limited number of night-time road movements from the site

Approved with conditions, informatics - 16 January 2007

P/12244/000 Temporary logistics centre for the delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of T5, incorporating inter alia rail sidings, bulk powder storage facility, steel, reinforcement fabrication facility, administration buildings, and car and lorry parking

Approved with conditions, informatics - 21 October 2003

P/09924/005 Temporary Period for a Construction Logistics Facility (County Matter)

Approved with conditions - 20 November 2001

Neighbouring site history – Aggregate Depot, Colnbrook By-pass, Slough, SL3 0EB:

P/11133/010 Erection of asphalt plant, reconfiguration of storage bays (5 covered), office block, workshop and associated parking

Approved with conditions, informatics - 16 November 2007

The application was referred to the Government Office for the South East (as was) for consideration, who declined to call the application in stating:

“The Secretary of State has concluded that there is not sufficient conflict in this case with national policies on the above matters, or other sufficient reason, to warrant calling the application in for her own determination. The Secretary of State is of the view that the applicant appears to have taken PPG2 into account and have accepted that the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Gren Belt. The Local Planning Authority has accepted that there are very special circumstances, which outweigh the harm causes by the development. The Secretary of State is satisfied that issues raised to not related to matters of more than local importance, she has therefore decided that the decision as to whether to grant planning permission in this case will remain with Slough Borough Council”

P/11133/013 Application for a new planning permission to replace an existing planning permission, P/11133/010 dated 16 November 2007 for the erection of an asphalt plant, reconfiguration of storage bays (5 covered), office block, workshop and associated parking

Approved with conditions, informatives - 18 January 2011

This permission simply extended the time limit for implementing planning permission ref: P/11133/010.

#### **7.0 Neighbour Notification**

7.1 In accordance with Article 15 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), 5 site notices were displayed around the site on 30/04/2024 advertising the application as a major application and a Departure to the Development Plan. The application was also advertised as a major application and a Departure to the Development Plan in the 03/05/2024 edition of The Slough Express.

7.2 Following the receipt of amended plans and additional information as requested by SBC Planning Officers, 5 further site notices were displayed around the site on 26/03/2025 and another press notice issued in The Slough Express on 21/03/2025 notifying the public of the amended application.

7.3 No representations have been received following public consultation.

#### **8.0 Consultation**

8.1 **SBC Transport/Highways:**

- Introduction

A consultation response from the Local Highways Authority is provided below for planning application No. P/12244/012.

A TA produced by STANTEC has been submitted in support of the planning application.

The TA outlines that planning permission is sought for: 'The continued/permanent use of testing, screening, delivery, storage and assembly of materials and components related to the construction of Heathrow related development projects. This includes the retention of existing remote goods screening centre for the secure screening of goods and materials; prior to entering Heathrow Airport and storage'.

- Vehicle Access

The LHA have no objection to the planning application due to continued use of the existing vehicle access junction to the site. The existing site has a left in/left out vehicle access with lane taper/merges for deceleration and acceleration. The A4 Colnbrook Bypass is subject to a 50mph speed limit in this location. The access deceleration taper would be amended to accommodate a toucan crossing; and swept paths have been provided which demonstrate a 16.5m articulated lorry can enter the site at 30km/hour (Drawing No. 333100454/STN/HGN/XX/DR/TX/5509-Rev-P01, dated 25.03.25, titled 'Colnbrook By-Pass Pedestrian Visibility and Swept Path Analysis').

The site access benefits from suitable visibility. On this section of A4, the collision record is 0 collisions causing injury recorded in the last 5-year period for which data is available. The nearest collisions were 450m west (Lakeside Rd) and 650m east (Stanwell Moor Road) and cannot be attributed to the site.

The site access also serves the 'Aggregate Industries' site to the north. The planning application does not propose the change or removal of vehicle access for the Aggregate Industries site. It is understood vehicle access to Aggregate industries will continue unchanged.

The NPPF states in Paragraphs 115 and 117 that applications for development should provide 'Safe and suitable access' and 'minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles'.

- Toucan Crossing Access for Pedestrians and Cyclists.

SEGRO have agreed to provide a Toucan Crossing on the A4 and a new pavement within the site to ensure safe access for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users. The drawing is titled 'Colnbrook By-pass Existing

Layout and Proposed Layout', dated 25.03.25, Drawing No. 333100454/STN/HGN/XX/DR/TX/5508).

The crossing and pavement would be delivered by SEGRO. It has been demonstrated that suitable visibility can be provided in each direction from the crossing in accordance with the 50mph speed limit. The crossing would be delivered solely using public highway controlled by Slough BC and land within SEGRO ownership.

The LHA require a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit to be completed as an obligation of the Section 106 agreement. This obligation is agreed with SEGRO. The RSA should be completed by an independent road safety auditor on Slough's approved list. The Stage 1 RSA will obtain an independent view of any possible safety problems and need for amendments, signage, overhead signal heads or localised speed limit reduction.

The Toucan Crossing was requested by officers on the basis that the NPPF states in Paragraphs 115 and 117 that applications for development should provide: 'Safe and suitable access for all users' 'ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised, taking account of the vision for the site' and 'give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements...facilitating access to high quality public transport'.

- Travel Plan

The LHA accept the Staff Travel Plan (STP) submitted in support of the application. A condition should be agreed requiring the site to operate in accordance with the Staff Travel Plan.

50 staff (25%) per day could arrive by public transport, walking and cycling using the applicant's target, that 25% of the 200 staff arrive using these modes. This demonstrates the need for the toucan crossing on the A4 Colnbrook Bypass.

The Travel Plan sets the following targets for staff travel to the CLC:

- 65% to travel by Single Vehicle Occupancy Car Journey;
- 13% to travel by Public Transport to/from the site;
- 12% to travel by walking/cycling to/from the site;
- 8% to travel by car sharing.

The STP outlines a Travel Plan Coordinator will be appointed who will liaise with the 200 staff on site to promote a cycle to work scheme, Heathrow Car Sharing scheme, provide basic cycle maintenance equipment, provide travel awareness days and coordinate travel surveys of staff travel mode.

- Access by Sustainable Travel Modes

The LHA considers if feasible for staff living in Slough to travel to site by bus. The combination of the No. 7 and A4 Bus services means there are 7 buses per hour to and from Slough Town Centre, Langley and Heathrow.

- Bus stops are 620 metres (8 minutes' walk) from the site at Lakeside Road on the A4 Colnbrook Bypass.
- The No. A4 offers 4 buses per hour to/from Langley, Slough Town Centre, Slough Trading Estate, Cippenham and Heathrow Central Bus Station.
- The No. 7 provides 3 buses per hour to/from Britwell, Farnham Road, Slough Town Centre, Langley High Street and Heathrow Terminal 5.

- Existing Trip Generation and Temporary Use

A TA was produced by WA Fairhurst and Partners for temporary use (Dated 2009, Planning Ref: P/12244/007). That TA forecast approximately 2,000 two-way delivery movements, which equals an average of 91 two-way HGV movements per day (based on an average of 22 working days per month). Condition 8 of permission no. P/12244/007 set a cap of average 2,000 HGV movements per month and no more than 2,750 lorry movements during any one calendar month.

- Trip Generation of Permanent Use

The LHA have no objection due to vehicle trips generated by permanent operation of the logistics centre. The TA forecasts 382 two-way vehicle trips per day which will be generated by the proposed logistics centre.

The TA forecasts 100 two-way HGV trips which would equal 2,200 monthly two-way HGV Trips (22 working days).

The 2200 HGV movements per month would equal a 10% increase in HGV numbers compared to the cap of 2,000 HGV movements per via Condition 8 of permission no. P/12244/007.

The full trip forecast from the TA is shown below. The forecast assumes a 50% increase in staff/visitor trips in anticipation of future growth. This is based on information from Heathrow.

Table 4.1: Daily average two-way vehicle trips

Type	Daily Average Flow Two-way Trips
HGV	100
Car / Van	138
Staff / Visitor	144
Overall	382

The TA forecasts that this will equal 17 two-way vehicle trips per hour given that the CLC operates a total of 22 hours per day.

Table 4.2: Traffic Impact

Link	DFT AADT Flows		Development Flows		CLC Impact %	
	Total	HGV	Total	HGV	Total	HGV
A4 Colnbrook Bypass East	18,044	1,212	113	40	1%	3%
A4 Colnbrook Bypass West	16,786	2,131	169	60	1%	3%

Source: DFT and Consultants calculations

The LHA do not expect a noticeable impact on the Colnbrook Bypass given the forecast number of vehicles will equal a 1% increase to the total no. of vehicles and a 3% increase to the total number of HGVs using the western and eastern halves of the bypass.

The NPPF Para 115 states that '*Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe*'.

The LHA requires the submission of a routing plan, monitoring strategy and provision of ANPR cameras to monitor direction of HGV traffic travelling to/from the site.

- Car Parking

The LHA are satisfied with the proposed number of car parking spaces. Approximately 133 car parking spaces are proposed on site with 4 disabled bays and 8 EV Chargers. The documents submitted estimate that there could be up to 200 staff employed at the site.

Slough Parking Standards for B2 and B8 Use				
Land Use (17,048sq.m)	Lorries per Sq.m	Cars per Sq.m	Car Spaces Required	Lorry Spaces Required
B2 Car Parking Land Use	Min. 1 to 500m <sup>2</sup> .	1 to 50m <sup>2</sup>	340	34
B8 Car Parking Land Use	Min. 1 to 500m <sup>2</sup> upto 2000m <sup>2</sup> then 1 to 1000m <sup>2</sup>	1 to 200m <sup>2</sup>	85	19

Source: Slough Developers Guide – Part 3: Highways and Transport (2008).

The site provides 17,048sq.m of B2/B8 Land Use (according to the application forms). The Slough Parking standards would require 85 spaces for B8 Land Use or 340 parking spaces if the standard for B2 Land Use is applied to the development. The 133 car parking spaces provided therefore strike a balance between the number required for B2 use and the number required for B8 use.

- Blue Badge

The existing 4 disabled bays will be retained which equals 3% of the 133 car parking spaces provided on site.

Inclusive Mobility (2021) recommends 5% of parking spaces at newly built employment premises are designed to an accessible standard with a 1200mm access strip. DfT data released in March 2023 showed that 4.6% of the UK population (2.57 million people) hold a valid blue badge.

- Electric Vehicle Parking

The TA states that 20% of car parking spaces will be fitted with EV Chargers. This is considered acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of the Slough Low Emissions Strategy.

The Slough Low Emissions Strategy (2018 – 2025) requires the provision of EV Charging Points for new dwellings with allocated parking. The National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 112 requires applications for development to: 'Be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible, and convenient locations'.

This meets the requirements of the Slough Low Emissions Strategy (2018 – 2025) which requires the provision of one EV Charging Point per dwelling for new dwellings with allocated parking. The National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 112 requires applications for development to: 'Be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible, and convenient locations'. An appropriately worded planning condition should require the applicant to submit details of charger specification and power supply and complete installation prior to the occupation of the development.

- Cycle Parking

The LHA have no objection to the cycle parking provision for the proposed facility. Approximately 46 cycle parking spaces are proposed which are

proposed using stands in an external shelter. Details of the store shall be secured via an appropriate condition.

The cycle spaces exceeds the SBC Parking Standards which require a minimum of 34 cycle parking spaces, with a requirement of 1 cycle parking space per 500sq.m for B2 and B8 Industrial Land Uses.

- Deliveries, Servicing and Refuse Collection

The LHA have no objection to the proposed delivery and servicing arrangements for the application site.

It is recommended that a Delivery and Servicing Plan (DSP) is secured by a suitably worded planning condition which includes a routing plan for HGVs associated with the operation of the site. The DSP is also required to include installation of ANPR cameras which monitor the direction of HGVs arriving/departing the site.

- Construction Impact

If planning permission is granted, then the Local Highways Authority require the applicant provide a Construction Management Plan (CMP) which details control measures for construction and construction routes for traffic. The CMP can be secured by planning condition.

- Summary and Conclusions

The LHA confirm there would be no objection to the proposed development on highways and transport grounds. This position is subject to SEGRO completing a Stage 1 RSA (secured through Section 106) and entering into a Section 278 agreement for the delivery of the Toucan Crossing.

The LHA recommend the agreement of conditions related to vehicle access, car parking, cycle parking, electric vehicle charging, HGV routing and construction management.

## 8.2 SBC Environmental Services:

- Air quality

*Assessment scope - an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) has been prepared by Stantec in support of this application.*

The assessment considers two main aspects, presented in Section 1.2 – the suitability of the site for the proposed end users, and the operational impact on air quality and receptors in terms of NO<sub>2</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub> and PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations.

Heating systems have not been included in the assessment, with the report stating, “it is recommended that an assessment is undertaken at the detailed design stage of the development should a centralised combustion-based heating plant be proposed”. It is expected that any heating system that comes forward will comply with Table 7 of the Low Emission Strategy as a minimum, which will be required via condition.

The applicant has provided a summary of emissions associated with railway lines, making reference to SBCs own monitoring in proximity to railway lines, and explained that Defra have not identified the railway line to the west as having a high proportion of diesel trains. This suggests that emissions from the railway line are not expected to impact the proposed development.

The applicant has also outlined how the line is not currently used operationally due to capacity limits, and that although there is an agreement between HAL and Aggregate Industries for HAL to use the railway line in future, only the existing rail capacity will be utilised, therefore indicating that an increase in rail movements will not occur. This therefore led to the scoping out of rail emissions. This response is accepted.

The impact of the construction phase has not been considered in the assessment, stating that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including a dust assessment, will be conditioned. To justify the omission of a construction traffic assessment, predicted construction vehicle movements (HGVs and staff vehicles) should be provided to demonstrate that thresholds within EPUK / IAQM guidance are not exceeded.

The applicant's response explains that vehicle movements associated with access, demolition and construction will vary throughout the construction programme, with short peaks of HGV movements, which reduce when averaged over a full year. It has still not been clarified however how many vehicles are expected during these peak periods. The applicant has confirmed that a CEMP will be implemented, which considers HGV and other construction traffic movements, including details of routing and times of day of movements. As the construction vehicle volumes have not been confirmed, the CEMP will need to include measures which protect air quality in Slough. As such, the CEMP will also need to include the following:

- No construction vehicles shall access the site via Brands Hill or Colnbrook, to avoid travelling through Slough's AQMA 2.
- All construction vehicles shall meet Euro 6/VI emission standards.
- All NRMM shall meet Stage IIIB, in line with Table 10 of the Slough Low Emission Strategy.
- The CEMP shall outline details of dust and noise control during the construction programme and will reference dust control measures presented in IAQM “guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction”, January 2024.

*Guidance and methodology* - Section 2 of the AQA presents the legislation, policy and guidance considered in the assessment. All information presented is appropriate and is accepted.

Section 3 of the AQA presents the methodology followed in the assessment. The assessment considers the impact of the proposed development using a baseline year of 2022, modelling the existing baseline and a 'do something' scenario. The report explains that 2022 has been used to reduce uncertainties associated with future year vehicle emissions and background pollutant concentrations. This along with the uncertainties and assumptions outlined in Section 3.4 and air quality impact significance criteria outlined in Section 3.5 are accepted.

*Baseline environment* - the baseline environment is outlined in Section 4 of the AQA, including a description of the study area, sensitive receptor locations (both existing and proposed) and ambient air quality. The choice of receptors has been clearly explained and focuses on junctions where traffic impacts are expected to be the greatest, with a supporting map shown in Appendix F.

*Predicted impacts* - in relation to site suitability, presented in Section 5.1, concentrations of pollutants have been modelled at the three selected proposed receptors to determine whether they will be impacted by exposure to existing air quality. Table 5-1 indicates that NO2, PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations are all below their respective objective levels and are therefore considered acceptable. The applicant has explained that the complete development modelling has been based on 2022 emission factors and background concentrations, which includes the baseline scenario and the full permanent application development flows. The resultant concentrations at receptors PR1 to PR3 are below the relevant AQOs, therefore demonstrating that detrimental impacts are not expected at these receptors. This response is accepted.

The operational phase road traffic emission impact assessment, presented in Section 5.2, considers the impacts at six existing worst-case receptors. The applicant has confirmed that 60 HDVs travel west along the Colnbrook Bypass and 40 HDVs travel east along the Colnbrook Bypass, and this is the arrangement that has been assessed in the air quality assessment.

Results from the modelling of pollutant concentrations without and with the development are presented in Tables 5-2 to 5-4 for NO2, PM10 and PM2.5, with each showing the change in emissions at 0%, which is considered negligible. As such, no mitigation is proposed (although it is noted in the

transport assessment that electric vehicle charging infrastructure will be provided to support the uptake of EVs).

Receptor R3 appears to be located closest to Slough Borough Council's continuous monitor in Brands Hill (SLH 11), within approximately 40m. Within Table 5-2, the predicted concentration in 2022 without the development was  $21.9\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . The grid reference indicates that this point is approximately 6.5m from the roadside. Monitored data for SLH 11 indicates the annual average for 2022 was  $36.8\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , which when distance corrected to the nearest receptor (8.4m from the monitor), was  $32.2\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . This is still over  $10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  more than the model has predicted, despite this receptor being further from the road than R3. It is understood that the model has limitations, however this discrepancy does not give the council confidence in the results and there is potential that the impact may be greater than presented.

The applicant has provided a short review of the monitoring data at SLH 11 and the activity occurring nearby the monitoring station, to explain the elevated levels recorded in 2022. The applicant stated that construction works resulted in "putting traffic closer to the monitor location which had resulted in the higher concentrations being recorded in 2021 and 2022", however the westbound traffic that is nearest the monitoring station had not moved during this period. It is correct however that significant construction works were ongoing during this time, and it is possible that traffic congestion due to the reduction in vehicle lanes had contributed towards an increase in concentrations during 2021 and 2022.

To compare, receptor R2 most closely aligns with SBCs monitoring location SLO 32. The modelled concentration at R2 in 2022 was  $25.2\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , whereas the monitored data at SLO 32 was  $22.2\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . Likewise, receptor R1 which most closely corresponds with SLO 28 had a modelled result of  $28.1\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , and a monitored result of  $28.8\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ . This therefore suggests that the  $>10\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  discrepancy only exists at the SLH 11 site, likely as a result of isolated local influences. As such, this response is accepted.

The model verification process is presented in Appendix D, which compares the modelled concentrations to the monitored concentrations at four diffusion tube sites in the study area. It is stated in Table D-1 that SLH 11 and the accompanying triplicate diffusion tubes were not considered for verification due to the presence of a bus stop. It is understood that the temporary bus stop at this location was introduced in 2023, therefore this site remains suitable for verification. The sites chosen for model verification were SLO 10, SLO 28, SLO 23 and SLO 39. The Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) was calculated at  $3.4\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , which falls within the acceptable range defined by Defra.

As requested, the applicant has re-run the verification exercise with the SLH 11 site included. The calculated Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) has

increased to 5.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , which remains within the acceptable range defined by Defra (0-10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). The with and without development scenario results show an increase in concentrations relative to the previous assessment, however the increase as a result of the scheme remains low (maximum 0.1 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  increase). As such, the conclusions of the assessment remain the same. This is therefore accepted.

*Summary* – overall, all matters are resolved, pending acceptance of additional requirements for the CEMP.

- Noise

*Assessment scope* - a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) has been prepared by Stantec in support of this application (dated February 2024). The assessment aims to assess the likely noise impacts at nearby noise sensitive receptors and determine the mitigation required to meet the proposed assessment criteria outlined in Section 2.

It is acknowledged in Section 2.4 that the site is located next to other industrial uses and the M25, with the nearest dwellings approximately 500m to the south-west. As such, activities such as loading of HGVs which occurs within the warehouse are not likely to be audible at the nearest receptor. The report therefore focuses on road traffic noise increase resulting from increased vehicle movements only.

*Road traffic noise impact* - the traffic noise assessment considers the change in AAWT 18-hour traffic flows on 11 road links, with and without the development in the opening year of 2024, following DMRB guidance. The calculations indicate that at most, noise levels increase by +0.1dB on four road links, whilst all others show no change. The report states that this is indicative of a negligible impact. This is accepted.

*HGV pass-by impact* - the assessment has also considered the impact of HGV pass-by noise during the night. The baseline has been quantified using Defra noise mapping data, which is based on road traffic flows and does not include industrial or commercial noise sources. As such, it is likely that the baseline noise level is higher than presented in the noise maps. The noise maps indicate that noise levels at residential properties 10m from the Colnbrook Bypass are 65dB LAeq8h. If a single HGV pass-by is considered to be 82dB at 10m, the report states that all 60 HGVs travelling at night would result in a sound level of 55dB LAeq8h at 10m at Colnbrook Bypass, which is 10dB below existing sound levels. This would be indicative of low impact. The calculations are accepted.

*Additional considerations* - the assessment has not considered the construction phase of the development; however, it is expected that a

Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be adequate in controlling noise on site, which will be required via condition.

The assessment has also not considered the noise levels that may impact the new purpose-built facility. Typically noise monitoring is conducted on site to determine the required specifications for glazing and ventilation, to ensure internal noise levels specified within BS8233 can be met. This information will therefore be required via condition.

*Summary* - the information provided in the report indicates that the noise impact of the development on existing receptors is low, and this has been demonstrated by supporting calculations.

Noise impacts during construction have not been considered, however a CEMP will be sufficient to control noise during this phase. On site receptors have not been considered in the assessment and it is likely that future occupants will be impacted by noise unless mitigated. This is therefore required as a condition.

### **8.3 SBC Urban Design Advisor:**

- The applicant has positively addressed comments made at pre-application stage. However, an alternative cladding option for the new Welfare Building should be explored which may be more appropriate for this industrial related use and additional details sought in respect to the proposed planted wall system to provide reassurance that the vegetation will remain viable longer-term.

The additional information submitted considers alternative materials and provides further justification for the use of the proposed cladding and details concerning the planted wall system. It is recommended that conditions are applied to any consent to ensure appropriate materials are selected and used and that the planted wall system is appropriately installed and managed.

### **8.3 SBC Planning Policy:**

- Given facility has been there for so long operating in connection with Heathrow under the temporary permissions, it has demonstrated it is commercially viable/necessary and thus meets the Strategic Gap test that it is essential to be in that location. The agreement to a contribution to the CVP is also met in principle so no strategic objection.

### **8.4 SBC Contaminated Land:**

- Based on the Phase 1 Desk Study prepared, it is recommended that further ground investigation is undertaken to determine the extent of the potential contaminants and soil gas. Appropriate planning conditions should therefore

be applied to the consent to ensure further work is carried out and any risks identified are mitigated appropriately.

**8.5 SBC Local Flood Officer:**

- No objection subject to appropriate planning conditions and informatics.

**8.6 Berkshire Archaeology:**

- There are no predicted archaeological impacts expected from this development, which is in an area previously impacted by gravel extraction.

**8.7 Environment Agency:**

- No objection subject to appropriate planning conditions.

**8.8 Natural England:**

- Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

No objection - based on the plans submitted, Natural England considers that the proposed development will not have significant adverse impacts on statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.

**8.9 Colne Valley Regional Park Authority (CVRPA):**

- This application is to make permanent the existing temporary building. The site is within the Colne Valley Regional Park and the Green Belt. Very Special Circumstances (VSC) need to be demonstrated for this application to be approved.

We believe that as the building has been in situ for a considerable time and is still a vital piece of infrastructure for Heathrow Airport, it may now be considered a brownfield site within the GB. The VSC may now exist providing there is sufficient mitigation in place to compensate for loss of Green Belt and of land within the CVRP. See Slough Borough Plan policies CG1 and 2. The developer is also providing more than the minimum for biodiversity net gain, as well as landscaping.

The land in question is within the strategic gap in the Green Belt between the London Borough of Hillingdon and Slough Borough. This is significant, and previous applications on other sites have failed at this hurdle. However, due to its requirements in connection with the airport and in particular its rail access, VSC may apply to this site in terms of its essential location. Nevertheless, this strategic gap in the Green Belt is protected by Slough Local Plan Policy and should be compensated for.

The Colne Valley Regional Park is under significant pressure from cumulative developments all claiming Very Special Circumstances. This is harmful to the six objectives of the CVRP (of which Slough Borough Council is a supporter) and is contrary to the Slough Local Plan policy which seeks to:

- maintain and enhance the landscape and waterscape of the Park and
- resist urbanisation of the countryside and
- conserve nature conservation and
- provide opportunities for countryside recreation.

We believe S106 mitigation for this application can enable those aims to be achieved. It would need to be appropriate for the application's significant impact on the CVRP, ensuring specific outcomes – including those in the Green Infrastructure Strategy – are delivered.

The proposed package of works to be delivered via a Section 106 agreement is agreed including:

- A financial contribution of £80,000 to the Colne Valley Partnership for improvements to the Colne Valley Trail and rivers.
- An annual financial contribution of £28,000 to the Colne Valley Partnership for a period of five years (£140,000 total) for countryside management to enhance the landscape in the vicinity of the site.

Relevant payment shall be made upon commencement of development and be index linked.

#### 8.10 Heathrow Airport:

- Heathrow supports this planning application on the basis that the CLC is retained for its sole use.

Heathrow has operated the CLC since 2003, first for the construction of Terminal 5, then for ongoing airport related projects such as Terminal 2 and other capital projects ranging from maintenance to investment. The CLC continues to perform an important and critical function for the operation and

development of the airport, and Heathrow needs the CLC to continue in its current role.

The CLC remains vital in its current capacity to successful operations across the Heathrow capital programme and wider operations. This maps forward into future requirements - Routine works supported are varied and range, not least, across new builds and demolition works, rebuilds, refurbishments and repairs. These occur across the whole airport site, including terminals, runways, taxi ways, control posts, security lanes and multistorey car parks. Multiple projects run simultaneously, involving landside and airside, tunnels and maintenance above and below ground. The Site is a vital mechanism in facilitating the correct output of staff and materials securely to each project location.

In terms of the future tempo of delivery for capital infrastructure, the site and capability remain an essential element of the planning process, saving significant vehicle and material movement. Operating day and night, it is consistently busy supporting not just the capital projects, but importantly engineering and maintenance requirements that keep Heathrow core functions operational. The site performs a rapid support and reaction role for fast moving and critical spares to get to the point of need at short notice.

In addition to capital projects, local engineering and operational support the slightly more sensitive element is support to the Home Office. The security screening of secure passengers is still conducted remotely from the airport on site and is conducted, prior to removal from the UK; this activity is also on an upward trajectory and keeps potentially volatile passengers away from the public.

In summary, amid a real time growing demand across all areas, any interruption to the CLC operation at Colnbrook, could have a significant impact on the successful delivery of Heathrow day to day operations and hence, to critical national infrastructure. It would be difficult to overstate the potential impact of such disruption.

Should the CLC cease operation, finding an alternative site of the same scale and level of accessibility to the airport would likely prove to be difficult. It is more likely that an alternate location would have to be found further from the airport, which would be sub-optimal in terms of efficiency and sustainability.

#### **8.11 Heathrow Airport Limited - Aircraft Safeguarding:**

- The proposed development has been examined from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective and could conflict with safeguarding criteria unless any permission granted is subject to the condition detailed below.

- Submission of a Glint & Glare Assessment

No solar panels shall be installed until a glint and glare assessment has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. No subsequent alterations to the approved scheme are to take place unless submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the development does not endanger the safe movement of aircraft or the operation of Heathrow Airport. The airport requires a glint and glare assessment to be completed to determine the full impact on Air Traffic Control Tower.

We will need to object to these proposals unless the above-mentioned condition is applied to any planning permission.

**8.12 National Highways:**

- Recommend that conditions should be attached to any planning permission that may be granted.

**8.13 Network Rail:**

- Network Rail has no objections in principle to the above application.

Network Rail have been in contact with SERGO regarding the creation of a new access route to access the railway at this location. Network Rail would welcome further updates from the developer on the progress of these discussions.

As part of the new proposed development there should be no stockpiling of materials and/or components as part of the testing, screening, delivery, [related to the construction of Heathrow projects] in proximity to the railway infrastructure.

This location is identified as being in the NR Landfill referral layer. Any new development should ensure that suitable mitigation is undertaken to prevent these soil gases affecting the new buildings/utilises etc.

**8.14 Health and Safety Executive:**

- This application does not fall within the Consultation Distance Zones of either a Major Hazard Site or Major Accident Hazard Pipeline.

This application does not fall within the Consultation Distance Zones of either a Major Hazard Site or Major Accident Hazard Pipeline.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is a statutory consultee for certain developments within the consultation distance of Major Hazard Sites and Major Accident Hazard Pipelines.

HSE has no comment to make on the application.

**8.15    Thames Water:**

- With regard to surface water drainage, Thames Water would advise that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water we would have no objection.

Thames Water would advise that with regard to waste water network and sewage works infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application, based on the information provided.

In relation to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company.

**8.16    Cadent Gas Ltd:**

- No response received.

**8.17    Spelthorne Borough Council:**

- No objection to the proposed development.

**8.18    London Borough of Hillingdon:**

- No response received.

**8.19    Buckinghamshire County Council:**

- No objection to the proposed development.

**8.20    Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead:**

- No response received.

**8.21    Colnbrook with Poyle Parish Council:**

- Advise that following the application being discussed at the Parish Council meeting on 10th September, no objections or questions were raised as to the details of the application.

## **PART B: PLANNING APPRAISAL**

### **9.0 Policy Background**

9.1 The following policies are considered most relevant to the assessment of this application:

### **9.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024**

The relevant chapters within the National Planning Policy Framework are:

Chapter 2. Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4. Decision-making

Chapter 6: Building a strong, competitive economy

Chapter 8. Promoting healthy and safe communities

Chapter 9. Promoting sustainable transport

Chapter 10: Supporting high quality communications

Chapter 11. Making effective use of land

Chapter 12. Achieving well-designed places

Chapter 13: Protecting Green Belt land

Chapter 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Chapter 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that decisions should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development which means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date granting permission unless:
  - the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed (footnote 7); or
  - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

*Footnote 7 notes that the policies referred to are those in the NPPF (rather than those in development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 180) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage*

*assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 67); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.*

9.3 The Slough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy 2006 – 2026, Development Plan Document, (December 2008)

Core Policy 1 – Spatial Strategy  
Core Policy 2 – Green Belt and Open Spaces  
Core Policy 5 – Employment  
Core Policy 7 – Transport  
Core Policy 8 – Sustainability and the Environment  
Core Policy 9 – Natural and Built Environment  
Core Policy 10 – Infrastructure  
Core Policy 11 – Social Cohesiveness  
Core Policy 12 – Community Safety

9.4 The Local Plan for Slough, Adopted March 2004

Policy CG1 – Colne Valley Park  
Policy CG9 – Strategic Gap  
Policy EN1 – Standard of Design  
Policy EN3 – Landscaping Requirements  
Policy EN5 – Design and Crime Prevention  
Policy EN6 – Interference with Telecommunication Signals  
Policy EN17 – Locally Listed Buildings  
Policy EN22 – Protection of Sites with Nature Conservation Interest  
Policy EN34 – Utility Infrastructure  
Policy EMP2 – Criteria for Business Developments  
Policy EMP7 – Slough Trading Estate  
Policy T2 – Parking Restraint  
Policy T8 – Cycle Network and Facilities  
Policy T11 (Protection of the West Drayton to Staines Line)  
Policy T12 (Rail Freight Transfer Facilities)

9.5 Slough Local Development Plan and the NPPF

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Annex 1 to the National Planning Policy Framework advises that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

The relevant Local Development Plan Policies in relation to determining this application are largely considered to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

9.6 The Proposed Spatial Strategy (Nov 2020)

Under Regulation 18, the Proposed Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough was the subject of public consultation in November 2020. This sets out a vision and objectives along with proposals for what the pattern, scale and quality of development will be in Slough.

The consultation document contained a revised Local Plan Vision which supports the Council's vision for Slough as a place where people want to "work, rest, play and stay."

It should be noted that the consultation document for the Proposed Spatial Strategy does not contain any specific planning policies or allocate any sites. It made it clear that the existing planning policy framework for Slough would remain in force until replaced by new Local Plan policies in the future. Nevertheless, it sets out the most up to date statement of the Council's position with regards to strategic planning issues.

9.7 Emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy for the Local Plan for Slough

The emerging Preferred Spatial Strategy has been developed using guiding principles which include locating development in the most accessible location, regenerating previously developed land, minimising the impact upon the environment and ensuring that development is both sustainable and deliverable. The site is not allocated in this Strategy.

9.8 Other relevant documents

- Slough Local Development Framework Proposals Map 2010
- Slough Borough Council Developer's Guide Parts 1-4
- Slough Low Emission Strategy 2018 – 2025
- DEFRA Technical Guidance TG (16). (Air quality).
- Sustainable Drainage Systems Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems (March 2015)
- Airports National Planning Policy Statement (June 2018)
- Heathrow Airport Consultation (June 2019)

9.9 Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 66 of the 1990 Act imposes a general duty on the Council as respects listed buildings in the exercise of its planning functions. In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Council shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

9.10 Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)

Under Schedule 7A of the Act, since 2 April 2024 developers of major development and small sites must deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10%, meaning that the development results in more or better-quality natural habitat than existed before.

The Local Planning Authority is currently preparing a draft Strategy for Biodiversity Net Gain which will set out in detail the Council's approach to ensure that habitats for wildlife on-site and/or off-site are left in a measurably better state than before development takes place.

9.11 Equality Act

In addition, Section 149 of the Equality Act (2010) which sets a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) came into force in April 2011 and requires the Council to consider the equality impacts on all protected groups when exercising its functions. In the case of planning, equalities considerations are factored into the planning process at various stages. The first stage relates to the adoption of planning policies (national, strategic and local) and any relevant supplementary guidance. In coming to a recommendation, officers have considered the equalities impacts on protected groups in the context of the development proposals as set out in paragraph 21.0 of this report.

9.12 The main planning issues relevant to the assessment of this application are as follows:

- Principle of development and land-use
- Design and impact on character and appearance of the area
- Amenity of neighbouring occupiers / uses
- Transport, highways and parking
- Air quality
- Noise
- Landscaping, ecology and biodiversity
- Land contamination
- Flood risk and drainage
- Economic impact
- Sustainability, energy, design and construction
- Equalities considerations
- Section 106 Requirements
- Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development and Planning Balance

10.0 Principle of development and land use

10.1 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy as highlighted in the NPPF is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Based on the NPPF, the proposed development, including the permanent use of the site, the retention of existing buildings and hardstanding, and the erection of a replacement building, new

footpath and landscaping works, would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt which is considered contrary to the Development Plan (Core Strategy Policies 1 and 2 and Local Plan Policies CG1 and CG9).

- 10.2 The NNPF states that Green Belt serves five purposes:
  - a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
  - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 10.3 The NPPF, advises when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It goes on to state that 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. This advice is reflected in local Core Policies 1 and 2 of the Core Strategy.
- 10.4 It should be noted that following the latest update to the NPPF in December 2024, which post-dates the submission of the planning application, applicant now considers the site to comprise 'grey belt' land and does not therefore constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt. As such, the applicant advises that the development is no longer required to demonstrate 'very special circumstances' which in turn no longer need to be weighed against potential harm to the Green Belt or other harm resulting from the proposal.
- 10.5 Notwithstanding this view however, given that the proposed development remains within the Green Belt, the applicant considers the impact of the proposal upon the Green Belt remains a relevant consideration within the planning balance.
- 10.6 Whilst understood, SBC Planning Officers do not agree with the applicant's suggested approach and do not consider the land to be 'grey belt' as defined in the NPPF. Planning Officers maintain that the proposed development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and Very Special Circumstances are relevant in determining its acceptability or otherwise in planning terms.
- 10.7 A Very Special Circumstances Report (VSC Report) has been submitted in support of the application. The report has assessed whether very special circumstances can be demonstrated and the potential impact of the proposed development on the Green Belt, Strategic Gap and Colne Valley Park.
- 10.8 The following sections briefly assess the key issues concerning the principle of the proposed development and use and its permanent retention against relevant

planning policies and guidance and other material planning considerations, appropriate to the determination of the application.

#### Green Belt impact

10.9 The proposed development will result in the permanent retention of a number of existing buildings and structures, some temporary, and new replacement buildings, which will result in a significant change to the character and appearance of the site and Green Belt, through loss of openness and built form.

*- Landscape character:*

10.10 In respect of Green Belt harm, a Landscape and Visual Impact and Green Belt Assessment has been submitted in support of the application to demonstrate that the harm to the Green Belt arising from the proposed development is limited, given the context of the site and character of the surrounding area. Although substantial weight is afforded to this harm, it is reasonable to consider this identified harm within the planning balance.

10.11 Under the former temporary planning consent, the existing works must be removed, and the site restored to grassland upon the expiry of the permission. The Assessment therefore considers as a baseline the character of the site as it would be on completion of restoration, in addition to its existing operational condition. The Assessment provides an overview of the location of the Site within Borough, adjacent to the western edge of London Borough (LB) of Hillingdon; the southern edge of Buckinghamshire District; and north-east and north edges of Windsor and Maidenhead District and Spelthorne District, respectively.

10.12 The Assessment considers a 'Study Area' encompassing a significant area of land from the mainline railway to the north of the M4 in the north, to Wraysbury Reservoir to the south; from the eastern extent of the built-up area of Slough in the west, to West Drayton, Harmondsworth, Longford and Stanwell Moor and Stanwell to the east, including the western end of Heathrow International Airport (HIA). The M25 and M4 dissect the Study Area north/south and east/west respectively.

10.13 It highlights that the majority of the Study Area is designated as Metropolitan Green Belt, with the exception of the substantial industrial areas at Colnbrook and Poyle and the existing settlement areas, such as Poyle and Colnbrook in the vicinity of the site, being excluded from the Metropolitan Green Belt, and that site also lies within the Strategic Gap and the Colne Valley Regional Park, as defined on the Slough Local Development Framework Proposals Map. It also indicates that approximately 1km to the south-east of the Site, beyond the M25, there is a collection of listed buildings at Harmondsworth and that approximately 1km to the south-west of the site is Colnbrook Conservation Area. The site is separated from the Conservation Area by the A4 Colnbrook Bypass and Lakeside Energy from Waste Plant with the Lakeside Estate.

10.14 It should be noted that whilst the site is located within the Colne Valley Regional Park, there are no Public Rights of Way across the site; and due to the severance created by the adjoining major transport road infrastructure and industrial and commercial development, the site is not connected to it physically. The site does not therefore contribute to the connectivity of the wider Colne Valley Regional Park nor its recreational function.

10.15 As part of Natural England's responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has developed a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles. These NCA profiles include an outline of the key characteristics that define broad landscape character areas. The Site is located within NCA 115: Thames Valley. The site is also covered by the Berkshire Landscape Character Assessment. This Landscape Character Assessment categorises the Study Area in part as an Urban Area, and as Landscape Character Areas B5 Lower River Floodplain: Eton Thames and C4: Lower River with Open Water, Wraysbury Thames, with the site being located within the latter.

10.16 The landscape character of the Study Area is described as a flat, low-lying valley predominantly associated with the River Colne and its complex network of water channels. The area has been significantly altered by large reservoirs and lakes in former gravel pits, and is now dominated by infrastructure such as motorways, major roads, railway lines, and Heathrow Airport. The landscape is further influenced by substantial commercial and industrial development, such as the Lakeside Estate and Grundon Lakeside Energy from Waste Facility, the Poyle Industrial Estate and hotel and office development associated with the Airport, along with areas of settlement throughout the Study Area. Although fragmented by these elements of built form, there is a high proportion of open space within the Study Area which is variously in agricultural and leisure use, with two golf courses and parkland within the Colne Valley Park.

10.17 It is reasonable therefore, as indicated in the submitted Assessment that the site and surrounding area exhibit varying characteristics of the Green Belt, that is "openness and permanence". It should be noted that the Planning Officers report to Committee in respect to the last temporary consent granted in April 2019 for a 5 year period – ref: P/20367/000, stated that "Whilst the Site and immediate surroundings are located within the Green Belt, Strategic Gap and Colne Valley Regional Park on Slough's Local Development Framework Proposals Map, the construction of the CLC and ancillary works means that the site has a developed character."

10.18 The proposed development will result in the introduction of built form and hardstanding on approximately 76% of the site, with 24% (2.1 Ha) dedicated to 'green' open space which will be enhanced for amenity value, biodiversity and canopy cover. As noted earlier, the proposals will result in an overall reduction in built floorspace across the site and more 'open' space than existing. It is considered that the proposed built form will be generally in keeping with the scale and massing of the adjacent industrial buildings on Lakeside Road and to, with the existing main

logistics centre building to be retained, having a maximum height of 14m (equivalent approximately to a 4/5-storey residential building). Despite covering a large floor plan area (130m x 100m), the building has a low elevational profile.

10.19 The newly proposed combined and replacement office and welfare building to the south, will be lower at approximately 13m in height and designed to a high-quality with green walls and natural materials to introduce some architectural treatment on the exposed southern and eastern elevations. The landscape proposals will complement this approach with tree and woodland planting framing open amenity spaces and screening security fencing. The trees and woodland will screen views of ground level activities and car parking from within open spaces and soften the built form overall in the wider landscape.

- *Visual amenity:*

10.20 The introduction of built form has resulted in a pronounced change to the character of the site, through loss of openness and addition of built form on most of the site. The proposed built form will however be characteristic of surrounding development which is clearly visible along the site's unenclosed western boundary.

10.21 The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment details indicates there are a very limited number of publicly accessible locations from which the site is visible from the surrounding roads, and these are fleeting and oblique. In the majority of publicly accessible views (i.e. from bridges crossing the M25 motorway), the proposed development will result in a limited addition of built form which will not result in a significant change to their composition. The value of the views of the site from the surrounding area, which is not covered by any specific scenic or cultural designations is therefore considered low.

10.22 The Assessment details how each of these views is strongly influenced by existing infrastructure, including the M25 and its gantries, the Grundon Lakeside Energy from Waste facility, the 30m high tower of Aggregates Industries and the Colnbook bypass. The roofline of the existing main logistics building and the proposed replacement building may be seen in the wider views, but this will result in a small addition to wider existing built form. The use of high-quality and softer materials, including green walls for the proposed building, will mean that where visible, the new built form will provide an improved view than existing. Similarly, as trees within the proposed landscape mature, the amount of vegetation cover will increase, and the visibility of proposed buildings will reduce further.

10.23 The nearest view of the site is from the Colnbrook bypass itself, but this view is also inclusive of the Aggregate Industries Tower, the Grundon Lakeside Energy from Waste facility and the M25. In the centre of the view the temporarily consented buildings on the site are visible. In its restored state this area would be replaced by grassland. In the background, buildings on Lakeside Road form an abrupt edge with no softening vegetation to enclose the view. The proposed development will therefore bring forward the built form in the view and introduce fencing and car

parking areas. This would be set however within a structure of proposed trees and woodland which will screen ground level activities and the built form. The proposed replacement building will be the closest building in the view, and it is considered that with its better architecture, will on balance enhance the view. The existing main logistics building has a wide but low form faced in simple white panelling. It is also considered that the woodland and tree planting in the foreground and along the perimeter fencing line, parallel to the M25 will help to soften and assimilate the built form and create a greener outlook than currently exists or should the site be restored to grassland.

10.24 In this closest and clearest view, where the south-eastern corner of the site adjoins the bypass, the proposed development will result in a noticeable change in the view, resulting from the addition of built form. The negative effects of this change would however be mitigated for by the better architecture set within a wooded landscape and it is considered that the overall impact is acceptable in relation to visual amenity.

*- Strategic Gap:*

10.25 The Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London is defined in the Slough Local Plan as “the Green Belt in Langley, and all Green Belt east of Brands Hill to the Borough boundary by the M25”. The Strategic Gap designation is congruous with land within the Green Belt but has been afforded additional protection to prevent the merging of Slough with Greater London.

10.26 Given the permanent nature of the proposed development, it will result in a permanent loss of land within the strategic gap between Slough and Greater London, The Local Planning Authority affords ‘substantial weight’ to this designation and it therefore substantial weight is afforded to this permanent loss.

10.27 The Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London comprises approximately 425 hectares of land, whilst the site only comprises 9.78 hectares. In percentage terms, the permanent development of the site will result in the loss of 2.3% of the Strategic Gap.

10.28 The site is immediately bounded by the M25 to the east, with a series of industrial uses (including Lakeside Energy from Waste, DPD Heathrow and DX Logistics). These industrial developments are designated as an ‘existing business area’, as defined by Core Policy 5 of the Core Strategy. Whilst Aggregate industries to the north of the site does fall within the Strategic Gap, it benefits from a permanent planning consent.

10.29 As set out in the next section in relation to Very Special Circumstances, the site is considered both essential in itself, and essential to be in this location and therefore accords with the relevant policy ‘test’ for the Strategic Gap, as defined by Core Policy 2 of the Core Strategy.

10.30 Whilst not as significant a consideration, given current uncertainties in relation to the project, the context of the proposals for the Heathrow expansion are of relevance.

The expansion as proposed will ultimately result in the permanent loss of the site and significantly more land within the Strategic Gap.

10.31 Having regard to these matters, whilst the development will result in a permanent loss of the Strategic Gap between Slough and Greater London, the impact of the permanent loss of this area of the Strategic Gap is considered to be limited. Substantial weight is nonetheless afforded to this loss in the overall planning balance.

- *Colne Valley Park*:

10.32 As noted earlier, the site is located within the Colne Valley Park, a large regional park which as a regional park which was made up of a large area of Green Belt land west of London.

10.33 Local planning policy seeks to maintain and enhance the landscape and waterscape of the park in terms of its scenic and conservation value and its overall amenity and provide opportunities for countryside recreation. Where development is permitted in the Park, measures to mitigate any visual impact and/or to enhance nature conservation and/or provision of new or improved access to the countryside will be sought by agreement and/or required by condition.

10.34 Whilst the site is located within the Park, the CLC has been operational for over 20 years and there are no Public Rights of Way across the site; and due to the severance created by the adjoining major transport road infrastructure and industrial and commercial development, the site is not connected to it physically. The site does not therefore contribute to the connectivity of the wider Colne Valley Regional Park nor its recreational function.

10.35 In seeking to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the Park and contribute to its key objectives, the applicant has agreed with the Colne Valley Park Regional Authority and Local Planning Authority a funding package for a range of environmental improvement measures. The contributions agreed as part of this package will be secured via the s106 agreement as set out in the recommendation.

#### Very Special Circumstances

10.36 Whilst there is no specific definition of what constitutes VSC, as circumstances are particular to each individual case concerned, the nature of a very special circumstance and the weight to be afforded to it, is very much a matter of degree and planning judgement and each case should be decided on the planning balance qualitatively rather than quantitatively. It may be the situation where a number of factors, none of them 'very special' when considered in isolation, when combined together amount to very special circumstances. It should be noted that VSC have been previously demonstrated in respect to the CLC, most recently in the 2019 renewal of the temporary planning permission - P/12244/009 for the site.

10.37 The VSC report sets out the following matters of significance in justifying the proposed development and use on a permanent basis:

- *Planning history:*

10.38 The site's current use was first granted permission in 2001, as a logistics, pre-fabrication, and administrative centre to support the operational and associated construction and maintenance projects at Heathrow Airport. A number of temporary consents have been granted since, allowing the use to continue for over a 20-year period.

10.39 Fundamentally, the primary purpose of the site has not changed since these consents were granted, and the common underlying principle is that the site is of a significant scale and is well located to provide a crucial role in serving Heathrow Airport and maintaining it as a facility of national importance.

10.40 As highlighted previously, it should be noted that National Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 21a-014) is clear that the grant of temporary planning permission is typically to enable a 'trial run' or where planning circumstances are likely to change at the end of the period. It goes on to note that subsequent or successive grants of temporary permission are generally only justifiable where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale for doing this.

- *Heathrow expansion:*

10.41 Following a legal challenge by Friends of the Earth (and others), the Supreme Court ruled that the Government acted lawfully in formulating the Airports National Policy Statement. The Heathrow Airport Consultation (June 2019) is clear that the third runway proposal will include the relocation of the Colnbrook Railhead, which will run parallel to the third runway beyond the Airport boundary and will support Cargo and Freight Forwarding, Aircraft Maintenance and, in the longer term, Hotels and Offices

10.42 Regarding the provision of the third runway, the Airport's official position that it still intends to pursue the project, and it is therefore evident that the long-term intention for the application site is development, notwithstanding its designation as Green Belt, Strategic Gap and Colne Valley Regional Park. Furthermore, the Consultation Document defines an 'Indicative Construction Programme' including a series of 'Anticipated Early Works'. The applicant has stated that confirm that the site and its associated infrastructure is likely to have a significant role to play in the Third Runway's construction, at least until such a time as the site itself is required to be developed.

- *Need for the site's current location and the 'Essential' test:*

10.43 The site's operational purpose requires it to be close to Heathrow and well connected to transport links. The site serves to screen and store materials required 'airside' at Heathrow Airport and the proximity of the site to the Airport is integral to

its successful operation in this area. The site is approximately 900m from Heathrow Airport's north-eastern boundary enabling discrete and swift access. This is only possible because of the site's proximity to Heathrow and the existing road connections. The site has a direct connection to the Colnbrook By-Pass (A4) which in turn provides a connection to the western side of Heathrow.

- 10.44 The need for the development will continue for the foreseeable future (if and until such a time as the Heathrow third runway expansion commences) to support the rolling upgrades and projects at Heathrow. There is a planned upgrade to security scanners, both runways are scheduled for resurfacing, and there is a rolling programme of refurbishment of the terminals (amongst other planned projects).
- 10.45 The proposed development will increase the site's capacity for pre-fabrication through the repurposing of the Cement Building and will retain and improve the wider operation of the site as 'last mile' storage facility. Many of the projects that the site serves to support are airside or otherwise security controlled and an alternative site located further away, were one to be identified, would not be as viable as noted by the applicant.
- 10.46 Rail-sidings that service industrial sites are uncommon features and provide a distinct advantage in capacity and operational ability as they afford the site the ability to handle goods of a size or in a quantity that would be difficult to accommodate by road. Therefore, rail linkage at the site (either the sidings immediately adjacent to the site or those at Aggregate Industries Asphalt Plant just to the north) supports the use of sustainable transport as part of the site's operations and is considered to be conducive to supporting the type of use envisaged for the site on a more permanent basis.
- 10.47 While the site does not currently make use of its rail sidings, there are arrangements with the neighbouring Aggregate Industries facility which enable the use of their sidings and rail capacity as required. Both the current arrangements with Aggregate Industries and any future plans which may rely on the use of site's own rail sidings are only possible in the site's current location.
- 10.48 The applicant and HAL state that the CLC is of considerable importance to Heathrow Airport, which in turn is of national and regional importance. The applicant has highlighted the crucial and highly specialised role that the facility plays in servicing the Airport and this is intrinsically linked to its location (see below). The applicant has also highlighted the importance of the continuation of the existing facility and the serious potential implications that a period of delay would have on Heathrow Airport's operation whilst an alternative location is found. The need for airport-related development at this location is therefore evident and it has been demonstrated that not only is the development itself essential, but it is also essential to be in this location, as per the requirements of Core Policy 2.

*- Alternative options and sites:*

10.49 The applicant has considered a range of alternative scenarios should a permanent existence at the current location not be an option. These include:

- 'Do Nothing' scenario
- Disaggregation of existing uses.
- Re-location of the facility
- Further temporary planning permission.

10.50 Given the importance of the construction and maintenance projects that the CLC currently delivers at the Airport, in addition to its screening function, closure of the facility would, as highlighted by the applicant have significant operational, financial and security implications for the airport and is not a feasible option. Furthermore, as the applicant also points out, closure would lead to additional traffic on local roads, and associated impacts on air quality, noise and amenity as alternative provision is made to service the Airport.

10.51 Separating the various uses on-site would the applicant states, similarly, cause significant operational issues for the Airport. The synergies provided by having all elements of the operation together provide are related to efficiency, management and security. They also involve both highly trained staff and specialised equipment that are rationalised on-site. It is not sensible to divorce these operations that are complementary and required near the Airport and that would otherwise create security risks and generate more traffic movement locally.

10.52 An Alternative Sites Assessment has been undertaken and accompanies the planning application. The Assessment supports the wider very special circumstances case and sought to identify whether any suitable alternative sites located outside of the Green Belt were available. It follows the methodology agreed as part of the previous permission on the site - P/12244/009.

10.53 Based on key operational criteria and the location of Heathrow Airport, the Assessment considered alternative sites in and around the Boroughs of Slough and Spelthorne, and the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Hillingdon. The Assessment concluded that there are no suitable alternative sites available capable of accommodating the proposed development.

10.54 A permanent planning consent is sought by the applicant (as opposed to a further temporary consent) given the role and therefore the importance of the facility has remained largely unchanged since it was originally granted permission by the Secretary of State in 2001; a period of 22 years. Furthermore, the applicant advises that Heathrow Airport remains of national importance to the UK economy and will remain so for the foreseeable future. This would be further solidified following the enactment of the proposed expansion programme. By extension, Colnbrook Logistics Centre therefore remains of equal importance in continuing to support construction and maintenance projects within the Airport, as well the early stages of the expansion project.

10.55 As previously mentioned, Government planning guidance highlights that the grant of temporary planning permission is typically to enable a 'trial run' or where planning circumstances are likely to change at the end of the permitted period. The guidance goes on to note that subsequent or successive grants of temporary permission are generally only justifiable where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale for doing this. The circumstances relating to the site and use haven't, as far as the applicant is concerned materially changed and in fact the alterations proposed as part of the permanent solution sought represent an improvement in relation to the facility, its appearance and condition and impact.

10.56 In assessing the appropriateness of a permanent consent for the facility in this location, the applicant has also considered comparable cases granted permission across the country including large commercial schemes in Hounslow, Warwick and Solihull. As with the CLC, these concerned Green Belt locations and were reliant on identifying very special circumstances based on need, locational advantages, lack of alternative sites, economic benefits and reduction in traffic movement and associated impacts.

*- Economic benefits:*

10.57 The applicant states that there are significant economic benefits associated with the development. A Socio-Economic Statement has been submitted with the application which details both the local and strategic socio-economic benefits of the site and the proposed development.

10.58 As noted in the Statement, the CLC currently employs a core staff of 159, of which there is an approximate range of 80 to 100 shifts active per day (in a 24-hour period). 98% of the current staff are estimated to originate from local boroughs. It is envisaged that the proposed development will involve a new building, the construction of which will sustain approximately 175 gross direct jobs and a further 70 gross indirect jobs throughout the construction period. Of these, approximately 130 direct jobs and 50 indirect jobs could be occupied by the labour force within the labour market catchment area. Similarly, the development could generate a direct GVA of approximately £12.6m and a further £4.3m indirect GVA throughout the estimated construction period.

10.59 The Socio-Economic Statement also highlights that the CLC plays a key role in supporting the wider operation of the Airport. It states that the total trade through Heathrow is forecasted to increase to over £204bn by 2025, equivalent to a growth rate of 8.9% during this period. By 2025, it states that the value of trade through Heathrow as a share of all UK trade of goods and goods and services is expected to grow to 21.2% and 14.6% respectively.

10.60 The Statement highlights that Heathrow is a major transportation hub in the UK responsible for over a fifth of the UK's trade of goods by value. Prior to the onset

of the Covid-19 pandemic, Heathrow handled over 475,000 flights, £160 billion worth of cargo, and 80 million passengers moving through the airport annually. The Statement goes onto explain how Heathrow Airport also has a profound effect on the communities and business structure within the local area. It is evident that all types of firms in the accommodation and food services sector, and the transportation and storage sector are overrepresented within the area of Slough located within a 5km radius of the Airport. Businesses have strategically located themselves to interact with airport and sites such as CLC. This emphasises the need to support facilities such as CLC to sustain established and efficient operations. These functions support not only Heathrow Airport but the catalytic effect and established network of businesses clustering locally.

- *Other benefits:*

- 10.61 In addition to the Socio-Economic benefits of the development, the scheme will also deliver the following improvements:
- 10.62 *Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)* - an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) has been prepared in support of the application and is supported by a Biodiversity Net Gains Assessment. The Assessments highlight that Biodiversity Net Gain resulting from the development will be significantly more than the 10% requirement mandated by the Environment Act and is a material benefit of the scheme.
- 10.63 *Improvement in the appearance of the site* - the application includes the demolition of two of the larger temporary structures on the site followed by the construction of a new modern replacement building. The new building will be permanent, sustainable and purpose built inclusive of green walls, and will improve the existing appearance of the site. The proposal also results in the permanent removal of several other ancillary buildings and structures. This, in conjunction with the proposed comprehensive landscaping scheme, will result in a significant improvement in the overall appearance of the site.
- 10.64 *Drainage* - by redeveloping the two buildings and the associated replacement landscaping scheme, a number of previously impermeable areas will be made permeable. Surface water runoff rates can be restricted to a level equivalent to a greenfield site (2l/s). The development proposals accordingly result in a reduction in hardstanding and betterment in drainage terms compared to the existing site.
- 10.65 Whilst the proposed development would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt, which is contrary and represents a departure to the Development Plan, the application has demonstrated that Very Special Circumstances exist which are considered to collectively outweigh the substantial harm identified to the Green Belt.
- 10.66 Given the assessment outlined above, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in principle subject to referral to referral to the Secretary of State.

10.67 Positive weight is afforded to the matters raised in the overall planning balance.

11.0 **Design and impact on character and appearance of the area**

11.1 The NPPF states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

11.2 It states more specifically that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

11.3 Core Policy 8 of the Core Strategy sets out that in terms of design, all development should:

- a) Be of high quality design that is practical, attractive, safe, accessible and adaptable;
- b) Respect its location and surroundings;
- c) Provide appropriate public space, amenity space and landscaping as an integral part of the design; and
- d) Be in accordance with the Spatial Strategy in terms of its height, scale, massing and architectural style.

11.4 Policy EN1 of the Adopted Local Plan states that all development proposals are required to reflect a high standard of design and must be compatible with and/ or improve their surroundings in terms of scale, height, massing/ bulk, layout, siting, building form and design, architectural style, materials, access points and servicing, visual impact, relationship to nearby properties, relationship to mature trees; and relationship to watercourses. Poor designs which are not in keeping with their surroundings and schemes that overdevelop the site will not be permitted.

11.5 The application seeks the permanent retention of the Logistics Centre which has been in operation on a temporary basis for over 20 years. The general layout and form of the proposed development will broadly reflect the site as it currently exists, albeit there are a number of important alterations including new replacement buildings and hard and soft landscaping.