

2 SITE DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

2.1 Site Description

- 2.1.1 The application site extends to 93.20ha and lies wholly within the Vale of Glamorgan Council's administrative boundary. It sits adjacent to Cardiff Airport, 14km south west of Cardiff city centre and 2km east of Barry. A Site Location Plan is included at **Figure 2.1**.
- 2.1.2 The site is bounded to the north by Port Road (A4226), open agricultural land to the east, Porthkerry Country Park to the south and Cardiff Airport and associated infrastructure to the west.
- 2.1.3 The site is currently in agricultural use, with arable pasture fields being the dominant use. The land is considered to be of moderate to poor agricultural quality, with the majority in Grades 3b and 4. A map showing the Agricultural Land Classification is included at **Figure 2.2**.
- 2.1.4 The field system is enclosed by hedgerows of varying heights and density and is intensively managed through annual cutting. There are a number of buildings on the site including the farm house and agricultural buildings.
- 2.1.5 The site slopes gently from north to south in its upper reaches, before falling away steeply in the southern portion. This southern part of the site is characterised by more significant areas of mature vegetation, mostly woodland.
- 2.1.6 Bullhouse Brook and Whitehouse Brook run east-west and north-south through the centre of the Application Site. No built development is proposed to interact with either water feature.
- 2.1.7 A Public Right of Way (PRoW) runs along the eastern boundary of the site.
- 2.1.8 The upper reaches of the site, comprising the fields, are considered to be of low ecological value and are not considered to be species-rich under the JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Classification System. The semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the south is considered to be of high ecological value in the context of the site only.
- 2.1.9 Much of the surrounding landscape to the north, south and east can be considered rural in nature, but the character to the west is dominated by large scale infrastructure associated with Cardiff Airport (runway and terminal building), Cardiff and Vale College's International Centre for Aerospace Training ("ICAT") campus and the British Airways Maintenance Cardiff hanger, which lies beyond the Airport.
- 2.1.10 The land to the north, known as Nant Llancarfan, is allocated as a Special Landscape Area in the adopted Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan.
- 2.1.11 A three/four storey Holiday Inn Express hotel sits immediately adjacent to the site's north western corner. Other built form within the vicinity includes The Old Rectory, Lower Porthkerry Farm and Church Farm.
- 2.1.12 The application site itself does not include any heritage assets, but there are a number within a 1km radius. These comprise nine Grade II listed buildings and structures (including Porthkerry Viaduct), three Grade II* listed buildings, two Conservation Areas and a number of buildings considered worthy of non-designated heritage asset status in the Vale of Glamorgan Council's

County Treasures List. Furthermore, there are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments within a 1km radius.

2.2 The Development Proposal

2.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of 44.75ha Class B1/B2/B8 Business Park, car parking, landscaping, drainage infrastructure, ecological mitigation and ancillary works (all matters reserved aside from access) within Area A and change of use from agricultural land to country park (Use Class D2) within Area B'.

2.2.2 The proposed primary access will be at the eastern end of the site, via a new arm off the existing Port Road/A4226 junction, with secondary access available from the existing Holiday Inn roundabout at the western end. No operational development is proposed within the land to be included within the Porthkerry Country Park extension area.

2.2.3 A series of parameter plans which illustrate the proposed development relating to land use and storey heights, movement and access and green infrastructure are included at **Figure 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5**. These will form the framework for the future development of the site through reserved matters. The parameter plans also illustrate a 'worse-case scenario' in order to ensure that potential environmental impacts are adequately assessed and to allow the proposed scheme maximum flexibility, thereby making it capable of adapting quickly to the market and the needs of potential occupiers.

2.2.4 An Indicative Concept Masterplan is also included at **Figure 2.6** and illustrates the following:

- Access points and internal road layout;
- Approximate position of development blocks and uses;
- Pedestrian and cycle links;
- Landscaping zones;
- Drainage features including attenuation areas and swales; and
- Extension to Porthkerry Country Park to the south.

2.2.5 Since the production of the original ES in 2019, there have been changes to employment sites and associated market demand and working practices. To inform the updated ES, the indicative mix of uses has been refreshed based upon current (2024) market conditions so that a consideration of the effects of the proposed development on receptors in current market conditions can be observed. The assessment of effects in the ES considers both those land use and floorspace assumptions assessed in the original 2019 ES, and the 2024 land use and floorspace assumptions. The application of land use and floorspace assumptions is relevant to the following chapters:

- Chapter 4: Highways and Transportation
- Chapter 7: Socio Economics
- Chapter 8: Climate Change

2.3 Aims and Objectives of the Development Proposal

2.3.1 The application site forms part of the wider St Athan – Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone, designated by Welsh Government in 2012 specifically to attract aerospace and defence related investment. The overall vision for the Enterprise Zone is to for it to become:

“Europe’s centre of aeronautical excellence, a catalyst for growth in the Cardiff Capital Region and an international gateway with world-class facilities, opportunities and a highly skilled workforce.”¹

2.3.2 The development proposal will make a major contribution to the delivery of the Enterprise Zone:

- The development proposal will provide 44.79ha of Class B1, B2 and B8 uses to accommodate appropriate manufacturing, research and development businesses within the ‘Gateway Development Zone’ (a 77ha allocation within the Enterprise Zone) and assist in the continued growth of Cardiff Airport;
- The Indicative Concept Masterplan (**Figure 2.6**) seeks to provide a coherent development which responds to the site’s topography, landscape and heritage sensitivities and ecological constraints to maximise its development potential whilst making the most of the high quality landscape setting;
- The development proposal will provide land to facilitate a 42ha extension to Porthkerry Country Park, which will provide increased opportunities for recreation and amenity, habitat creation and connectivity and biodiversity management; and
- The co-location of the development proposal with Cardiff Airport, British Airways Maintenance Cardiff and Cardiff and Vale College will encourage cluster opportunities for aerospace related advance manufacturing, research and development and innovation.

2.4 Connectivity with the Wider Enterprise Zone

2.4.1 The development proposal is the first to come forward within the Gateway Development Zone. Through a series of meetings with Council Officers and other key stakeholders, the Indicative Concept Masterplan (**Figure 2.6**) seeks to ensure the development proposal is consistent with, and will not prejudice, the future development of the wider St Athan – Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone, particularly those parts immediately adjacent including Cardiff Airport and the remainder of the Gateway Development Zone.

2.4.2 In December 2019, the Council adopted the supplementary planning guidance document relating to Cardiff Airport and the Gateway Development Zone, which extends to approximately 288.6ha. As a major landowner within the Gateway Development Zone, the applicant, Legal & General, provided input into the document. The masterplan within it illustrates the integration of the vision for Cardiff Airport and the development proposal.

2.4.3 The supplementary planning guidance document recognises that due to the scale of the site, the phasing of applications will be important to ensure there is adequate infrastructure to support each proposal. The applicant is part of a working group comprising representatives from Cardiff Airport, Welsh Government, the Vale of Glamorgan Council and Cardiff and Vale College and discussions are ongoing with regard to sharing the costs of infrastructure provision to ensure each development proposal is supported by adequate infrastructure.

2.5 Alternatives

2.5.1 As previously noted, the application site falls within the St Athan – Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone, designated by Welsh Government. The designation has been incorporated into the adopted Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan and is recognised within the Plan as being of regional importance and a significant opportunity to bring aerospace related inward investment to the area. Of the Plan's four key development strands, St Athan is highlighted as a 'Key Development Opportunity' and Cardiff Airport as an 'Employment and Transport Opportunity'.

2.5.2 The employment allocation relating to the Enterprise Zone under Policies MG9 and MG10 was subject to significant scrutiny throughout the Local Development Plan examination process prior to its adoption in 2017 and the locational benefits of Cardiff Airport were a critical factor in the allocation of the Gateway Development Zone:

- There is land (including the application site) and facilities available close to the airport for potential maintenance, repair and operations and associated supply chain operators, which complement the existing British Airways Maintenance centre;
- The proximity of the airport and runway allow for the fast movement of aerospace parts, storage and salvage, cargo operations and freight related businesses; and
- The runway at Cardiff Airport can accommodate all generations of aircraft and future improvements to airport infrastructure will allow the runway to accommodate the new generation of wide bodied aircraft.

2.5.3 As such, the location of the development proposal is the most appropriate and it accords fully with the Council's published aspirations for the future expansion of wider St Athan – Cardiff Airport Enterprise Zone. To locate the development proposal outside of the Gateway Development Zone or the wider Enterprise Zone would not fulfil the requirements of the planning policy framework.

2.5.4 The EIA process influenced the iterative design process of the Proposed Development through the identification of constraints, responses to consultation undertaken and identification of environmental effects. The masterplan has been informed by a series of design principles as set out in the Design Brief document which was submitted in support of the planning application. The design principles considered in the Design Brief are:

1. Land Use – to accommodate the following land uses:
 - (a) B1, B2 and B8 (up to 31ha)
 - (b) Existing retained green infrastructure
 - (c) Green infrastructure and public open space (7.73ha)
 - (d) New spine road corridor
 - (e) Public footpaths
 - (f) Land expansion to Porthkerry Country Park (up to 42ha)
2. Movement (Vehicle, Public Transport, Cycle/Pedestrian) – to ensure that the development will not adversely impact the operation of the existing highway network and to ensure that the site is accessible by sustainable methods of travel.

3. Green Infrastructure Strategy – to retain existing landscape features, incorporate existing hedgerow networks and landscape buffers into the layout and provision of functional greenspace of biodiversity value.
4. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and Drainage – to provide a comprehensive SuDS scheme to include swales, attenuation areas and ditches in order to manage surface water run-off.
5. Scale and Massing – to deliver a higher density development at the access point in the north-west corner with land mark buildings in this location whilst minimising the visual impact away from the airport by including lower building heights (one to two-storey) across the wider site.
6. General Design Approach for the Public Realm – to be designed to encourage, support and sustain public activity in the external environment by creating a distinctive and memorable place, delivering a character, providing attractive and safe spaces and a high-quality public realm.
7. Parking and Servicing – to play a role in the promotion of sustainable travel through the application of a Car Parking Management Strategy whilst providing adequate and suitable access and servicing areas to enable HGVs and refuse vehicles to enter and exit the individual units safely.

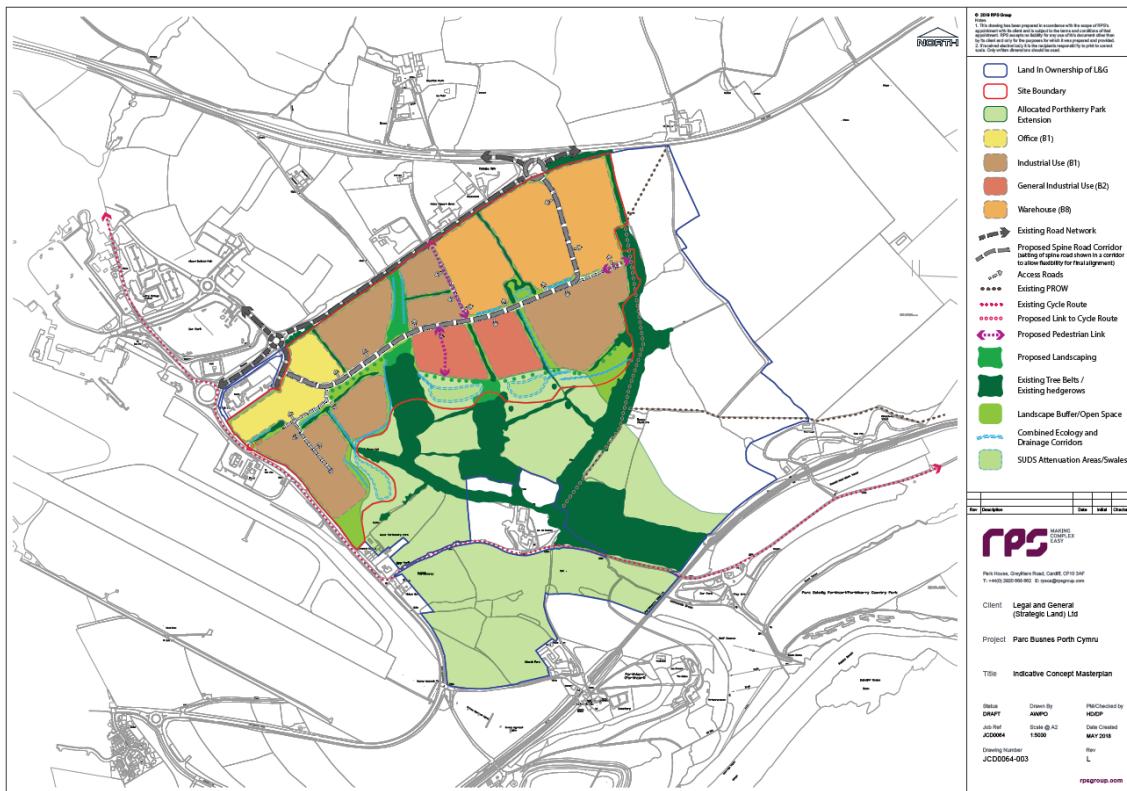
2.5.5 The proposed masterplan has undergone a number of design iterations and refinements as set out below taking into account the design principles set out above.

Initial Framework Masterplan (July 2018)

2.5.6 The initial framework masterplan process was undertaken ahead of the completion of some technical assessment reports. The layout utilised the existing access points to the site along the northern boundary and retained the existing key landscape and ecological features allowing for mitigation by design through protection of ecological and landscape features.

2.5.7 The initial framework masterplan is included at Plate 1 overleaf.

Plate 1 – Initial Framework Masterplan

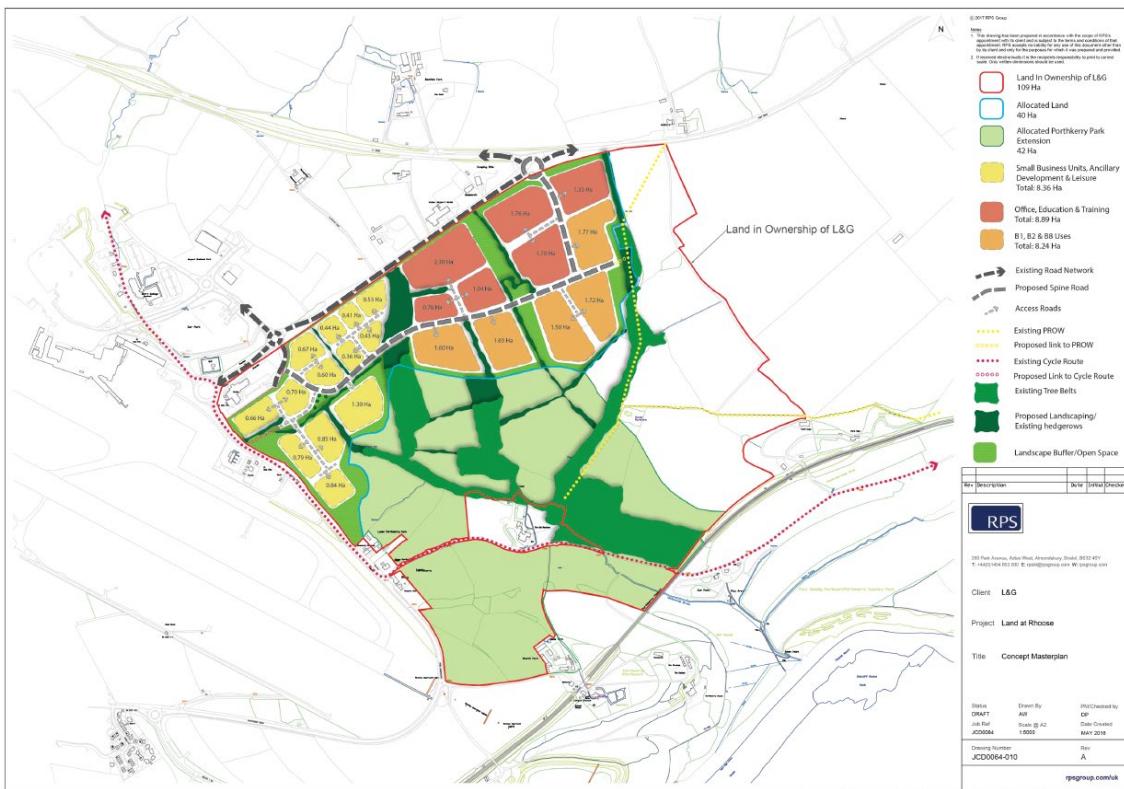


Second Design Iteration (October 2018)

2.5.8 The second design iteration was completed in October 2018 and identified an initial mix of development based on both the aspirations of L&G and pre-application discussions with the Council. In this iteration, development blocks were identified and internal access points to each block were indicated.

2.5.9 The second design iteration is at Plate 2 overleaf.

Plate 2 – Second Design Iteration



Initial Planning Application Submission Version (June 2019)

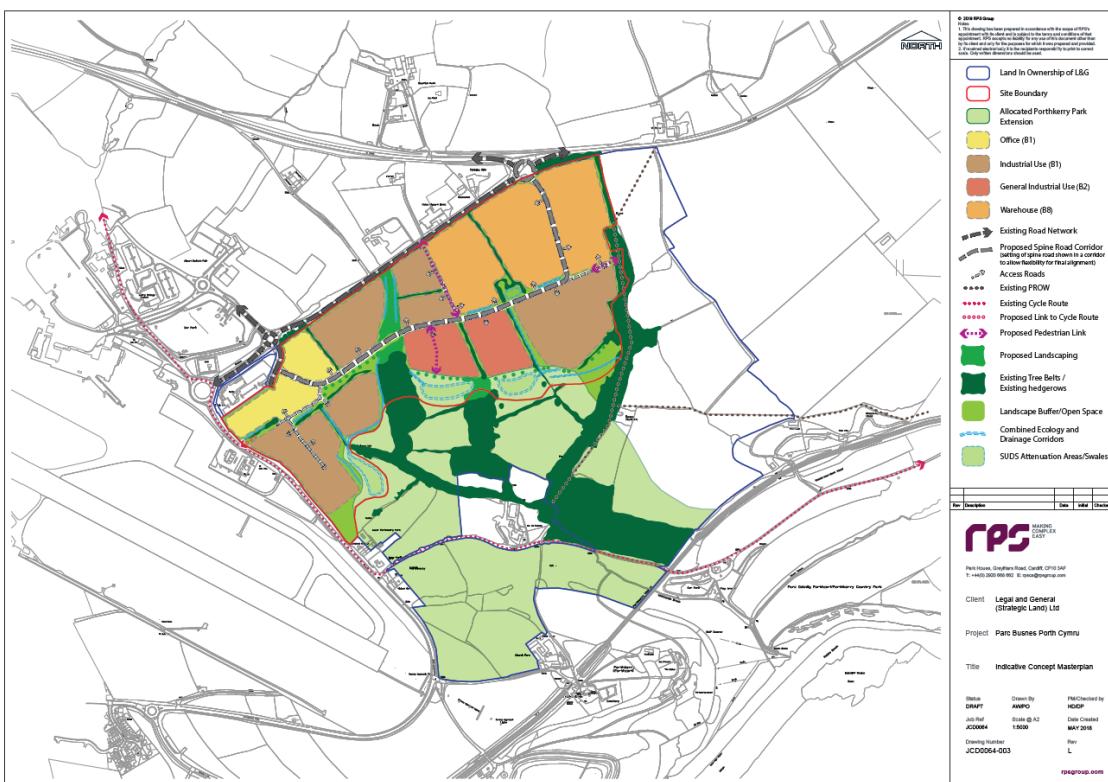
2.5.10 In June 2019, the final illustrative masterplan was completed for submission with the planning application. This layout was informed by the outcomes of the landscape and ecology assessments and incorporated appropriate buffers and stand-offs from wooded areas and individual trees and hedgerows. This allowed mitigation by design through the provision of a sense of transition into the rural landscape surrounding the Enterprise Zone which reduced landscape effects of the scheme as well as effects on heritage receptors located to the south.

2.5.11 The masterplan was also informed by the drainage strategy for the proposed development and incorporated the proposed attenuation ponds and swales. Pre-application advice received from the Council was also incorporated into this iteration. The initial planning application submission version is included at Plate 3 below.

2.5.12 The final planning application masterplan responded to the design principles set out above by incorporating the required mix of land uses, provision of green infrastructure and SuDS as well as providing a high quality design of development which responded to the character of the wider area whilst providing the operational requirements of the proposed development.

2.5.13 The initial planning application masterplan is at Plate 3 overleaf.

Plate 3 – Initial Planning Application Submission Version



Revised Planning Application Illustrative Masterplan (April 2021)

2.5.14 In April 2021, a revised illustrative masterplan was submitted to the Council in response to feedback from the Council's Officers. The revised masterplan included the proposed extension to the Porthkerry Country Park within the red line boundary in order to secure the provision of the necessary ecological mitigation measures including new areas of woodland and scrub planting and the creation of an east-west wildlife corridor beyond the southern boundary of the development. By including the proposed Country Park extension within the red line boundary, the landscape and biodiversity value of the proposed mitigation measures would be secured as part of the planning permission.

2.5.15 The revised planning application illustrative masterplan is included at Plate 4 overleaf.

Plate 4 – Revised Planning Application Illustrative Masterplan



2.5.16 The final illustrative masterplan option was chosen as a result of the capacity of the design to:

- Meet the design principles as set out above in terms of the mix of land uses and operational requirements of the proposed development to realise its contribution towards the Cardiff Capital Region economy.
- Maximise opportunities for access to the site by sustainable methods of travel thus reducing the impact of the proposed development in the existing highways network.
- Provide an appropriate area for the realisation of ecology mitigation measures as well as incorporating appropriate landscape buffers to ensure a gradual transition between the proposed development and the wider rural landscape as well as providing screening to reduce the impact on identified heritage receptors.
- Accommodate sustainable drainage features to ensure that appropriate surface water management measures are in place to limit the contribution of the proposed development to increased flood risk elsewhere.

2.5.17 Further information in respect of design evolution and design principles is included within the accompanying Design & Access Statement and Design Principles document which were submitted in support of the planning application and are re-submitted in support of the appeal.

2.5.18 As demonstrated in this chapter, there are no other reasonable alternatives within which to locate the development proposal, and the design evolution has ensured the most appropriate scheme is accommodated within the site in terms of reducing environmental effects.

References

Cardiff Airport – St Athan Enterprise Zone Strategic Development Framework 2015 p.29