

## Urban Design Consultant Comments

### URBAN DESIGN AND HERITAGE CONSULTEE RESPONSE

23/0005/RRM

Submission of reserved matters of Building 1 pursuant condition 1 (layout, appearance, and landscaping) of planning permission ref.20/0747 dated 09/02/21 relating to "Outline application with all matters reserved for 2 new buildings for Headquarters and Engineering (Building 1) and Vehicle Research and Development (Building 3)".

Highams Park, Chertsey Road, Windlesham, Surrey GU20 6HZ

#### Recommendations

##### Relevant policy and guidelines:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)
- Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) (2021)
- National Design Guide (NDG) (2021)
- Surrey Heath Core Strategy and Development Management Policies 2012 (CSDMP)

I was consulted on urban design and heritage aspects during the extensive pre-application process for the consented scheme, 20/0747/FFU, regarding the new campus headquarters, R&D and production facility, a major commercial development also in National terms, and refer to my comments on that planning application. Located in the Green Belt, and consented due to Very Special Circumstances, the 20/0747/FFU scheme was also characterized by an ambitious design vision and high quality architectural design, including a sophisticated material schedule and colour palette.

This submission comprises the construction details for building 1, including amendments to its original design and layout together with the provision of an extension necessitated by changes to operational requirements, building regulations and branding policy, since the original application was prepared. The changes to elevations and floor plans for building 1 are considered minor amendments from an urban design perspective, and will not have a significantly harmful impact on the design quality of the development. The facade build up and the footprint of the main building have increased slightly to comply with new Part L & O building regulations, although the total ground floor GIA remains the same. The proposed elevations have been revised to accommodate updates to internal space planning and solar shading requirements. The roof lights have been rotated to conform with building orientation and thermal requirements. The plant screen position has been shifted in line with adjustments to mechanical and electrical requirements reflecting internal space planning updates. The screen height has been reduced by 0.2m. The central building bays have been infilled with an additional area of slab to accommodate the required area for office needs.

There are no objections to the minor revisions to floor plans or elevations to the main building, including the increase of brise soleil required to comply with updated Part L and O. In terms of building materials, the metal profile in the brise soleil and plant screens has changed from expanded mesh to a sinusoidal perforated aluminum, which is considered acceptable from an urban design point of view.

In terms of roofscape, two larger plant screens have been re-positioned to align with the mechanical servicing routes. The positions and forms of the roof lights have been revised, and the height reduced, to respond to the building's orientation and provide north light to the build bays and offices below. The provision of photovoltaic panels has increased considerably to align with improved Part L requirements, angled at 2 degrees only to prevent glare. The increased area and volume of the two roof plant areas are not considered insignificant especially with regards to the North and South elevations, however includes AHU units as well as heat exchangers, to enable reduction of energy consumption. The sustainability aspects of the design are considered very important, however further information is required on that point, to fully assess if those benefits outweigh the visual impact of the proposed roofscape. However, the visual impact of the massing of those two plants has been reduced optically by the colour of the cladding, gradually fading away, to give the impression of depth.

The general colour scheme has been revised to align with new corporate branding guidelines. The previous building design proposal in silver grey with distinct colour accents was strongly supported due to the sophisticated combination of building components, modules, materials and different textures in silver grey, with distinct colour accents in yellow, orange and red, which created local distinctiveness and assisted way finding. The current proposal of building materials is more restrained, however elegant, with less variation and a more subdued colour scheme, grey in combination with dark blue. The signage on the front elevation of the main building has also been reduced.

The hard landscaping palette in light/mid grey tones and charcoal banding is considered to match the building design well.

However, a substantial extension to the ancillary building, which increases the length > 100% and introduces a part two storey element, for a car lift, has been proposed. Due to the position of the two-storey element, in close proximity to the main building, the visual impact is not considered to cause any substantial detrimental impact. This is a substantial increase in footprint, volume and built form compared to the outline permission. Car parking has been redesigned accordingly in what was proposed as a soft landscaping area. A firefighting hydrant tank has been introduced on site due to fire regulations and consultation as well as a EV storage unit, both to the east of the ancillary building. The extension and car parking redesign remain within the parameter of the outline consent.

The elongated, ancillary building has been given a slight L-shape, with the new sprinkler tank positioned opposite, which is a logical position in principle. However the utilitarian tank, which sits on a concrete base with a low retaining wall to the north, is considered to be highly visible due to its position as an outpost against the wider rural landscape, which is undesirable, given the Green Belt status. The tank is proposed to be hidden by a wooden screen. The EV Compound, positioned south of the sprinkler tank, will constitute a storage container and skip on a concrete plinth surrounded by a clad block-work wall. This additional built elements will contribute to a more built up character. From an urban design point of view, it is vital to minimize the visual impact of these two additional built elements in this prominent position as far possible, and vertical greening by vigorous climbers, such as ivy, and Boston Ivy, is therefore recommended, to make them appear part of the green landscape setting. Technically the climbers can be separated from the actual facade using a metal mesh in close proximity to the facade. An alternative solution would be to create a hidden, below ground construction for the tank, in a position where the root zone of trees will not be affected. The area could be covered by a safety grid/cover above and separated from the access road by a green boundary hedge. This principle would accommodate also a potentially larger water tank without any detrimental visual impact on the Green Belt.

Some of the functions proposed for the ancillary building such as garden store, should be possible to accommodate in relation to the former "Gardener's building", within the park, a less sensitive setting. Separated from the main building, this alternative should be explored. Previous design advice regarding external lighting has been taken onboard, is well integrated and supports the different components in terms of hard and soft landscaping, creating a suite of high quality outdoor places of different character which complements the scheme.

In summary, there are no objections the submitted layout, appearance or landscaping from an urban design or heritage point of view subject to the following conditions (following clarification on the aforementioned points):

- Buildings should be constructed strictly in accordance with submitted plans and drawings
- Full schedule and specifications of all building materials and hard landscaping materials to be submitted to and agreed with the LPA prior to construction to ensure high quality design delivery.

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