

10 February 2025

Our Ref: 333101744/A3/JL/MO
Planning Portal Ref: PP-13625143

Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam

SUBMISSION OF FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR PROPOSED INSTALLATION OF SECONDARY ACCESS AT BRITISH MUSEUM ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH COLLECTION FACILITY, LAND TO THE SOUTH OF CUTBUSH LANE EAST, SHINFIELD

We are pleased to submit via the Planning Portal (Reference: PP-11380336) to Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC') on behalf of our client, the British Museum ('the Applicant'), a planning application for the installation of a secondary access at the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection (BM ARC) Facility, land to the South of Cutbush Lane East, Shinfield ('the Site').

The proposed description of development for which full planning permission is sought is as follows:

"Installation of a secondary access for the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection facility."

As indicated above, the development will be located at the BM ARC Facility, which was granted planning permission in 2018 (Reference: 182059). The facility is located off Cutbush Lane East, from which it can be accessed, to the east of the Thames Valley Science Park. The Site lies to the south of Upperwood Farm and north of Old House Farm. The Site lies to the west of St John's Copse ancient woodland and Local Wildlife Site. The majority of the BM ARC site comprises the relatively recent construction of the storage facility.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes to construct a secondary site access northeast of the existing 'primary' BM ARC site access. The road will align seamlessly with the northern boundary and the approved Cutbush Lane East extension road (Reference: 232995). A secondary access is necessary to improve arrival/ departure capacity of the wider site in preparation for development of Phase 2 of the BM ARC, enhance operational flexibility, and to serve as a secondary access in case of the primary site access becoming blocked.

A previous application for a second access at the Site was approved on 15th December 2022 (Reference: 223152). This showed the second access to the south of where it is proposed as part of this application, just north of the primary access. This new second entrance will be constructed rather than the one that was previously consented as the Cutbush Lane East extension road (Reference: 232995) will pass by the north of the BM ARC site, offering the opportunity to use this for the BM ARC's second access instead of the 2022 proposal (Reference: 223152).

A mutually beneficial land swap between the Applicant and the University of Reading facilitated the alignment of the approved Cutbush Lane East access road (Reference: 232995), planned by the University of Reading to extend the Thames Valley Science Park spine road to the new Natural History Museum building, while also enabling the Applicant to establish the amended second entrance. The arrangement optimises site functionality for both institutions, ensuring improved and cohesive infrastructure. The separate Cutbush Lane East access road extension application (Reference: 232995) also gained approval for a replaced/ reconfigured access track to Upperwood Farm. Some of the existing track will fall within the BM ARC site boundary, so details of the proposed landscaping that will replace the track in this area, is included as part of this application.

The proposed access road will be located south of the Cutbush Lane East extension road, to the north of the existing BM ARC facility. A security gate will be installed leading into the BM ARC site to mark the new entrance. The gate will be located at a sufficient distance from Cutbush Lane East so that a max length vehicle can wait in front of the gate without impacting on vehicles travelling east along Cutbush Lane East. The existing security fence will be realigned to accommodate the amended secondary access and gate proposals. The smoking shelter will also be relocated to accommodate minor regrading in its vicinity.

Also, as the construction of the new access will introduce a new impermeable area, new drainage to the road is proposed. The application is supported by details of the proposed drainage.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Although the Site is situated outside of Development Limits, the majority of the proposed secondary access lies within the boundaries of the BM ARC site which, as indicated above, received hybrid planning permission in 2018 (Reference: 182059). That application was determined positively as it was considered that the BM ARC proposals would bring significant economic and cultural benefits which outweighed any concerns regarding the location of the site outside of defined Development Limits. The proposals subject to this application should therefore be considered in the context of supporting the operation of the BM ARC facility and, as indicated above, are necessary in case the primary site access becomes blocked and to improve the capacity of the site access in advance of Phase 2 of the BM ARC.

Furthermore, the existing consent for a second access at the Site (Reference: 223152) set a precedent for such development. It is therefore considered the principle of this proposal is acceptable.

TRANSPORT

Paragraph 115(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) notes that specific applications for development should ensure that "safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users". Also, Paragraph 116 states that "Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety."

Similarly, Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP6 advises that planning permission will be granted for schemes that 'enhance road safety and do not cause highway problems'.

Although vehicle numbers will be low, even with the delivery of Phase 2 of the Site, the proposed second access would provide an alternative for suitably and safely accessing the site if the primary access were to be blocked, and support increased vehicle movements resulting from a future Phase 2 development. Also, a secondary access to the site would reduce the risk of vehicles having to wait and block the public highway.

The accompanying Transport Report identifies that the proposed secondary access to the BM ARC facility is suitable for the provision of access for HGVs which is the largest type of vehicle that will need to regularly enter the Site. The Transport Report has summarised the existing conditions, the proposals for the Cutbush Lane East extension road (Reference: 232995), and the proposals for this BM ARC second access. Details have been provided on vehicle usage, swept path analysis, visibility splays, and vertical alignment. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable on highway grounds, in accordance with national and local planning policies.

DRAINAGE

NPPF Paragraph 161 advises that the planning system should take full account of flood risk and help to minimise vulnerability and improve resilience.

The WBC Core Strategy emphasises that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that ensure the provision of adequate drainage and avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater).

The Drainage Note submitted with this application explains that the proposal is to construct new highway gullies and a linear drainage channel in order to positively drain runoff from this highway link. The new gullies and channel would connect to the existing below ground network. The existing drainage assets shall be protected at all times during construction and where levels are being changed, appropriate structural checks will be required.

The drainage proposals would result in an additional 130sq.m of hardstanding being drained to the site wide storm water drainage network. The Drainage Note concludes that this will have a small but insignificant impact on the existing BM ARC system and that both on site and downstream of the BM ARC, there is no discernible change in flood risk or final discharge rate from the site.

As such, proposal for the second access can be accommodated with the existing site wide storm water drainage network on the BM ARC site. The proposals are therefore considered acceptable in accordance with relevant national and local policies.

LANDSCAPE AND ECOLOGY

The submitted Design Statement and Proposed Site Plan shows the landscape enhancements proposed, including new tree planting and the 4no. existing young trees that will be relocated. The landscape proposals are designed to integrate the new entrance and access road into the existing context, minimizing visual and environmental impact. The Applicant will create new areas of meadow and tree planting. Previously hard-surfaced areas that were outside the Applicant's land ownership boundary will be excavated, re-soiled, and transformed with native planting to enhance biodiversity and ecological value. The landscape proposals illustrated in the Design Statement and Proposed Site Plan indicate the integration of the proposed second entrance and access road into the existing environment, ensuring minimal disruption while delivering operational and ecological benefits.

NPPF Paragraph 187(a) states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity.

The WBC Core Strategy Policy CP7 states sites designated as important for nature conservation will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. CP7 goes on to advise that mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses can be provided.

The habitats on Site are currently considered to be of low-negligible ecological value, with the wildflower grassland being of most importance. The accompanying Ecological Appraisal details that the proposals will result in the loss of two small areas of Bramble scrub bordering Cutbush Lane East, an area of planted wildflower grassland, individual (young) planted trees and an area of bare ground comprising exposed soil. This area is however compensated for through planting of more trees within the Site, with the 4no. individual young trees relocated on site, and creation of approximately 108m² new wildflower grassland in an area currently comprising predominantly bare ground. Overall, there is considered to be no negative impacts on the approved BNG achievements of the original BM ARC permission (Reference: 182059).

As a new planning application, the development is required to achieve at least a 10% BNG. Calculations for the Site have been prepared using the Statutory Metric and are submitted with the application separately, alongside a Biodiversity Statement. This Report sets out the results of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations completed for the Proposed Scheme, which predict a net gain in 0.21 habitat units (24.95%). Net gains will be delivered through on-site habitat creation and ongoing management. It is therefore concluded that the Proposed Scheme would comply with the statutory minimum requirements for 10% biodiversity net gain under the Environment Act 2021 and Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), as well as with the NPPF and local planning policy.

Also, the Ecology Appraisal makes recommendations for impact avoidance, mitigation and enhancement. With the proposed mitigation and incorporation of habitat compensation in place, the ecological impacts of the proposals are considered to have no significant effect on the important ecological features within the Zone of Influence and the proposals will comply with applicable nature conservation related legislation and policy. The effects of the proposals on the ecology of the Site are considered to be positive and therefore in accordance with relevant national and local policies.

Design with community in mind

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

To complete the application, please find attached the following documentation:

- Completed Application Form;
- Covering Letter (this letter) – Stantec;
- CIL Form;
- Design Statement (10 January 2025);
- Ecology Appraisal (21 January 2025);
- Biodiversity Statement (20 December 2024) with Condition Assessments and Metric Calculation;
- Transport Report (07 January 2025) and Appendices including:
 - Kerbs and Levels Plan (ref. 1910/911/010 B);
 - Sections Sheet 1 (ref. 1910/911/050 B);
 - Sections Sheet 2 (ref. 1910/911/051 B);
 - Swept Path Analysis 16.5m Articulated Vehicle (ref. 1910/911/100 A);
 - Swept Path Analysis 12m Rigid Vehicle (ref. 1910/911/101 A);
 - Swept Path Analysis Refuse Vehicle (ref. 1910/911/102 A);
 - Visibility Splays (1910/911/110).
- Drainage Note (03 February 2025) and Appendices including:
 - Existing Surface Water Drainage Layout (ref. 393293-MMD-00-XX-DR-C-0001 Rev C7);
 - Drainage Plan (ref. 1910/911/020);
 - Micro-drainage Note and Output.
- Drawings including:
 - Location Plan (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5000);
 - Location Plan with proposed Cutbush access road (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5001);
 - Existing Site Plan (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5002);
 - Demolition Plan (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5003);
 - Proposed Site Plan (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5004);
 - Sections and Elevations Plan (ref. 393293-JMP-XX-00-DR-L-P-5005);

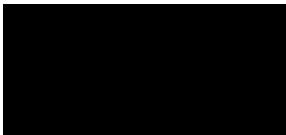
SUMMARY

In summary, on behalf of the British Museum, we are submitting a full planning application for a proposed secondary access at land to the south of Cutbush Lane East, Shinfield which is required to improve the capacity of the site access in advance of development Phase 2 and in case the primary site access becomes blocked. As indicated above, this proposal is considered to be in compliance with national and local planning policy, and it will not have any unacceptable transport, drainage, or ecology impacts.

Additionally, we will arrange payment to the Council to cover the cost of the application.

I trust that the above is clear and we look forward to receiving notification that the application has been registered in due course. Should you have any queries in relation to any of the attached information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



JOSEPH LYNCH
Planner

Direct: +44 1189523193
joseph.lynch@stantec.com

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