Outline planning permission was originally granted on the site in August 2012, which defined the specific floorspace, height and layout of individual buildings. More flexibility was needed to allow a market-led approach and for the development to meet the specific requirements of future occupiers. This meant a new outline permission was required. The parameter plans for the EIA therefore needed to strike a careful balance between providing sufficient certainty to enable a robust impact assessment and maintaining the required flexibility.

The site is adjacent to two local wildlife sites and around 350 m north of Stowe grade I registered park and garden. Silverstone Circuit lies to the south and east of the site, meaning that traffic generation was also an important issue.

Upgrades were required to the area’s gas and electricity networks to serve the proposed development and the EIA process had to ensure that potential effects associated with these were considered.

MEPC is seeking to build over 2 million sqft of new development over a 15-20 year timeframe, which will establish Silverstone Park at the heart of the newly launched Silverstone Technology Cluster. The outline planning application provided the framework for MEPC’s vision to be realised. The aim is to create a campus-style facility with a strong sense of community to attract a range of companies in the high performance technology and motorsport sector.

The proposals include up to 157,000 sqm of employment floorspace, 250 beds in up to two hotels, 9,000 sqm of education floorspace, 5,000 sqm of student residences, 5,000 sqm of promotional automotive display space and a social hub.

The 49.2 ha site lies to the north and west of Silverstone Circuit and is split into four parcels. Zones G and K comprise undeveloped land, while zones M1 and M2 comprise part of the main Circuit car park.
Lessons learnt

Need for flexible parameter plans
The two parameter plans were designed to balance the need for flexibility with providing a robust framework for the EIA to ensure all potentially significant effects could be assessed. The building heights parameter plan showed broad zones of maximum building heights, but did not delineate individual buildings.

The land use parameter plan set broad zones for built development, but did not restrict use classes in each area. Site accesses were shown, but no routes through the site. The plan also delineated landscape buffer zones, to ensure sufficient protection was provided to sensitive ecological sites and key site approaches, and showed tree retention and removal.

Consideration of wider project infrastructure
The provision of services to the development required upgrades to local networks, including around 9 km of new gas pipeline and 10 km of new underground electricity cables. These works will be carried out by statutory undertakers under licence, but the scale of the works meant that the potential for significant effects needed to be considered in the EIA. The ES therefore assumed likely routes for the services and assessed the potential for cumulative effects with the main project elements.

Lessons learnt cont. –

Engagement with key stakeholders
The site lies within both Northamptonshire and Buckinghamshire and it was important to maintain good communications with officers from the four councils and other key stakeholders to ensure that all potential issues were addressed in the EIA. This meant that there were no objections from statutory consultees when the applications were submitted.

Commitment to sustainable travel
The original planning permission included major junction upgrades to the nearby A43. A detailed sustainable transport strategy was prepared for the new applications, including an on-site social hub for employees, secure covered cycle storage above required provision, pool bicycles for employees, improvements to public transport services, and Liftshare car-pooling, and these large scale junction works were no longer required. New pedestrian and cycle crossings and traffic calming were also proposed off site.

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