## Key Issues

Pinewood Studios opened at the site in 1936 and has grown modestly. An application in 2009 for expansion of the studios as a living and working community was met by vociferous local opposition. South Bucks District Council (SBDC) refused consent for reasons including intrusive scale and massing, and failure to demonstrate the very special circumstances to justify this form of development in the green belt. This decision was upheld by Secretary of State on appeal in 2012.

Given this context, the client and design team were faced with significant planning and environmental sensitivities, in addition to political pressure and scrutiny due to the specialised nature and location of the proposed development.

The PSDF project took a completely fresh look at the demand for studio expansion and the need for it to be at the existing location, where specialist skills and businesses have established themselves over the last 70 years to support the media industry.

Particular focus was given to scale and massing and landscaping measures to minimise the visual effects of the scheme. Sustainability was embedded throughout the scheme design and included a CHP centre, underground wastewater treatment plant, and extensive landscape and ecological works.

## Purpose of the project

Pinewood Studios Development Framework (PSDF) is a £200m long-term scheme of national significance led by Pinewood Studios Ltd and Peel Holdings, designed to address increasing global demand for production facilities in the UK.

## Description of the project

Reconfiguration and expansion of facilities for screen-based media including film, television and video games and associated industries and facilities. Key elements: sound stages; workshops; offices; gas CHP energy centre; multi-storey car park and backlots (large areas of hardstanding for construction of extensive external sets).

- located at Iver Heath 6km north east of Slough and 20km west of London
- bounded by Black Country Park to west, M25 to east, residential to the south and Fulmer Village to the north west.
- site covers 83ha, part of which lies within Colne Valley Park and green belt
- green belt part of site includes former landfill
- construction in 3 phases, each 5 years long.
EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt
The planning history of the site, outline application and subsequent Public Inquiry for the PSDF scheme in 2013 have provided many lessons which could be implemented for future projects.

- Understand and address the precise issues of an earlier planning refusal.
- Invest time in obtaining independently verified/validated research and data to support the business case.
- Engage with government to gain support for development of the industry to help demonstrate very special circumstances.
- Undertake early and ongoing consultation and engagement with key stakeholders and local community to address their specific concerns thereby reducing the potential for objections.
- Demonstrate the benefits of implementing landscape and ecological mitigation and enhancements in the first phase of development (where possible); landscaped bunds around the PSDF boundaries with sensitive receptors will provide screening for later phases of construction and form a permanent feature to mitigate landscape and visual effects.
- Implement ecological works as soon as possible to provide linking receptor habitats minimising fragmentation and disturbance.

Lessons learnt cont.

- Innovative! Following research on the effectiveness of green roof habitat for skylark, the scheme includes 2.4ha of green roof habitat on the sound stages.
- Early liaison with County Ecologist to agree approach for ecological surveys and mitigation; the Defra offsetting metric was used to establish biodiversity losses and gains and helped establish a S.106 agreement for off-site biodiversity offsetting.

Following refusal by SDBC in 2013, outline planning consent for PSDF and associated highway works was granted on appeal in 2014. To satisfy Condition 11, the first reserved matters application included an Ecological management and monitoring strategy for the PSDF for a period of 25 years.

The Ecological works have commenced on site and further reserved matters applications will be submitted to implement the PSDF.

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