

ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL PLANNING REGULATORY BOARD

PLANNING, REGENERATION AND CULTURE

REPORT TO BOARD  
**17<sup>th</sup> September 2015**

ITEM NO. SUBJECT

1 RB2015/0474

Erection of Advanced Manufacturing and Research Centre Campus (AMRC2) including demolition of hangars, to include up to 80,000sqm B1(b)+B1(c) floorspace, 43,500sqm C1 / C2 floorspace and 1,500sqm D2 use at land Between Europa Link And Europa Court, Europa Link, Sheffield, S9 1XE

<b>Application Number</b>	<b>RB2015/0474</b>
<b>Proposal and Location</b>	Courtesy Consultation in respect of the Development of Advanced Manufacturing and Research Centre Campus (AMRC2) including demolition of hangars., (Development to include up to 66,983sqm of B1(b) and B1(c) Advance manufacturing and research floorspace, up to 37,551sqm of C2 residential training centre and conferencing floorspace, up to 450sqm of D2 outdoor and indoor recreation floor space) at Land Between Europa Link And Europa Court, Europa Link, Sheffield for the University of Sheffield
<b>Recommendation</b>	That Sheffield City Council be informed that Rotherham Borough Council raises no objections to the proposed development subject to Sheffield City Council attaching conditions and/or securing the delivery through S106 of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The implementation of a robust Travel Plan, various transportation improvements and the development of trip rate restrictions; and</li> <li>• The implementation of robust mitigation measures to reduce the emissions of air pollutants from the proposed development as outlined in the submitted Air Quality Assessment.</li> </ul>



## Background

Rotherham MBC has been consulted on the above planning application submitted to Sheffield City Council (SCC). This is a 'courtesy' consultation as required by the DMPO due to the close proximity of Rotherham Borough to the application site which is across the boundary in Sheffield. RMBC are invited to provide SCC with comments on the application and the impact of the proposal on Rotherham.

## **Site Description & Location**

The site lies within the administrative area of Sheffield City Council, however it is situated close to the boundary with Rotherham which is to the east, defined by the Europa Link.

The site comprises part of the land that was previously used as the runway for the former Sheffield Airport, which has been closed to commercial flights since 2008 and has been subject to redevelopment for business use in the form of the Sheffield Business Park (SBP).

SBP Phase II is located to the west of the site and extends to some 20ha of land. Outline planning permission was granted in July 2007 (ref:05/04338/OUT) for a mixed use development comprising B1a Offices, B2 Research and Development, B8 Storage and Distribution and ancillary uses.

To the north of the site are large scale industrial and business units; whilst to the east is the former airport area comprising of a variety of built forms which have been converted into office space. The west of the site is the remainder of the runway area and to the south is land previously associated with the airport which is generally open in nature and extends further southwards to the junction between the Europa Link and the Sheffield Parkway where it meets Tinsley golf course.

The closest residential properties are located approximately 370m away on Olivers Way in Brinsworth and the AMP is located on the opposite side of the Sheffield Parkway, to the south, approximately 600m away.

The site itself is generally flat, reflecting its former use as an airport and encompasses the airport control tower, runway and car parking area. Access will be provided from the north and will require the relocation of the existing car parking areas to serve the offices located within the former terminal building to the east.

## **Proposal**

The application seeks outline permission for an extension to the existing Sheffield Business Park comprising predominantly of advanced manufacturing and teaching space as well as support amenities.

Specifically, the applicant is seeking permission for an upper range of 104,984sq.m of buildings on a site extending to 18.6ha comprising:

- 66,983sq.m of B1(b) and (c) of advanced manufacturing and research;
- 37,551sq.m of C2 Residential Training and conferencing;
- 450sqm of D2 outdoor and indoor recreation

Building heights across the site are proposed to have an upper limit of 50m and a lower limit of 7m.

The proposal will form Phase III and comprise mainly of advanced manufacturing uses and teaching space as well as support amenities. These amenities may include office space and elements of retail however these are proposed to be of a scale to support the overall function of the campus and be ancillary in nature.

Supporting documents submitted by the applicant include the following:

- Planning Statement
- Environmental Statement containing:
  - Air Quality
  - Transport
  - Surface Water and Drainage
  - Ecology and Bio-diversity
- Design and Access Statement
- Transport and Highways Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Economic Impact Assessment
- Woodland Assessment
- Breeding Bird Survey
- Reptile Survey
- Great Crested Newt Survey
- Badger Survey
- Air Quality Assessment
- Geoenvironmental Desk Survey
- Energy Infrastructure Feasibility Study
- Statement of Community Involvement

## **Publicity**

It is incumbent upon Sheffield City Council to carry out appropriate publicity in the processing of this application to ensure any affected residents (including those in the Rotherham Borough) are aware of the proposals.

## **Consultations**

Streetpride (Transportation and Highways Unit): raise no objections to the proposed development subject to the approval of an enforceable Travel Plan which places emphasis on mitigation by means of vehicle trip reduction.

Streetpride (Landscape Design): raise no objections in principle to the proposed development however raised concerns regarding the loss of species rich grassland and habitat mitigation and have raised the question whether green roofs could be incorporated into the scheme.

Streetpride (Drainage): have held detailed discussions with officers at SCC to agree the discharge rate from SBP which then enters SCC surface water sewer located along Poplar Way, Catcliffe. This rate has been agreed at 450 litres/sec and on that basis no objections are raised from a drainage/flood risk perspective.

Streetpride (Public Rights of Way) confirm that the proposal falls outside of RMBC's rights of way network, however suggests that there are opportunities to improve non-vehicular transportation links between this site and the existing AMP at Waverley and as such RMBC's public rights of way officer has discussed this matter with his counterpart at SCC and requested that measures are incorporated into the scheme to ensure this links are upgraded.

Neighbourhoods (Environmental Health - Noise): raise no objections to the proposed development based on the recommendations outlined in the submitted supporting information.

Neighbourhoods (Environmental Health – Air Quality): confirm that RMBC were consulted on the methodology of the Air Quality Assessment raise no objections to the proposal subject to the proposed mitigation measures being implemented.

## **Appraisal**

The main considerations relating to Rotherham are:

- Principle of Development.
- The impact on the Local Highway Network
- The impact on the residential amenities of sensitive properties within the Borough.

## **Principle of Development**

Prior to assessing whether the principle of development is acceptable it is necessary to document the legislative background to Sheffield City Council's up to date Development Plan.

The site lies predominately within areas designated as the 'Airport' and 'Green Belt', although the access road from the north connects to a 'Designated area of General Industry with Special Industries' in the SCC Unitary Development Plan which has a plan period and contains policies to 2011. In 2009, Sheffield City Council adopted their Core Strategy which contains strategic policies to 2026. The key diagram in this document identified that land at the end of the runway should be removed from the Green Belt although no clear boundaries were agreed.

In 2013, a plan was produced as part of the City Sites and Policies document that would allocate the application area for development and remove it from the Green Belt. However, this document was withdrawn at the end of 2013 after it was found unsound as it did not identify a 5 year housing land supply and was therefore never adopted.

As such, the proposed development when considered in the context of local and national planning policy is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and as such very special circumstances for the development must be demonstrated. The NPPF states that *'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations'*. There is no definition within national or local policy of what would constitute very special circumstances as each proposal must be judged on its individual merits.

SCC have previously reported that untenable anomalies are defined in the explanatory text of SCC Policy CS71 as circumstances where it is no longer possible to trace the Green Belt boundary on the ground, as required by national policy. The explanatory text to this policy goes on to specifically state that the only non-minor change to the Green Belt boundary will be at the airport runway which will be resolved with a land swap, excluding the runway from the Green Belt and adding a larger area (Tinsley Park) back into the Green Belt, which also satisfies the purposes of the Green Belt.

The Green Belt boundary as drawn on SCC's UDP proposal map follows the alignment of a public footpath in Tinsley Park. The public footpath from Tinsley Park does not continue through the former airport or application site - it diverts around the former airport alongside Europa Link. However, the Green Belt boundary continues to cut across the former airport runway, through the application site, without any reference to established built form or a feature on the ground. This is because the Green Belt designation pre-dates the runway and used to follow the footpath and a fence line before it was diverted. As such it is accepted that the Green Belt boundary as shown on the UDP proposals map does not follow any established built form on the ground as required by national policy and is therefore an untenable Green Belt anomaly.

In light of this, RMBC acknowledged that the principle of a change to the Green Belt Boundary at the airport is established and whilst no precise boundary is established, the plan does indicate the site is removed from the Green Belt and as such indicates SCC's direction of travel in this respect.

Having regard to the impact of this release of Green Belt land on Rotherham, it is noted that the existing Green Belt within Sheffield, and partly within Rotherham (outside the application boundary), lies to the north-west of the Parkway and the settlement of Catcliffe. It is not anticipated that the release of Green belt land in this location will raise any significant concerns for Rotherham. Indeed RMBC has previously consulted on proposals to remove land from the Green Belt through its Local Plan to the east of Europa Link and north of the Parkway. Together these proposed changes could make a positive contribution to the development of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID) to which both RMBC and SCC are supportive of.

Consequently, it is accepted that the proposals will be beneficial to the wider city region and nationally and the proposed development will contribute to the delivery of the aforementioned AMID proposals and as such the economic benefits of the development can be afforded some weight as clearly the construction and operational phases of the scheme will contribute to the economic development of the City Region and nationally. However, it is accepted that the economic benefits on their own are not considered to justify very special circumstances for developing in the Green Belt.

Finally and having regard to the discounting of alternative sites outside of land allocated for Green Belt purposes, the applicant's, in their supporting statement, state *'The physical and operational ties to the AMP are important to retain in this expansion process and this significantly narrows the area of search appropriate for the development'*.

Amongst other sites, a review of potential expansion areas within the AMP was also undertaken. The report concludes that there is only one further area which is available. All other plots have been taken up. Highfield Commercial land extends to approximately 7ha while the University has also taken up the additional 2ha to accommodate an expansion of their existing facilities. However, the landowner Harworth Estates have expressed their desire to develop this land for the local centre and as such, the land is unavailable.

The AMP expansion area within the south western corner, adjacent to Sheffield Parkway extends only to 7ha which is insufficient to facilitate the expansion and centralised campus that this application seeks to generate. It was also considered by

the University not to be in a prominent enough location to accommodate the development proposed.

Having regard to this, it is clear that both sites within RMBC do not have capacity to accommodate the proposed development and RMBC are not aware of any evidence which would contradict the arguments put forward by the applicant regarding the AMP site.

Notwithstanding the above, SCC have previously approved a much smaller development within the Green Belt (Factory 2050) which could have been accommodated on the AMP and to which RMBC raised no objections to. The reason given for discounting sites on the AMP was that the applicant required the building to be co-located with the proposed development to create a campus style development and as such RMBC accept the applicant's argument that the proposed development cannot be disaggregated and requires the land proposed as part of this application.

Taking all of the above into account, RMBC acknowledge SCC's intention to remove the application site out of the Green Belt through the local plan process. This together with the potential economic benefits the proposed development will bring to the wider City Region are considered to outweigh any minor impact the release of this Green Belt site will have on Rotherham and on that basis raise no objections to the development in principle.

#### Impact on the Local Highway Network

*The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which concludes:*

*"Trip generation methodology and rates have been agreed with Sheffield City Council. Committed developments in the vicinity of the proposed site have been agreed by Sheffield City Council to be included within the SATURN model which also provides Sheffield City Council's requested method of trip distribution. The operational assessments show that the network will continue to operate within capacity during all scenarios modelled with the addition of the development traffic. Mitigation measures have been implemented at the A630 Sheffield Parkway Interchange and Southern Site Access junction as follows:*

- Signalised priority junction at the Southern Site Access on Europa Link;*
- New segregated left turn slip road in separating northbound A630 exit arm traffic heading towards Europa Link northern arm at the A630 Sheffield Parkway/ Europa Link Interchange roundabout; and*
- Northern area of internal circulatory carriageway to be stopped up at A630 Parkway / Poplar Way roundabout to deter u-turn manoeuvres*

*These mitigation measures enable the junctions to operate within capacity or to a similar / no worse capacity when compared to the base plus committed development scenario with no mitigation measures in place. Considering the above, it is considered that the traffic impact (in terms of capacity) of the proposals are minimal, that the site accords with Local and National Policy and has been proven to be well related to major settlements. Thus, there are no substantive highway reasons why the development proposals should not be granted consent.'*

The site will be accessed via Europa Link. The northwest of the site, including plots 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 will be accessed via the Europa Court / Europa Link roundabout. A new access road will be constructed through the existing car park which will be moved to

the east to accommodate the proposed carriageway. A main arterial route will be constructed through the site from Europa View to Europa Link to the south of the Britannia Way roundabout. Plots 7, 8, 9 and 10 will potentially be accessed via this route from the junction with Europa Link.

Bus stops are located on both sides of Europa Link, well within the recommended 400m walk distance from the site. These stops provide access to a number of bus services providing regular services linking Sheffield Interchange with Rotherham Interchange. It is noted that a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is proposed between Sheffield City Centre and Rotherham Town Centre along two routes. This scheme could provide frequent bus services to the development site in future years. It can clearly be seen that the site is well served in terms of accessibility to bus services.

The Council's Transportation Unit have been consulted on the application and have been involved in detailed discussions with Officers at Sheffield City Council and the applicant's transportation advisors regarding the impact the proposed development may have on the local highway network within Rotherham.

Initial concerns were raised regarding the development's impact on the operation of the junction with the A630 at the dumbbell roundabouts at Catcliffe and as a consequence of this a robust interrogation of the TRICS database was undertaken by the applicant's advisors to provide trip rates for each phase of the proposed development. These trip rates were used to calculate an estimated person trip generation for each of the plots. The search criteria included sites that are of B1 Business Park land use, have a GFA between 10,000 sqm and 118,448 sqm, are located within England (excluding London) and are found within Edge of Town Centre, Suburban Area and Edge of Town zones. The conclusions of this work suggest that 65% of people travel to work by car or van which equates to 964 AM arrivals, 310 AM departures, 218 AM arrivals and 756 PM departures.

Initial discussions to mitigate against these additional trips considered the restriction of vehicular access at the northern area of the internal circulatory of the southern roundabout (dumbbells) in terms of a physical 'stopping up' such that the northern access from Europa Link is free flowing to the roundabout. However, due to the current dualling scheme of Poplar Way, which restricts vehicles travelling from the South along Poplar Way from turning right into 'Sandersons' traffic would then need to travel up to the dumb-bell roundabouts in order to access Sandersons from a left turn.

By providing a physical barrier at the southern roundabout traffic would then need to travel to the northern roundabout to undertake a manoeuvre to return to Poplar Way. It has then been considered that a better option would be to provide a 'give way' at the northern area of the internal gyratory of the southern roundabout which would enable northbound traffic on Poplar Way who do wish to turn right into Sandersons to travel round just the southern roundabout then turn left in from the southbound Poplar Way.

An assessment of this proposed mitigation by Officers at RMBC and SCC concluded that the proposed works does not demonstrate the need for the circulatory give way as the volume of u-turning traffic is almost zero in real terms. The TRANSYT modelling should have included a "do nothing" scenario to demonstrate whether the mitigation was effective or not. There is an underlying assumption that free-flow from Europa Way is actually desirable, which was considered not to be the case as undue priority



would be given to Europa Link traffic turning westbound onto the A630 at the expense of straight ahead and right turning traffic from Poplar Way.

Consequently and since the model showed that there might be some benefits to this mitigation, it was considered that should problems become apparent in the future, funding for further analysis and a trial of this mitigation should be secured as part of the travel plan for the site. The number of trips allowed to be generated should be capped and once that level had been reached, further development would be paused until such time as a further scheme of acceptable mitigation had been implemented.

Having regard to the above, RMBC raise no objections to the proposed development from a transportation perspective subject to the approval of a Travel Plan which places a greater emphasis to be put on mitigation by means of vehicle trip reduction (University Travel Plan). This Travel Plan should be site specific to the AMP/Sheffield Business Park and be implemented by the University.

#### Impact on Residential Amenity

As previously mentioned, the site is located adjacent to the established Sheffield Business Park. The closest residential properties are located to the east on Olivers Way, Brinsworth, some 370m away. The Council's Environmental Health department have assessed the proposals in terms of potential noise nuisance and have concluded that the proposals will not result in any significant loss of amenity by virtue of noise or land pollution, therefore the impact of the proposals to Rotherham residents are considered to be minimal.

The site does however lie within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). The applicants acknowledge this in their supporting Air Quality Assessment which concludes:

#### *Operational Phase*

*'The assessment concluded that the proposed development would not result in significant impacts. However, the University of Sheffield operate a Travel Planning section and will be producing a Travel Plan to demonstrate their commitment to controlling impacts due to transport arising from University sites and activities. This was not completed at the time of writing.'*

The following measures will be considered to be incorporated into the proposed scheme in accordance with the SCC Air Quality Action Plan (SCC, 2014).

- Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Provisions
- Provision of EV Cars
- Managing EV Car Charging (removed once charged to allow availability)
- Low emission Car Parking (Priority)
- Low emission deliveries
- Car Sharing
- Reviewing the plan every 2 years.

The Council's Air Quality Officer has confirmed that RMBC were consulted on the methodology of the Air Quality Assessment and provided air quality monitoring data to be used in the assessment process.

The Air Quality Assessment presents the predicted impact on air quality, including that predicted to occur at sensitive receptors in Waverley, Catcliffe and Brinsworth in Rotherham. It is concluded that there will not be a significant adverse impact on ambient air quality in terms of the National Air Quality Strategy pollutants annual mean nitrogen dioxide and annual mean PM<sub>10</sub> (fine particulate matter). However, the development will result in increased emissions of air pollutants. Sheffield City Council has requested robust mitigation measures to reduce the emissions of air pollutants from this proposed development as outlined above and on the basis that these mitigation measures are put in place no objections are raised to the proposed development as they will minimise the impact in terms of air quality.

**Conclusions:**

Having regard to the above it is concluded that the impact of the development on Rotherham will be acceptable subject to the implementation of a robust Travel Plan, various transportation improvements and the development of trip rate restrictions. Additionally, the implementation of robust mitigation measures to reduce the emissions of air pollutants from the proposed development as outlined in the submitted Air Quality Assessment is also considered necessary to reduce the developments impact on Rotherham.