



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

PLANNING STATEMENT

TO ACCOMPANY A FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR:

'Full planning application for the erection of a new high quality combined research, development and production facility comprising of Class B2 floorspace and ancillary office floorspace with associated infrastructure including: formation of signal-controlled vehicular access to the A41 and repositioning of existing bus stops; ancillary workshops; staff gym and canteen; security gate house; a building for use as an energy centre (details of the energy generation reserved for future approval); loading bays; service yard; waste management area; external plant; vehicle parking; landscaping including permanent landscaped mounds; sustainable drainage details; together with the demolition of existing agricultural buildings within the red line boundary; and the realignment of an existing watercourse'.

SYMMETRY PARK OXFORD NORTH

APPLICANT:

**TRITAX SYMMETRY LLP AND
SIEMENS HEALTHINEERS**

APRIL 2022

PF/10528

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Frampton Town Planning Ltd on behalf of Tritax Symmetry LLP and Siemens Healthineers (the Applicants) in support of a full planning application for Siemens Healthineers new combined production, research and development facility on land known as Symmetry Park Oxford North. The extent of the site is edged red on the attached Location Plan (Appendix 1).

1.2 The application description is as follows:

‘Full planning application for the erection of a new high quality combined research, development and production facility comprising of Class B2 floorspace and ancillary office floorspace with associated infrastructure including: formation of signal-controlled vehicular access to the A41 and repositioning of existing bus stops; ancillary workshops; staff gym and canteen; security gate house; a building for use as an energy centre (details of the energy generation reserved for future approval); loading bays; service yard; waste management area; external plant; vehicle parking; landscaping including permanent landscaped mounds; sustainable drainage details; together with the demolition of existing agricultural buildings within the red line boundary; and the realignment of an existing watercourse’.

1.3 The planning application is accompanied by the following plans and drawings:

Drawing Name	Drawing No.	Rev.
13-222-SGP-STE-00-DR-A-131002	Location Plan – Symmetry Park, Oxford North	P8
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131007	Watercourse Diversion Planning Location Plan	P1
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131009	Location Plan	-
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-121404	Energy Centre Proposed Plan & Elevations	A
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131000	Site Plan – Phase 1	V
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131001	Site Plan – Phase 2	V
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131002	External Finishes Plan – Phase 2	M
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131003	External Furniture & Boundary Treatment Plan	M
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131105	ENHANCED Phase 1 – Production Area Layout (Rev. F)	F
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131106	ENHANCED Phase 1 & 2 – Office Layout	D
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131107	ENHANCED Phase 1 – Gross External Area Plans	C
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131108	ENHANCED Phase 1 - GIA Plans and Critical Dimensions (Rev. E)	E
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131109	ENHANCED Phase 1 – Roof Plan	G
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131110	ENHANCED Phase 2- Production Area Layout	E
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131112	ENHANCED Phase 2 – Gross External Area Plans	C
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131113	ENHANCED Phase 2 – GIA Plans & Critical Dimensions	D

13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131114	ENHANCED Phase 2 – Roof Plan	H
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131115	ENHANCED Phase 1 & 2 – Facilities Management Building	D
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131116	ENHANCED Phase 1 & 2 – Gatehouse	B
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131200	ENHANCED Phase 1 – Production Area Sections	D
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131201	ENHANCED Phase 1 & 2 – Office Sections	C
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131202	ENHANCED Phase 2 - Production Area Sections	D
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131204	ENHANCED Phase 1 & 2 - Atrium Sections	E
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131300	ENHANCED Phase 1 – Elevations	E
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131303	ENHANCED Phase 2 – Elevations	E
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-131307	ENHANCED Elevation Visuals	-
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-210109	Energy Centre Warehouse Sections	-
13-222-SGP-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-210110	Energy Centre Typical Office Sections	-

- 1.4 The purpose of this Planning Statement, as an overarching document, is to explain the planning background of the proposals for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and the local community, and to consider the national and local planning policy framework within which the application has been assessed.

Environmental Statement

- 1.5 The planning application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement (ES). The proposed development falls within Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, being development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location under the category of “Industrial estate development projects” (Schedule 2, 10 a). In accordance with Regulation 15 of the EIA Regulations, a Scoping Opinion was submitted to the Council in September 2021 to scope the level and detail of the information that should be provided in the ES.
- 1.6 The following topics that may have a significant environmental impact have been ‘scoped into’ the ES:
- Transport;
 - Air quality;
 - Noise;
 - Biodiversity;
 - Landscape and visual effects (including Lighting);
 - Heritage;
 - Hydrology, flood risk and drainage;
 - Ground conditions and soils;
 - Climate change; and
 - Socio-economic effects.

1.7 It was agreed through the Scoping Opinion that the following topics are likely not to give a significant environmental impact and are scoped out.

- Human Health;
- Accidents and Disasters,
- Waste; and
- Agriculture and Soils.

1.8 The ES will also consider the cumulative effects of the proposed development; effects that relate to multiple developments that may give rise to significant effects at a receptor identified in each topic chapter; and effects arising from the combination of the different environmental topics as outlined within the ES.

Pre-application Discussions and Community Engagement

1.9 The Applicants have entered into pre-application discussions and a Planning Performance Agreement. Meetings have been held with the Cherwell District Planning Team on the principle of the development. Appendix 2 summarises the content of discussion.

Further pre-application discussions took place as set out in the Planning Performance Agreement with members of the Project Team, the District Landscape Officer, Ecologist and the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA). Discussions have taken place with the Local Highway Authority (Oxfordshire County Council) and National Highways relating to the impact of the development on drainage and transport and highway matters.

1.10 The Applicant undertook extensive engagement with the local community. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the public engagement strategy included both virtual and face to face meetings. The consultation material used for the consultation events was uploaded onto Frampton Town Planning website to allow continued online access for those members of the community not able to attend the face to face or virtual events. The following consultation events were held:

- A Virtual presentation to invited local Ward Councillors held on the 13th September 2021;
- A Public Exhibition (face to face) for the wider community was held at the Chesterton Community Centre on the 14th September 2021 between 3pm and 8pm.

Presentations were made to the following Parish Councils:

- Weston-on-the-Green Parish Council on the 6th October 2021.
- Joint meeting with Wendlebury Parish Council and Chesterton Parish Council on the 8th October 2021.
- Bicester Town Council on the 8th November 2021.

1.11 Details of the feedback from the various events can be found in the Statement of Community Involvement that accompanies this application.

2.0 SIEMENS HEALTHINEERS

2.1 Siemens Healthineers (SH) is a producer of superconducting magnets used in Magnetic Resonances Imaging (MRI) scanning technology, taking a leading role in both manufacturing components and pioneering new technology through its R&D operations. SH has outgrown its existing facilities in Eynsham and has undertaken a global search for its new research and production facility.

2.2 There has been a long history associated with superconductive magnets in Oxfordshire. Oxford Instruments, a start-up company, researching and manufacturing magnets was founded by Sir Martin and Lady Audrey Wood in 1959. Oxford Instruments was hugely successful and experienced rapid growth. From this, Oxford Magnet Technology was founded in 1982, with the aim of commercialising propriety technology for magnets and accessories used in MRI scanners.

Wholly owned by Oxford Instruments, in 2003 Oxford Magnet Technology became Siemens Healthineers, based in Eynsham and has become the world leader in superconducting MRI magnets.

2.3 The cost and management arrangements of MRI scanners in hospitals has resulted in residents of more wealthy countries having greater access to scanners than residents of developing countries. For example, Japan and USA have 54 MRI scanners for each 1 million of population, whereas developing countries may have as little as 1 MRI scanner per million population. Some 90% of the world population does not have access to an MRI scanner.

2.4 SH has developed a revolutionary new magnet technology that will facilitate access to MRI scanners on a more equitable basis around the world. This technology relies on transforming the manufacture of MRI scanners, from wet-magnets to dry-magnets. It is anticipated that the manufacture of wet-magnets in SH Eynsham facility will finish by 2030. SH's facility in Eynsham is too constrained to meet the anticipated increase in demand for the manufacturing of the dry-magnets as a result of this new technology.

2.5 Having concluded that their existing Eynsham facility is not suitable for the manufacture of the new magnet technology and at the output required, SH embarked on a high-level strategic review of opportunities to facilitate its requirements for a new facility which would be operational by 2024. Siemens Healthineers were supported by its commercial advisors, JLL, and its planning consultants, Montagu Evans (ME) during this process. A broad summary of this initial high level strategic review is included at Appendix 3. This exercise evidenced the operational need for Siemens Healthineers to remain in Oxfordshire and ideally as close as possible to its existing facility as it would mean:

- Retaining the existing high quality and specialist skill of its existing workforce;
- Maintaining SH's existing extensive supply chain;
- Continuing SH's important commercial and academic links with the Oxford University 'super conductivity hub', and the Oxfordshire cryogenics cluster[1];

[1] See SQW Socio-economic Impact Assessment for further detail of the cryogenic cluster

- Such a location would support the economic vision for the Oxford-Cambridge Arc that described Oxfordshire as the ‘global leader in cryogenics, with the most powerful concentration of cryogenics expertise in the world’.

2.6 During 2020, Siemens Healthineers, again with the support of JLL and ME, undertook a detailed site search for opportunities against the following locational and operational criteria:

- Site area of 20 Ha;
- The capacity of the site to accommodate 55,000sqm;
- The geographical proximity to its existing Eynsham premises;
- Accessibility of the site for staff travelling to the site other than by car;
- The required operational date of the first quarter of 2024; and
- The overall suitability of the location for its headquarters and manufacturing operation.

2.7 SH’s initial site search resulted in a ‘long list’ of potential sites. Further assessment of these sites produced a final list of 5 potential sites for its operation. All 5 sites are located within Oxfordshire. Appendix 3 lists the SH site searches.

2.8 Following SH’s internal site search, it was concluded that there was no certainty that the sites identified could accommodate or be delivered within the timeframe to facilitate the proposed development. The only option available to SH to retain its operation within Oxfordshire is to identify a parcel of land that could be developed to meet its operational needs within the required timescale.

2.9 Tritax Symmetry control the parcel of land edged red on the Location Plan attached at Appendix 1. This is the only site that has the capacity to accommodate the scale of SH’s operation and be delivered within its operational timeframe. The proposed new facility at Symmetry Oxford North will enable SH to manufacture the dry-magnets, and continue with its ground breaking research and development work.

2.10 The relocation of SH to this site will have a significant impact on the economy of Bicester, Oxfordshire, and the UK as a consequence of:

- Capital Investment of £80M into the economy;
(Paragraph 4.28 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))
- 670 construction jobs will be created;¹
(Page 15 Table 4.5 Estimate of construction jobs of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022));
- 1,126 skilled jobs will be created when the facility is fully operational;¹
- The retention of 528 current jobs (of which 90% are Oxfordshire based);
- SH investment will add to the economy a net additional £820M to the Gross Value Added (GVA) to the Oxfordshire economy by 2040; and
(Paragraph 4.22 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))

¹SH is projected to employ 1,345 staff at its new facility, when potential displacement and supply chain multiplier are taken into account, the anticipated job generation is 1,126 – page 2 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022).

- SH investment will add to the economy £360M to the Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy.

(Paragraph 4.22 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))

- 2.11 SH is a socially responsible employer that seeks to have a positive impact on the local community and where its employees play centre stage in its operation. SH delivers social benefits to both its workforce and the wider community through the National Themes Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) Measurement Framework.
- 2.12 TOMs is a framework that seeks to deliver social values through specific themes: Promoting Local Skills and Employment (jobs); Supporting Growth of Responsible Business (Growth); Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities (Social), and decarbonising and safeguarding our world (Environment). The following sets out how SH deliver its social values to each of these criteria at its existing Eynsham facility, and would continue to do so at the new facility at Symmetry Park, Oxford North.
- 2.13 The proposed relocation and expansion of SH to Symmetry Park, Oxford North will provide the opportunity to scale up the depth and breadth of the social value offer, reflecting the proposed significant expansion of its workforce with a clear opportunity to embed itself into the community in close proximity to the proposed development.

Jobs: Promoting Local Skills and Employment

- SH works in partnership with local secondary and primary schools. A senior SH employee acts as an Enterprise Advisor to the local secondary school working collaboratively to optimise the school's engagement and interaction with business. Through the school's initiative, the SH Eynsham facility hosted interview skills and CV sessions for secondary school pupils, mentoring of students and hosted 3 factory tours for 20 students.
- SH run an Apprenticeship programme (up to NVQ Level 3), with 15 apprentices employed at any given time, either working at the factory in Eynsham or in the classroom, across a 3-year programme.

Growth: Supporting Growth of Responsible Business

- SH places significant emphasis on supporting the wellbeing of its staff through the principal areas of their; physical and mental health, nutrition and medical care and assistance. To this effect SH will provide, such facilities as (not exhaustive), an onsite gym, yoga session, mental health and nutrition workshops, and a WellPoint Kiosk where the workforce can access health information sessions, such as Stroke Awareness.

Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities

- SH supports its employees in engaging with their local community through a combination of allowing time to be spent volunteering every year (each SH employee is allowed to spend 2 days of company time volunteering per year supporting local charitable organisations and events) and contributing to charitable fundraising. Other events include, SH employees voting to support a charitable partner which for the last 3 years was Cancer Research UK, with the workforce raising over £25,000.

Decarbonising and safeguarding our world

- SH employees of the existing Eynsham facility have established a Biodiversity Team which supports the local Eynsham Nature Recovery Network (ENRN). A Biodiversity Team, of 20 employees of the Eynsham facility, arrange events such as, company meadow walks, wildflower planting and animal box making workshops. The Biodiversity Team also support the production of local wildlife information boards in partnership with ENRN and local schools.

- 2.14 It is anticipated that, once planning approval has been achieved, the development of the new facility will commence in the second quarter of 2022, with the facility becoming operational in the first quarter of 2024. There will be a phased closure of SH Eynsham facility, with the workforce being transferred to the new HQ and the Eynsham facility being closed by 2030.

3.0 THE SITE AND ITS CONTEXT

- 3.1 The boundary of the site fronts the A41 road and extends across several open fields that are currently in agricultural use. There are a number of buildings in agricultural or commercial use located in the north east part of the site.
- 3.2 The eastern extent of the site is defined by field boundaries and hedgerows, the Grange Farm Industrial Estate, and Lower Grange Farm. The Wendlebury Brook defines the western edge of the site, flowing from north to south towards a small area of woodland, where its course then changes to flow east across the site, before passing under the A41.
- 3.3 Generally, ground levels fall from north to southeast, from approximately 77.50 metres Above Ordnance Datum (mAOD) to approximately 64.00 mAOD.
- 3.4 Fields within the site are enclosed by hedgerows having few associated mature trees. The arable use offers negligible ecological value. A site survey has found the agricultural land to be of moderate quality (Grade 3b), which is not categorised as the best and most versatile.

- 3.5 The Environment Agency's flood map indicates that the majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1. It therefore has a 'low probability' of river flooding, with less than a 1 in 1,000 annual probability (<0.1%). A small proportion of the site, located immediately adjacent to the Wendlebury Brook, is located within Flood Zone 2 where there is currently a 'medium' annual probability of river flooding (1% - 0.1%) in any year.
- 3.6 Footpath 161/4/20 traverses the site and crosses the A41 into the village of Wendlebury. At present there are no formal crossing points, but there is a pedestrian refuge area provided in the central reserve of the A41.
- 3.7 There are no designated heritage assets (i.e. world heritage sites, scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens or registered battlefields) located within the site.
- 3.8 Tritax Symmetry acknowledge that the site forms part of a larger parcel of land where it has a controlling interest. This larger parcel of land is being promoted for employment use through the Cherwell Local Plan review and the Oxfordshire Spatial Plan. The promotion of a larger area for employment development through the development plan process is not a material planning consideration for the determination of this application. This application for a new SH facility should be determined on its own merits.

4.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The proposed development is a state-of-the-art manufacturing and research and development facility to accommodate the SH operation. The existing former agricultural buildings on the site will be demolished. The facility consists of up to 56,162.2sqm (GIA) of Class use B2 floor space (and other ancillary uses) providing:
- Single storey production facility (constructed in 2 Phases);
 - Ancillary production spaces including workshops office areas;
 - Three storey office accommodation;
 - Hard standing for external plant and car parking area;
 - Service yards and loading bays;
 - Waste management area;
 - Security Gatehouse;
 - Energy Centre Enclosure; and
 - Multi use games area.
- 4.2 The site will be developed in two phases, as set out below. The whole of the site will be set out in Phase 1, including the estate road, car parking, the service yard and associated structures, landscaping and the production facility and office accommodation. Phase 2 consists of the extension of the production facility by 19,400sqm, to a total production area of 44,563sqm.

	Phase 1	Phase 2
Production Area (GIA)	25,163sqm	19,400sqm
Office accommodation (3 floors)	10,363sqm	
FMB (GIA)	1,168.9sqm	
Gatehouse (GIA)	67.3sqm	
Sub Total	36,762.2sqm	19,400sqm
TOTAL	56,162.2sqm	

Jobs

- 4.3 The total cost of the construction and development of the site has been estimated by Savills to be around £80million. This will generate around 670 construction jobs. There are currently 528 members of staff at the SH Eynsham facility. Over 90% of these employees live within 20 miles of the site and 42% live in Cherwell. The type of job split is 60% process operators, with the other 40% being engineers, R&D, HR, administrative and management staff.
- 4.4 The new facility, when fully operational (following the closure of Eynsham), will provide 1,345 staff across all functions, with the existing 528 members of staff transferring to the new facility. SH operate a shift pattern of 3 shifts a day, 7 days a week. The likely shift pattern will be:
- Production 06:00 to 14:00 (anticipated 338 employees)
 - Production 14:00 to 20:00 (anticipated 338 employees)
 - Production 20:00 to 06:00 (anticipated 338 employees)
 - Office 06:00 to 20:00 (anticipated 300 employees)

Access

- 4.5 Access to the site will be achieved via the creation of a new signalised junction on the A41. This junction will comprise two ahead lanes in each direction, together with dedicated left and right turning lanes on the north and south bound approaches respectively for vehicles wishing to access the site.
- 4.6 The Estate Road off the A41 will have a separate vehicular access to the staff and visitor car parking area, which will include, car parking space, motorcycle parking spaces and cycle stands. A further vehicular access for HGVs will be provided to access the manufacturing area of the facility. The development includes 474 car parking spaces, including 24 disabled spaces and 120 electric vehicle charging spaces, 160 bicycle parking spaces, 14 trailer spaces, 15 van spaces and 15 motor cycle spaces.

Ecology

4.7 The proposed development will demonstrate a net biodiversity gain. It will do this in part by incorporating into the soft landscape scheme the following features:

- New woodland planting;
- New hedgerow/linear woodland planting;
- New grassland (on inner slopes of landscaped bund);
- New stream corridor;
- Wetlands in SUDS basins; and
- Species-rich wildflower grassland to be created within areas of green open space to provide nectar-rich habitats for pollinating insects such as bees, butterflies.

Sustainable Urban Drainage

4.8 The drainage of the Site will be managed by a Sustainable Urban Drainage System (SUDS). The SUDS will incorporate swales and below ground storage facilities, to ensure that the 1 in 100 years plus 40% climate change storm event can be contained on site. The run-off rate will not exceed the existing greenfield run-off rate.

Landscape

4.9 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) accompanies the planning application. The findings of the LVIA informed the site layout and the eventual landscape strategy. The landscape strategy involves the following:

- Existing boundary hedgerows and trees would be retained where possible (with buffers to the proposed development), reinforced and brought into regular, long-term management;
- Creation of a landscaped buffer from the proposed development to protect and enhance retained boundary features of landscape and ecological interest;
- Provision of structural landscaping, native trees and shrubs that reflect the local context throughout the scheme to maintain a buffer to the wider setting. Particularly within the northern areas of the site, existing landscape features would be reinforced with additional planting measures in order to maintain the 'green' setting to the wider rural setting;
- Provision of landscape screening, in the form of landscaped bunds and native tree planting, to properties and PRow in close proximity to the site;
- Native heavy standard tree planting is proposed within landscape buffers to fragment views of the development, particularly for receptors in close proximity to the north-eastern and eastern boundaries;
- Additional structural landscaping proposed to the western boundary, enhancing the landscape corridor that aligns the M40 and providing visual screening to the development from the M40 and the wider context to the west;

- New scrub planting to comprise density of blackthorn to provide new egg-laying opportunities for brown hairstreak butterflies, and shelter for small mammals, birds and other wildlife;
- Species-rich wildflower grassland to be created within areas of green open space to provide nectar-rich habitats for pollinating insects such as bees, butterflies and moths; and
- The landscaping will complement the existing landscape features of the site and character of adjacent uses and rural areas.

Sustainability Elements

4.10 The following sustainable features are embedded within the design, further details are contained in the sustainability statement accompanying this application

- Plant will achieve a minimum EPC rating A;
- Buildings will be delivered to 'net zero carbon in construction' to accord with the UK Green Building Council's definition;
- The development will achieve a minimum rating of BREEAM Excellent for the fit-out certificate;
- Incorporate substantial on-site renewable energy generation through solar PV coverage on the roof;
- Provide on-site cycle storage and shower facilities to encourage employees to cycle to the site; and
- Provide Electric Vehicle Charging points for staff and visitors.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) requires the determination of planning applications to be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The Development Plan comprises the:

- Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1);
- 'Saved' policies Local Plan 1996 (November 1996);
- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need September 2020; and
- Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Plan (Part 1- Core Strategy) September 2017.

5.3 The relevant planning policies of Cherwell District's development plan are set out below:

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) (CLP)

- Policy PSD1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Policy SLE1 – Employment development
- Policy SLE4 – Improved transport and connections

- Policy BSC2 – Effective and efficient use of land
- Policy ESD1 – Mitigating and adapting to climate change
- Policy ESD2 – Energy hierarchy and allowable solutions
- Policy ESD3 – Sustainable construction
- Policy ESD4 – Decentralised energy systems
- Policy ESD5 – Renewable energy
- Policy ESD6 – Sustainable flood risk management
- Policy ESD7 – Sustainable drainage systems
- Policy ESD8 – Water resources
- Policy ESD10 – Biodiversity and the natural environment
- Policy ESD13 – Local landscape protection and enhancement
- Policy ESD15 – Character of the built environment
- Policy ESD17 – Green infrastructure
- Policy INF1 - Infrastructure

‘Saved’ policies from the adopted Local Plan 1996 (November 1996) (LP)

- Policy C28 – Layout, design, and external appearance of new development
- Policy TR10 – Heavy goods vehicles
- Policy ENV1 – Development likely to cause detrimental levels of pollution

- 5.4 There are no planning policies in the Cherwell Local Plan Review (Part 2) or the Minerals and Waste Plan relevant to this planning application.

The Cherwell Local Plan

- 5.5 Development plans contain broad statements of policy, many of which may be mutually unreconcilable. It is hence important when considering the merits of a particular planning application to establish whether there is ‘dominant’ policy whose provisions are most relevant to the proposals. Policy SLE1 Employment Development is the most relevant policy consideration.

- 5.6 Policy SLE1 comprises two parts, namely;
- i. the protection of existing employment sites and the focus of employment development within the built-up areas of Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington and on strategic allocations included within the CLP; and
 - ii. the circumstances where ‘new employment proposals’ on non-allocated rural sites will be supported.

5.7 As the application site is not allocated in the CLP and is located within the countryside, the proposed development falls within the second part of the Policy. Fundamental to the support for employment developments on non-allocated rural sites are the following:

- i. The need to demonstrate 'exceptional' circumstances.
- ii. The requirement to demonstrate through a robust site assessment that the proposed development cannot be accommodated on land:
 - committed for employment development,
 - allocated for employment development,
 - within or adjoining Category A Villages.

5.8 Thereafter Policy SLE1 sets out Criteria for assessing employment proposals on unallocated sites in the rural area, as follows:

- They will be outside the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated (Bullet Point 1);
- Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate why the development should be allocated in the rural area on a non-allocated site (Bullet Point 2);
- They will be designed to a very high-quality standards using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of the villages and the surroundings (Bullet Point 3);
- They will be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact on the character of a village or surrounding environment (Bullet Point 4);
- The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance (Bullet Point 5);
- The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by car (Bullet Point 6);
- There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites in the rural area (Bullet Point 7).

Other Material Considerations

5.9 Other material considerations include:

- Planning Practice Guidance;
- National Planning Policy Framework; and
- Oxford Cambridge Arc.

National Planning Policy Framework 'The Framework'

5.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied.

- 5.11 Paragraphs 81, 82 and 83 (Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy) are the most significant in the determination of this planning application. Paragraph 81 states that ‘Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt’ and further states that ‘Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development’.
- 5.12 Paragraphs 82 goes on to state that local planning policies are required to:
- Set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;
 - Set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment;
 - Seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services, or housing; and
 - Be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan.
- 5.13 Paragraph 83 of the NPPF recognises the importance of locational requirements for different sectors including ‘making provision for the clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries’.
- 5.14 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 explains that there are three objectives associated with sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. These three objectives are ‘interdependent’ and to be pursued in ‘mutually supportive’ ways.
- 5.15 Paragraph 8 of the Framework states that to ensure that the economic objective of sustainable development is achieved and to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, a sufficient land of the right type needs to be made available in the right place and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improve productivity.
- 5.16 The NPPF introduces the presumption in favour of sustainable development and at Paragraph 10, states that this is ‘at the heart of the Framework’. For decision-taking, Paragraph 11 explains that this means approving proposals, without delay, that accord with the Development Plan. The following sections of the Framework contain policy guidance that is relevant to this proposal:
- Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 5.17 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is online based government guidance. The NPPG provides supplementary and supporting context for the NPPF and should therefore be read in conjunction with the NPPF.
- 5.18 The NPPG provides general procedural guidance on matters including the use of planning conditions and obligations as well as on planning appeals. The document provides guidance on issues of prejudice and prematurity alongside providing detailed technical guidance for both authorities and applicants on the production of planning studies, such as housing and economic land availability assessments.
- 5.19 The NPPG includes guidance across a range of planning issues which are referred to in the NPPF. This includes the importance of good design, general guidance regarding the ‘natural environment’, and further information about issues such as flood-risk and transport, and refers to issues on which local planning policies are usually expected to provide more specific guidance where relevant to the location and/or site involved.
- 5.20 Of particular relevance to this application is Paragraph: 032 Ref: ID:2a-032-20190722:

‘When assessing what land and policy support may be needed for different employment uses, it will be important to understand whether there are specific requirements in the local market which affect the types of land or premises needed. Clustering of certain industries (such as some high tech, engineering, digital, creative and logistics activities) can play an important role in supporting collaboration, innovation, productivity, and sustainability, as well as in driving the economic prospects of the areas in which they locate. Strategic policy-making authorities will need to develop a clear understanding of such needs and how they might be addressed taking account of relevant evidence and policy within Local Industrial Strategies. For example, this might include the need for greater studio capacity, co-working spaces or research facilities.

These needs are often more qualitative in nature and will have to be informed by engagement with businesses and occupiers within relevant sector ’

The Oxfordshire-Cambridge Arc

- 5.21 The Oxford-Cambridge Arc is a national economic priority area set by the Government and covers an area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. The Arc is formed of five administrative counties: Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire, and already support over two million jobs, adds over £110 billion to the economy every year and houses one of the fastest growing economies in England.
- 5.22 The Arc has the potential to become a world-leading and globally renowned centre for business, innovation and investment in a variety of industries, including AI (Artificial Intelligence), advanced manufacturing and life sciences. Furthermore, the Economic Vision for the Oxford Cambridge Arc described Oxfordshire as the ‘global leader in cryogenics, with the most powerful concentration of cryogenics experts in the world’.

5.23 The objectives of the arc are three-fold:

- support long-run sustainable economic growth across the area;
- help to make the area a brilliant place to live, work and travel in – for existing residents and future communities alike; and
- support lasting improvements to the environment, green infrastructure and biodiversity.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 In considering the principle of development Policy SLE1 is considered to be the dominant or most important policy provision for the determination of this application. Consideration is also required to be made to the wider economic and social benefits that would arise from the proposed development, Especially the sustainable development objectives, the need for significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity and the specific ‘cluster’ locational requirements as referenced in the NPPF.

6.2 An environmental statement accompanying the application considers the effects of the development on the topics set out below including landscape, sustainability, residential amenity (through noise, air quality and lighting), heritage and flood risk. A full list of the topics covered under the ES is set out in paragraph 1.6 of this planning statement.

6.3 It is necessary to undertake an assessment of the proposals against the provision of policy SLE1 which may be articulated by posing the following question:

1. With employment development to be focused on existing sites, are there existing or vacant employment sites at Banbury, Bicester or Kidlington or the rural area which could accommodate this development, and are these sites both deliverable and operational by 2024 as required by Siemens?
2. If there are no available existing employment sites are there ‘exceptional circumstances’ to justify consent being granted on an unallocated site?
3. If exceptional circumstances exist, are there sites in or on the edge of Category A Villages that could accommodate the proposal?
4. Whether or not a suitable site can be identified in or on the edge of a Category A Village, does the proposal satisfy the criteria for employment development on a non-allocated site in the rural area?

Assessment of the Principle of Development

6.4 Following the consideration of the proposed development in the context of the provisions of Policy SLE1 it is necessary to consider the compliance of the proposed development with other policies in the development plan. The criteria attached to Policy SLE1 embrace other planning policy issues. As such compliance with a particular criterion may also establish that the proposed development is compliant with a ‘topic related’ policy e.g., say in respect of landscape or heritage considerations.

1. ***With employment development to be focused on existing sites, are there existing or vacant employment sites at Banbury, Bicester or Kidlington or the rural area which would accommodate this development?***
- 6.5 In order to establish whether the proposed development could be accommodated on an existing employment site it is necessary to identify the 'parameters' for the site search by Siemens Healthineers. These locational and operations criteria are set out below:
 - Availability of the land - Operational by the first quarter of 2024.
(Reason: to ensure that the SH anticipated growth strategy is achieved.)
 - Minimum site area of 20ha.
(Reason: to ensure that the building components and infrastructure can be accommodated on the site).
 - The capacity of the site to accommodate to accommodate 55,000sqm.
(Reasons: SH needs a site where the production and office space can be accommodated in one building.)
 - The overall suitability of the location for its headquarters and manufacturing operation.
(Reason: to ensure that the proposed development is able to integrate within the surrounding area effectively).
 - Accessibility of the site for staff travelling to the site other than by car.
(Reason: to ensure the site can be accessed using sustainable modes of transport)
 - The geographical proximity to its existing Eynsham premises.
(Reason: to ensure that the existing specialist workforce is able to relocate to the new facility).
- 6.6 The extent of the site search has been agreed with officers at Cherwell District Council through pre-application discussions and comprises:
 - Land comprising existing or allocated employment sites within Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington and the rural areas. (See Appendix 4 for details of the site search).
- 6.7 Table 1 below identifies the allocated strategic scale (employment within the Cherwell Local Plan) sites analysed within the district. The suitability and availability of each of the strategic employment allocations to accommodate the SH operation has been assessed in the 'Comment' column below. A more detailed assessment of each of the sites is contained in **Appendix 4**.

Table 1: Assessment of Strategic Sites

Policy	Site	Included in Site Assessment	Comments
Bicester Allocated Site			
Bicester (BIC1)	Bicester Planning Policy North West Bicester Eco-Town	Yes	Marketing name: Axis 9, Bicester Developer: Albion Land Site area: 10ha The site is now fully developed with the last two units about to be completed and now let to Arrival and The Menu, both local occupiers. As the site is fully developed, it is not large enough to accommodate the SH development.
Bicester (BIC2)	Graven Hill	Yes	The employment land extends to 26ha. The scale of the remaining land, 18.68ha, after the parcel of land for the approved Barrus development (c7.32ha) has been deducted would not accommodate the SH development. It is understood that the entire commercial element has been sold to a confidential owner / occupier, which CDC will be aware of through their interest in the site.
Bicester (BIC4)	Bicester Business Park	Yes	Site area: 29.5ha. Now known as Bicester Office Park. The remaining 13.01ha is too small and has an irregular shape making it impossible to accommodate the scale of the SH operation.
Bicester (BIC10)	Bicester Gateway/Catalyst Bicester	Yes	Site area: 18ha. The site is too small to accommodate the scale of the SH operation. The site is already majority developed by Albion Land.
Bicester (BIC11)	Employment Land at North east Bicester	Yes	The remaining employment land at North East Bicester is too small to accommodate the scale of the SH operation.

Bicester (BIC12)	South East Bicester	Yes	23.15ha of employment land - 6.66ha included the Wretchwick Green approval and 16.49ha that forms the Symmetry Park logistics park. Symmetry Park includes Units A1 and A2 (occupied) Units B (to be occupied by OCADO), which leave 6.75ha of remaining land to be developed. Neither the undeveloped land within Wretchwick Green (6.6ha) nor Symmetry Park (6.7ha) are large enough to accommodate the SH operation.
Banbury Allocated Site			
Banbury (BAN6)	Banbury 6: Employment Land West of the M40	Yes	The majority of the allocation has been built out and occupied meaning the site is too small for the SH operation. The remaining 10.3ha of undeveloped land within the allocation is located within Flood Zone 3b where development is precluded. This land has been reserved for biodiversity mitigation for the adjoining development located within South Northamptonshire Council.
Banbury (BAN15)	Employment Land North East of Junction 11	Yes	Site area: 13ha. The site is not large enough to accommodate the SH operation.
Rural			
Villages 5	Former RAF Upper Heyford	Yes	Employment on the allocation will be provided by the retention of the existing buildings already in commercial use. These include buildings on the historic air field that lies within a Conservation Area and would not be appropriate for re-use/demolition for the SH operation, in addition to being too small to accommodate SH. The allocation includes a further 13.4ha of employment land. This area is not large enough to accommodate the SH operation.

6.8 The same exercise has been undertaken for other committed employment sites in the District, as set out in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment of Committed Sites

Planning Ref	Location	Description	Notes	Suitable/available
18/01333/F	Bicester Heritage Buckingham Road Bicester (Forms part of Planning Policy BIC8 Former RAF Bicester)	Extension to existing Technical Site to provide new employment units comprising flexible B1(c) light industrial, B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage or distribution) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, together with associated access, parking and landscaping.	The site extends to 1.6ha. The remainder of the site is allocated for heritage tourist development.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required.
18/02160/F	Part Of OS Parcel 0083 North Of 89 Cassington Road Yarnton	Redevelopment of part of the site with new purpose-built buildings for B1 and B8 use including provision for access onto Cassington Road	The site area is 0.72ha.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required/ Use Class not compatible.
19/02708/OUT	Bicester Heritage Buckingham Road Bicester	Outline: - Provide new employment units comprising B1 (Business), B2 (General Industrial), B8 (Storage) and D1 (Education) uses with ancillary offices, storage, display and sales, with all matters reserved except for access	The site area is 10.08ha.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required.

20/00247/F	Land South East of Town and Country Scaffolding Ltd Tramway Road Banbury	Erection of three B1 (c) light industrial units	The site area is 0.54ha.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required.
19/02081/F	Land adjacent to Unit E25 Telford Road Bicester	Erection of four Class B2 units of varying sizes with associated car parking and landscaping - Resubmission of 19/00545/F	The site area is 0.8ha.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required.
20/02139/F	E P Barrus Ltd Launton Road Bicester OX26 4U	Demolition of existing VOSA buildings and the erection of two new commercial building	The site area is 0.6ha.	Not suitable – will not accommodate the scale of development required.
21/03177/F	Axis J9 Howes Lane	Full planning application for employment development (use classes E (g) (iii), B2 and or B8) and associated parking and servicing	The site area is 7 HA	Not suitable- will not accommodate the scale of the development required. Planning consent is yet to be granted.

- 6.9 A further assessment of the urban areas of Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington has been undertaken to establish that there is no urban area of land that lies vacant, or awaits redevelopment of a scale to accommodate the SH Operation.

Conclusion

- 6.10 The analysis above reveals that there is no allocated employment site of a strategic scale and no other site committed for employment within Banbury, Bicester or Kidlington that can accommodate the SH requirements.
- 6.11 On this basis, the next stage is to consider whether exceptional circumstances exist in relation an unallocated site.
- 2. *If there are no available existing employment sites are there 'exceptional circumstances' to justify consent being granted on an unallocated site?***

- 6.12 The policy test is for the applicant to show exceptional circumstances to justify, in principle new employment development on unallocated land. The Framework states:

‘Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential. (Paragraph 81)

Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations. (Paragraph 83)’

- 6.13 SH has been established at Eynsham for some 40 years. SH has built up an established supply chain and skilled personnel to form a cluster within the cryogenics sector. The 2015 Science and Technology Facilities Council estimated that the Oxfordshire cryogenics cluster contributed £97 million to the UK economy annually. Subsequently, Oxfordshire’s Local Industrial Strategy (2019) stated that the county is a global leader in cryogenics. Alongside Oxford Instruments and SH, it identified Oxford Cryosystems, Quantum Cryogenics, Innovative Cryogenic Engineering, and Thames Cryogenics as key businesses. The Economic Vision for the Oxford Cambridge Arc concurred, asserting that “Oxfordshire is the global leader in cryogenics, with the most powerful concentration of cryogenic expertise in the world”.
- 6.14 The proposed investment by SH is of some £80m, with the provision of 1345 (net increase of 1,126) jobs in the highly specialised super conducting magnet technology. This investment and jobs opportunities entirely meet the objectives of the Oxfordshire industrial strategy.
- 6.15 The fact that there is no suitable allocated or committed sites available that meet this investment requirement is in itself a crucial consideration in establishing ‘exceptional circumstances’.
- 6.16 The phrase ‘exceptional circumstances’ should be given its ordinary meaning within the proper context, and means ‘much greater than usual’. The development plan anticipated that employment development needs would ordinarily be met on allocated or committed sites but has acknowledged that exceptional circumstances may exist justifying in principle the provision of employment on an unallocated site.

6.17 Attached is an appeal decision (Ref: APP/M1005/W/20/3265602) that relates to a proposal for the expansion of an existing Business Park into the Nottingham and Derby Green Belt. The applicant had to 'show very special circumstances' why the development should be granted. In granting planning permission on appeal, the Planning Inspector said (Appendix 5):

'The evidence before me demonstrates that the appeal scheme would enable their 7 manufacturing process to cluster. This would allow these businesses to grow, implement more efficient working practices, stimulate new research, development and innovation and increase productivity

I find that the appeal scheme presents very significant opportunities to secure industrial expansion, innovation and efficiencies through integrated operations. These are benefits of the particular appeal proposal which, because of land availability, could not be achieved on alternative non-Green Belt land and would otherwise demand wholesale relocation of these significant operations beyond the borough

...there is a range of inter-related economic and social benefits that would arise as a result of the proposals. They are set out below. At the inquiry the Council confirmed that they carry substantial weight'. (Paragraph 51).

6.18 In respect of 'very special circumstances', the Planning Inspector said:

'Crucially, it has been demonstrated that the proposal cannot be accommodated elsewhere in the Borough in available non-Green Belt land, or within the confines of the existing business park'. (Paragraph 64).

6.19 It is of course acknowledged that the circumstances of this proposed development are not 'on all focus' with the SH operation. Nevertheless, the principles given 'substantial weight' do have a synergy with this proposal, namely:

- The contribution of the investment to an existing cluster;
- The fact it has been demonstrated the proposal cannot be accommodated on any allocated or committed site for employment or any other land within the existing main urban areas of the District; and
- That a range of interrelated socio-economic benefits would accrue from these proposals.

6.20 The socio-economic benefits of the proposed development are addressed in the SQW Socio-economic Impact Assessment and are summarised below:

- The construction phase of the SH development will bring in the region of capital investment of £80M into the economy;
(Paragraph 4.28 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))
- The SH operation investment will add to the Oxfordshire economy more than £60M to the Gross Value Added (GVA) per annum.

- The SH investment will add to the Oxfordshire economy a net additional £820M to the Gross Value Added (GVA) by 2040;
(Paragraph 4.22 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))
- SH investment will add to the wider UK economy a net additional £360M to the Gross Value Added (GVA) by 2040;
(Paragraph 4.22 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022))
- Siemens Healthineers currently employ 528 staff at its Eynsham facility. Crucial to the success of the SH operation and its anticipated growth both in terms of research and development and magnet production is dependent upon the retention of its skilled workforce. Over 90% of SH workforce live in Oxfordshire with 42% living in the Cherwell District. Over 45% of the existing staff reside in Cherwell District.
- The proposed development allows the retention of SH's existing skilled workforce to remain in Oxfordshire and Cherwell. The loss of the skilled workforce would adversely impact on the success of the cryogenics cluster within Oxfordshire;
- The construction phase of the development will generate 670 jobs
(Page 15 Table 4.5 Estimate of construction Jobs of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022)).
- Once fully operational the SH operation will generate C1,126 jobs (this includes the retention of 528 of the existing Eynsham workforce).

Conclusion

- 6.21 It is submitted that socio-economic benefits from this investment, and crucially the lack of alternative allocated or committed sites to accommodate this investment amount to 'exceptional circumstances' which are compelling and satisfy the requirements of Policy SLE1.
- 3. *If exceptional circumstances exist, are there sites in or on the edge of category A villages that could accommodate the proposal?***
- 6.22 The operation of Policy SLE1, where it has been demonstrated that no allocated or committed employment site is available, and exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated – requires consideration of the availability of suitable land within or on the edge of category A villages.
- 6.23 An assessment of the suitability and availability of land at each of the category A villages (as identified in Policy Village 1) to accommodate the SH operation has been undertaken. Further details on the findings including the sites referenced below is contained in appendix 6. A summary of the findings is contained in table 3 below.

Table 3: Category A Village Assessment

Villages	Comments	Suitable/available Sites
Adderbury	Potential Site 1 Identified: Located to the north west of the village. Bloor Homes has an option on the site for future residential development, therefore the site is not available. The scale of the proposed development would adversely impact the rural character of the village. The site is not suitable. There are no other sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Ambrosden	Potential Site 1 Identified: Located to the north of Ambrosden and extends to the A41. The site would fill the gap between the edge of the village and the A41. The scale of the proposed development would adversely impact the rural character of the village. The site is not suitable. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Arncott	Village does not benefit from access onto the A41. Land surrounding the village is affected by restrictive planning designations, land within Ministry of Defence Ownership and is too small for the SH Operation.	None
Begbroke	Begbroke village and surrounding area lies within the Oxfordshire Green Belt. The proposed development located on the edge of Begbroke would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt precluding development. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Bletchingtondon	Land to the south and east of the village is located within the Oxfordshire Green Belt. The village does not have access to an A road. Heritage assets further preclude development on the village edge. There are no other sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Bloxham	Potential Site 1 and 2 identified: Both sites are located to the south of the village either side of the A361. Both sites do not fulfil the SH operational requirements. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Bodicote	Heritage assets and potential coalescence between the village and Twyford to the south precludes development in this village.	None

Chesterton	Potential coalescence with Bicester and heritage assets precludes development on the edge of this village. The village does not have access to an A road. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Cropredy	Heritage assets preclude development on the village edge. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Deddington	Potential Site 1 Identified: land to the north west adjacent to Banbury Road is optioned for residential development which precludes this site for development. The Deddington Conservation Area precludes development to the south the B4031 and the East and west of the A4260. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Finmere	There are no sites of sufficient capacity to accommodate the Siemens operation. The scale of the operation would overwhelm the character of the village and its surroundings.	None
Fringford	Impact on ecological and heritage assets, as well as the scale of the SH operation precludes development on the edge of this village. The village does not have access to an A road. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Fritwell	The extent of the Conservation Area precludes this village from being able to accommodate the scale and operation requirements of SH. The village does not have access to an A road. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Hook Norton	Heritage and ecological issues precludes this village from being able to accommodate the scale and operation requirements of SH operation. The village does not have access to an A road. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Kidlington	Kidlington and the surrounding area lies within the Oxfordshire Green Belt. The proposed development located on the edge of Kidlington would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt precluding development. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None

Kirtlington	Impact on heritage assets and the scale of the SH operation precludes development on the edge of this village. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Launton	Potential Site 1 and 2 identified: Site 1 would fill the gap between Launton and Bicester, which would erode the rural character of the village. site 1 and 2 would result in an unacceptable impact on the adjacent Heritage assets. The scale of the the SH operation would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the village and its setting. There are no sites therefore that could accommodate the SH Operation.	None
Milcombe	Potential Site 1 and 2 identified: The scale of the proposed SH operation would adversely impact the rural character and the setting of the village. Sites 1 and 2 not progressed to Stage 5 assessment There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Sibford Ferris / Sibford Gower	Impact on heritage assets and the scale of the SH operation precludes development on the edge of this village. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Steeple Aston	Impact on heritage assets and the scale of the SH operation precludes development on the edge of this village. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Weston-on-the-Green	Heritage assets and part of the village being included in the Oxfordshire Green Belt precludes development on the edge of this village. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None
Wroxton	Significant heritage assest, Wroxton Abbey and Grade II* listed parkland, preclude development within or on the edge of this village.	None
Yarnton	The SH operation on the edge of this village would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, where the application site could be considered an alternative options, not requireing release of Green Belt land. There are no sites within the village that could accommodate the SH operation.	None

6.24 Further investigation on potential sites within the rural area that may be suitable and available has been undertaken by a review of the Cherwell Housing and Economic Availability Assessment (HELAA) (February 2018). Table 4 lists those employment sites that have been assessed as suitable for employment use in the HELAA. None of the sites approaches the scale of land that is required to accommodate the SH requirement.

Table 4: Assessment of 'Suitable' land Included in Cherwell Housing and Economic Availability Assessment (HELAA)

HELAA078	Land at 3.45ha Farm, Ploughley Road, Ambrosden	2.8ha developable area	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA013	Land East of Banbury Business Park, Aynho Road, Adderbury	2.27ha developable area.	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA265	Land at Arncott Hill Farm, Buchanan Road, Arncott	0.35ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA041	Land Twenty-Two Cricket Ground, Thorpe Way Banbury	2.41ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA047	Land West of Southam Road and North of Alcan, Banbury	6.9ha of developable eland	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA048	Land east of A361 Junction 11	13ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA054	Land north west of Vantage Business Park, Wykham Hill. Bloxham	1.06ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA056	Stroud Park, Ermont Way, Banbury	0.8ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA069	Land to the west of Himley Village, Middleton Stoney	11.1ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA089	Extension to Bicester Gateway, Bicester	1.6ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA091	Lakeside House, Bicester	2.6ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA12	Land East of the A41, Chesterton	4ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA087	Brymbo Hook Ironworks Station Road, Hook Norton	0.6ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.

HELAA148	Land off Langford Lane, Kidlington	5.8ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility
HELAA162	London Oxford Airport, Langford Lane, Kidlington	204ha Green Belt land	Located within the Green Belt which precludes development.
HELAA170	Land South of Station Field Industrial Park, Kidlington	1.7ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA171	Kidlington Depot, Langford Lane, Kidlington	3.4ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA182	Hatch End Industrial Estate, Middle Aston/Steeple Aston	2.3ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA194	Shipton on Cherwell Quarry (part of a larger mixed-use site 18ha)	3ha of Green Belt developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA213	Land at Baynards Green, Stoke Lyne	2ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA217	Land West of Chilgrove Drive and North of Camp Road, Upper Heyford	9ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA236	Land to the rear of Kelberg Trailers, Weston-on-the-Green	1.93ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.
HELAA242	Apollo Office Park, Ironstone Lane, Wroxton	3.4ha of developable land	Land too small to accommodate the SH facility.

Conclusion

6.25 It is submitted that the above analysis robustly demonstrates that there is no suitable land to meet the development requirements of SH within or on the edge of a Category A village or in the rural areas.

4. *Whether or not a suitable site can be identified in or on the edge of Category A Village does the proposal satisfy the criteria for employment development on a non-allocated site in the rural area?*

6.26 The operation of Policy SLE1 now requires consideration of the proposed development against the 7 criteria set out within the policy. The criteria are broad and overlaps with other planning policies in the development plan. Where this occurs, the planning assessment below covers both policy SLE1 and the related CLP policy.

Policy SLE1: They (employment sites) will be outside the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. (Bullet Point 1)

6.27 The proposed development is outside of the Oxfordshire Green Belt.

Policy SLE1: Sufficient justification is provided to demonstrate why the development should be allocated in the rural area on a non-allocated site (Bullet Point 2); and,

Policy SLE1: There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites in the rural area. (Bullet Point 7)

6.28 The site search assessment has demonstrated that there are no available or suitable sites that are committed for employment development in the Cherwell Local Plan. It is therefore necessary to consider a non-allocated site in the rural area. Symmetry Park Oxford North is the only site within the administrative boundary of Cherwell District Council that could accommodate the SH operation and timeframe for delivery.

6.29 A fundamental objective of SH to achieve its anticipated growth, is to be able to retain its existing skilled workforce, and to attract the required future skilled workforce. Over 90% of its current workforce in its Eynsham facility live within 20 miles of where they work. Symmetry Park Oxford North will facilitate the transfer of SH existing workforce transfer to its new facility. The Symmetry Park Oxford North Site being closely related to the Oxford University 'super conductivity hub', and the Oxfordshire cryogenics cluster will ensure that SH is able to attract the skilled workforce it needs to maintain its position as global leader in superconducting magnet technology.

Impact on the Character of Nearby Villages

Policy SLE1: They will be designed to a very high-quality standard using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of the villages and the surroundings (Bullet Point 3); and,

Policy SLE1: They will be small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impact on the character of a village or surrounding environment (Bullet Point 4).

Policy SLE1: The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance) (Bullet Point 5).

6.30 The local villages in close proximity of the site include Little Chesterton, Chesterton, Weston-on-the-Green and Wendlebury. The Heritage Assessment considers the impact the proposed development will have on the setting and character of the Conservation Areas of Chesterton and Weston-on-the-Green. This assessment forms a robust basis on which to assess how the proposed development will impact the character of Chesterton and Weston-on-the-Green. As Wendlebury does not have a Conservation Area, the LVIA and its conclusion have been used as a basis to assess the impact of the proposed development on Wendlebury.

Little Chesterton

- 6.31 Little Chesterton is located approximately 1 mile to the north of the site. In assessing the impact of the proposed development, the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment concluded that at year 15, proposed landscape measures within the application site, including tree planting, landscaped bunds and a range of proposed new habitat types, would have matured, assimilating the proposed development into the wider landscape context. There would not therefore be a long-term adverse effect on the character of Little Chesterton.

Chesterton

- 6.32 The village of Chesterton is located within a flat landscape to the north-east of the site. The village straddles Alchester Road, with the Conservation Area lying to the east and extending to include most of the historic core of the village. The Heritage Assessment outlines the features of three Character Areas included in the District's Conservation Area appraisal, and concluded that the setting of the Conservation Area is mainly focused on the surrounding field from where its character and appearance can be appreciated. The distance between the site and the conservation area, together with the lack of visual relationship or any historical function, means that the site makes no contribution to the setting or the significance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.33 The Chesterton Conservation Area assessment identified key views into the Conservation Area in each of the Character Areas, none of which encompass views towards the site. The proposed development will not adversely impact the character of the village of Chesterton.

Weston-on-the-Green

- 6.34 The village of Weston-on-the-Green lies to the south-west of the site, separated by the M40. The Conservation Area extends to include almost all the village apart from an area to the north, where a small housing development is being built out. The significance of the Conservation Area largely focuses on its historic layout, listed buildings and the open spaces within the villages. The setting is mainly focused on its surrounding field and approaches from where it is experienced.
- 6.35 Given the distance between the site and the Conservation Area, the lack of a visual and functional relationship and the presence of the M40 across the intervening landscape, the site makes no contribution to the setting or significance of the Conservation Area.
- 6.36 To summarise: The proposed development will not adversely impact the character of the village of Weston-on-the-Green.

Wendlebury

- 6.37 Wendlebury lies to the east of the site separated by the A41. The village lies outside the Zone of Primary Visibility of the site. As illustrated in the LVIA Photo viewpoints EDP 1 to 14, there is very little, if any, intervisibility between the site and the wider context. This includes the views of the site from the village of Wendlebury, where mature trees and scrub that aligns the A41 prevent any views of the site when viewed from Wendlebury. The proposed development will not adversely impact the character of the village of Wendlebury.

The proposed development will preserve the character of the villages of Little Chesterton, Chesterton, Weston-on-the Green and Wendlebury and complies with bullet point 3, 4 and 5 of Policy SLE1.

Impact on Highways and Transport

Policy SLE1: The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance) (Bullet Point 5).

Policy SLE1: The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and will wherever possible contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by car (Bullet Point 6).

Policy SLE4 of the CLP 2031 Part 1 requires that new developments maximise opportunities for access to sustainable modes of travel and seeks improvements to the highway network to mitigate significant adverse impact of traffic generation.

Saved Policy TR10 states that development that would generate frequent heavy goods vehicle movements will not be permitted if they would create traffic problems or adversely affect the amenity of residential areas or villages.

- 6.38 The Applicant has entered into extensive pre-application discussions with Oxfordshire County Council, the Local Highway Authority (LHA), and National Highways. The pre-application agreed such elements as the scope of the Transport Assessment (TA) that will accompany the planning application and inform the Transport ES Chapter and the level of car and cycle parking.
- 6.39 As the end occupier, SH, is known, and as there are no standard trip generation or car/cycle standards, for the proposed bespoke use, it has been agreed with the LHA, that the trip generation (required to assess the impact of the development on the local highway network) and the level of car and cycle parking for the new facility is based on first principal approach, in that it takes its lead from the likely impact/demands of the end user, in this case SH.

- 6.40 As well as assessing the potential trip generation in terms of both car and HGV journeys, the proposed signalised access junction to the site and the Vendee Drive roundabout, were modelled to assess the likely impact that the SH operation would have on the local highway network. The results of the trip generation calculations and junction modelling demonstrated, that the SH operation, will have no adverse impact on the local highway network, and all modelled junction remain operating within capacity (Please see TA for further details).
- 6.41 The Transport Assessment also looked at the cumulative impact on traffic generation arising from committed developments (as set out in the Introduction Chapter 1 of the ES) and the associated traffic that is expected to pass through junction 9. The TA concluded that the proposed development will not have a severe impact from a highway perspective in isolation or cumulatively with the committed developments
- 6.42 It is proposed to provide 474 car parking spaces, which includes 24 disabled spaces, 120 electric vehicle charging spaces, 14 trailer spaces and 160 cycle spaces, with a further 15 motor cycle parking spaces. As agreed with the LHA, these quanta are based on the operational requirements of the SH operation.
- 6.43 The TA demonstrates that the site has a good level of accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, with National Cycle Network Route 51 located to the south of the site, as well as four bus services per hour between Oxford and Bicester accessible from the A41. The S5 bus service provides a link towards Bicester railway stations, making longer distance public transport journeys a viable option.
- 6.44 In order to encourage the use of modes of transport, other than the private car, the proposed development also includes the following sustainable transport measures:
- The inclusion of shared pedestrian/cycle routes within the site that will connect the site with the off-site infrastructure that will be provided adjacent to the A41.
 - The inclusion of a shared pedestrian/cycle path that runs adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A41, which will connect with the National Cycle Network at Wendlebury Lane.
 - The inclusion of dedicated pedestrian/cycle crossing points within the signalised access, which will not only provide effective links to bus stops but also provide significant safety benefits for people that currently use Footpaths 398/1/20 and 161/4/20.
 - Upgrading the bus stops that are currently located adjacent to Footpaths 398/1/20 and 161/4/20 with real time travel information.
 - Car and cycle parking that is consistent with the bespoke SH operation.
 - Operating a Travel Plan that will encourage staff to make use of more sustainable modes of transport when travelling to/from the site.

The proposed development therefore complies with bullet point 5 and 6 of Planning Policy SLE1, policies SLE4 and paragraph 111 of the NPPF.

Impact on Landscape

Policy SLE1: The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance) (Bullet Point 5).

Planning Policy ESD3 of the CLP 2031 (Part 1) requires development to respect and enhance the local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to the local landscape cannot be avoided. Policy ESD 15 of the CLP 2031 (Part 1) requires development to contribute positively to an areas character and identity including respecting local topography and landscape features and trees.

Saved Policy C28 requires control to be exercised over the layout, appearance and design to be sensitive to areas such as Conservation Areas, the AONB and areas of high landscape value.

- 6.45 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) accompanies this planning application. The LVIA provides a baseline assessment of the landscape character and visual amenity of the site. The baseline establishes that; the site does not lie within or contain any nationally or locally designated landscapes; there are few listed buildings in close proximity of the site; there is no visual relationship between the site and any Village Conservation Areas; there are numerous small blocks of woodland throughout the study area; there is one PRow within the site with several others within the proximity, the Alchester Roman site, Ancient Scheduled Monument is located within 1km of the site.
- 6.46 The LVIA concludes that the relatively flat landscape of the site, with most ground level views being filtered by intervening hedgerows and other vegetation, result in limited visibility from the surrounding area. The prominent road infrastructure of the A41 and the M40 corridors impact both in an audible and visual influence on the local tranquillity.
- 6.47 In assessing the impact of the proposals on users of public rights of way 161/4/20 the LVIA concluded that there are significant effects during the temporary construction phase and at operation in the short term. However, the long-term effects are not considered to be significant.
- 6.48 In terms of the impact on users of public right of way 398/1/20 the LVIA concluded that this is not a recorded or promoted view. The LVIA concluded that there are significant effects during the temporary construction phase, at operation in the short term and on completion in the long term.
- 6.49 Whilst the proposals will have an impact on the uses of the public right of way, the benefits in terms of providing an improved and safer pedestrian, access across the A41 are considered to weigh in favour of the proposals.

- 6.50 Views experienced by residential receptors in close proximity of the site are generally screened by mature tree cover within the agricultural context, with middle distance views of the site being screened by the intervening vegetation. Much of the wider study area lies outside the visual envelope where no views of the site are possible. The low number of significant landscape and visual effects confirm the extent to which strategic planting incorporated into the proposed development, as set out in paragraph 4.9 of this statement, would mitigate views, retaining and reinforcing the characteristic landscape fabric and pattern of the application site and assimilating the proposal, into the urban and rural landscape context.
- 6.51 The LVIA and the proposed mitigation measures shown on the Landscape Plan which include areas of new tree planting demonstrate that the proposed development meets the test at Bullet Point 5 of policy SLE1. The proposed development will have no significant adverse impact on the surrounding area.

The proposed development complies with planning policies ESD13 and ESD15 and the appearance and character of the landscape element Bullet Point 5 of Policy SLE1.

Sustainability

Policy SLE1: They will be designed to a very high-quality standards using sustainable construction, and be of an appropriate scale and respect the character of the villages and the surroundings (Bullet Point 3).

Energy Efficient and Ensuring Sustainable Development Policies ESD1, ESD2, ESD3, ESD4, and ESD5 Policy ESD 5 of the CLP requires new commercial developments of over 100sqm floorspace to provide for significant on-site renewable energy provision unless robustly demonstrated to be undeliverable and unviable. Policy ESD 4 requires feasibility assessment to be carried out for such developments to determine whether a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) could be incorporated. Policy ESD3 requires all developments to meet at least BREEAM 'Very Good' standards.

Policy ESD1 seeks to; locate development in the most sustainable locations; to reduce the need to travel and encourage sustainable forms of transport; as well as, including climate change mitigation and resilience in design approaches.

Policy ESD 2 sets an energy hierarchy in seeking to achieve carbon emission reductions. At the top of the energy hierarchy is the 'reducing energy use', in particular by the use of sustainable design and construction measures.

- 6.52 By the use of improved building fabric U values, high efficiency plant, and by focusing on the building shell and system design, Tritax Symmetry has achieved in new buildings a 20% betterment in energy efficiency and CO₂ emission reductions above the targets included in Part L2A of the Building Regulations (Conservation of Fuel and Power in New Buildings Other than dwellings). These construction methods will be incorporated within the proposal. The energy efficiency and reduction in CO₂ emissions will be further improved by the installation of Photovoltaic cells. Planning permission is sought for a PV array extending to 100% of the useable roof area. The level of PV's installed will be subject to individual occupier requirements along with the technical ability and viability to export the electricity generated by the PV into the National Grid. A minimum of 18% of PV of the array will be installed prior to the use commencing.
- 6.53 Level 2 of the energy hierarchy and Policy ESD 4 seeks to supply energy efficiently and to give priority to decentralised energy supply. The accompanying Sustainability Report has assessed a range of renewable sources including District Heating (DH), Combined Heat and Power (CHP) and biomass fuelled Combined Heat and Power (CHP). The suitability of decentralised energy sources is dependent upon the building base load requirements for heat and power. The base load for the proposed development will not be sufficient to support decentralised energy systems.
- 6.54 Level 3 of the energy hierarchy and Policy ESD5 relates to 'making use of renewable energy'. An assessment of the potential to make use of renewable energy systems is included in the Sustainability Report. PVs and air source heat pumps are the only viable and practical method of installing renewable energy within the energy supply strategy. It is proposed that 18 % of the roof will be covered with solar PV Cells. This will provide the normal base load of electricity to the unit prior to occupier specific requirements.
- 6.55 The building design utilises a steel frame structure with light weight walls and roof cladding. This minimises the load bearing capacity of the structure, particularly relating to the roof. The roof structure of the unit has been designed to take further PVs in the future.
- 6.56 Policy ESD 2 supports an energy hierarchy, with reducing energy use at the top; the design approach to including roof lights to reduce the need for artificial light (as well as the well-being effects of natural light) accords with this policy. The use of PVs on the roof has to be proportionate to the energy they can provide and the energy consumption from the use of roof lights.
- 6.57 Planning policy (ESD3) seeks sustainable construction, and particularly, that any new non-residential development will be expected to meet at least BREEAM 'Very Good'. The proposed development will achieve a minimum BREEAM Excellent for the fit-out certificate and therefore exceeds the requirements of policy ESD3.

The proposed development complies with planning policy ESD1-5 of the CLP and the sustainable construction element of bullet point 5 of Policy SLE1.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Policy SLE1: The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance) (Bullet Point 5).

Saved Policy ENV1 Development likely to cause detrimental levels of pollution. This policy seeks to ensure that the amenities of the environment and particular the amenity of residential properties are not unduly affected by development.

- 6.58 The nearest residential dwellings (sensitive receptors) that may be affected by the proposed development are located in the hamlet of Little Chesterton, Chesterton and Wendlebury.
- 6.59 Local and national planning policy seeks to ensure that development locations are appropriate for the proposed use, and that development does not impact the amenity or well-being of neighbouring occupiers. The following elements have the potential to impact amenity and wellbeing of neighbours.
- Noise
 - Lighting
 - Air Quality
- 6.60 The noise chapter accompanying the Environmental Statement assessed the potential noise generating activities of the proposal, including noise associated with traffic. It concluded that the proposal is expected to have a low impact on sensitive receptors and will preserve the existing amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.61 Lighting details accompany the planning application. Operational lighting is required throughout the development to provide minimum levels of lighting to complete activities safely, prevent crime and aid navigation through the site. The lighting scheme will be designed with regard to the minimum lighting levels provided in the following documents;
- CIBSE Lighting Guide LG6 – The Outdoor Environment;
 - Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance for safety and security; and
 - BS EN 12464-2:2014 Light and Lighting – Lighting of Work Places Part 2.
- 6.62 The External Lighting Layout and Illuminance Plot is shown on drawing 20944/E/105 Rev P2. The illuminance plot demonstrates that there will be no light spill on the closest sensitive receptors.
- 6.63 An Air Quality Assessment (AQA) accompanies the planning application. The AQA assesses potential air quality impacts during both the operational and construction phases of the development. The nearest Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) is located along the Queens Avenue and Field Street, that forms the main vehicle route through Bicester.

- 6.64 The potential for construction activities to cause nuisance from dust is considered to have a low/negligible adverse impact. This potential adverse impact can be mitigated by the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). A draft CEMP is submitted as part of this planning application.
- 6.65 The Air Quality Assessment submitted alongside this application assessed the impact of the proposed development on air quality. It found in the absence of mitigation the site is found to have a 'Low Risk' in relation to dust soiling effects on people and property, human health and ecological impacts. Providing mitigation measures are implemented as outlined in the Air Quality assessment residual effects from dust emissions arising from the construction phase are considered to be not significant.
- 6.66 The Air Quality Assessment has also considered the operational effects of the proposed development and found the effects to be not significant.

The proposed development complies with planning policy ENV1 of the saved policies of the Local Plan 1996 and the residential amenity element of bullet point 5 of policy SLE1.

Impact on Heritage Assets

Policy SLE1: The proposal and any associated employment activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including on any designated buildings or features (or on non-designated building or features of local importance) (Bullet Point 5).

Policy ESD15 of the CLP 2031 Part 1 requires appropriate information and assessments to be included within the application submission to enable an assessment of the potential impact of a development upon them to be made. Saved Policies C18 and C25 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996 are also relevant in terms of seeking to protect the setting of listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments.

- 6.67 The Heritage Impact Assessment has considered the impact of the proposed development on designated and non-designated heritage assets within a 2-mile radius from the boundary of the site. Heritage assets have been assessed in order to understand to what degree their setting contributes to their significance; whether the site forms part of that setting; and whether the site makes a contribution to the significance of the asset.
- 6.68 The site does not contain any designated heritage assets. The following heritage assets are identified within 2km of the site; Alchester Roman Site Scheduled Monument; the Chesterton and Weston-on-the-Green Conservation Areas; the Middleton Registered Park and Garden; and, listed buildings within the village of Wendlebury and elsewhere.

- 6.69 The entire site has been subject to a geo-physical survey. The survey identified the presence of enclosures, probably related to a farmstead or farmsteads to the north of the site dating probably to the Romano-British period and some medieval ridge and furrow in relation to the sites more recent agricultural use. Further trial trenching will be undertaken to fully establish the extent and significance of these non-designated heritage assets.
- 6.70 The proposed development will lead to the loss of a historic boundary between the parishes of Chesterton and Wendlebury. The loss is unavoidable and will be partially mitigated by recording prior to development.
- 6.71 The Oxfordshire Historic Landscape Characterisation records the southern part of the site as 18th century piecemeal enclosures subdivided in the late 19th century, and further reorganised in the modern times with the creation of the A41 and the M40. The remainder of the site is recorded as an area of 18th Century piecemeal enclosures subdivided in the 19th century. Neither of these landscape types are rare, with the overall historic value of the site being low.
- 6.72 The assessment concludes that the site makes no contribution to the setting or significance of the Conservation Area at Chesterton or Weston-on-the-Green.

The proposed development complies with planning policy ED15 of the CLP and the designated buildings or features element of Bullet Point 5 of policy SLE1.

Conclusion

- 6.73 The proposed layout and design of the development together with the supporting technical and environmental reports that accompany this planning application demonstrate that the proposed development satisfies the 7 bullet point criteria included in Policy SLE1, namely:
- Bullet Point 1: The development is not located on land within the Green Belt.
 - Bullet Point 2: It has been robustly demonstrated that there are no suitable and available sites within Category A Villages (within or on the village edge) or on allocated sites included in the CLP. The only suitable and available site that could accommodate the SH operation, within its timeframe is the application site.
 - Bullet Point 3: The building will be built to a very high standard using sustainable construction (See the Design and Access Statement for further details).
 - Bullet Point 4: The scale of the development will have no significant impact on the character of nearby villages of Chesterton, Weston-on-the-Green and Wendlebury.
 - Bullet Point 5: The SH operation will have no adverse impacts on the residential amenity of nearby villages; the local highway network; the character and appearance of the local villages and landscape, or any designated or non-designated heritages assets within 2km of the site.
 - Bullet Point 6: The development will not lead to excessive or inappropriate traffic. A genuine choice of transport is available.
 - Bullet Point 7: There are no suitable plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites.

Assessment of other Relevant Planning Issues

- 6.74 The following section assesses the proposed development against other relevant planning policies that have not been covered in the assessment of Policy SLE1.

Flood Risk and Drainage Policy ESD6 Sustainable Flood Risk Management and ESD 7 Water Resources

Policy ESD6, ESD7 of the CLP 2031 Part 1 together resist new development where it would increase flood risk or be unduly vulnerable to flooding. The policy also seeks to ensure that the proposals incorporate sustainable drainage systems in order to prevent increased risk of flooding.

- 6.75 The Environment Agency's flood map indicates that the majority of the site is located within flood risk zone 1 and therefore has a low probability of fluvial flooding, with less than a 1 in 1000-year annual probability of flooding. A small proportion of the site, to the east on the left bank of the Wendlebury Brook, is located within Flood Zone 2 and therefore has a medium probability of flooding.
- 6.76 A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) accompanies the submission of the planning application. The flood resilient design of the site's drainage, through the implementation of a Sustainable Urban Drainage Strategy (SUDs) will ensure that the proposed development can provide a betterment in respect of the surface water discharge rate into the Wendlebury Brook. The development can therefore come forward without increasing the risk of flooding, either on the site, or to the surrounding area.
- 6.77 This betterment will be achieved through a 20% reduction in the rate (Qbar) of surface water discharging from the site into the Wendlebury Brook. This will be achieved through additional underground attenuation storage tanks or oversized pipes that will be provided through the development. Further details are contained in the Surface Water Drainage Strategy accompanying this application.
- 6.78 Through this the proposed development will have no impact on the movement of floodwater across the site; there will be no increase in the floodwater levels due to the proposed development. The proposed development will improve the surface water drainage and risk of flooding within the locality and result in an overall betterment when compared with the existing position. Through the implementation of SUDs, the exposure of people and property to flood risk will be reduced and minimised compared to existing site conditions.
- 6.79 The proposed development complies with policies ESD 6 and 7 of the CLP.

Ecology Policy ESD 10 and 11

Policy ESD10 of the CLP lists measures to ensure the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and the natural environment, including requirement for relevant habitat and species surveys and associated reports to accompany planning applications which may affect a site, habitat or species of known ecological value

Policy ESD11 is concerned with Conservation Target Areas (CTAs) and requires all development proposals within or adjacent to CTAs to be accompanied by a biodiversity survey and report identifying constraint and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

- 6.80 The planning application is accompanied by an Extended Phase 1 survey and detailed (Phase 2) surveys relating to breeding birds, roosting and foraging/commuting bats, otter, water vole, badger, reptiles, great crested newts, and hairstreak butterflies. The surveys confirmed that there are no internationally designated sites within 10km of the Site, although Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies approximately 12km south-west of the Site.
- 6.81 There are seven statutory designated sites within 5km of the Site: Wendlebury Meads and Mansmoor Closes' Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Weston Fen SSSI, Ardley Trackways SSSI, Ardley Cutting and Quarry SSSI, Otmoor SSSI, Arncott Bridge Meadows SSSI, and Bure Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The survey confirmed that, as a result of the separation, the proposed development would not have any negative impact on the SSSI's.
- 6.82 There are three non-statutory designated Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km of the Site: Bicester Wetland Reserve Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Wormough Copse LWS, Weston Wood LWS, and Bowlers Copse Cherwell District Wildlife Site (CDWS). Of these, only Bowlers Copse CDWS is considered, in the absence of appropriate mitigation, to be at risk of adverse effects as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.83 The majority of the Site comprises improved grassland fields, with smaller areas of bare ground, tall ruderal vegetation, buildings and hardstanding that are of negligible intrinsic ecological importance. The Site also includes a semi-improved grassland field, a pond, broad-leaved semi-natural woodland (part of which comprises ancient semi-natural woodland), hedgerows and trees, and a stream that are of Local ecological importance.
- 6.84 Chapter 8 Ecology of the ES assessed the impact of the proposed development at the construction and the operational phases of the proposed development. The ES concluded that with mitigation in the form of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), and the Ecological Construction Method Statement (ECMS), the impact during the construction phase on the designated sites, habitats and vegetation, fauna, and species will be negligible. Paragraphs 8.6.10 to 8.6.15 of Chapter 8 of the ES sets out additional mitigation measures required during the construction phase.
- 6.85 During the operational phase, with mitigation, the impact on the designated sites, habitats and vegetation, fauna, and species will be negligible. The required mitigation measures are set out in paragraphs 8.6.16 to 8.6.21 of Chapter 8 of the ES.
- 6.86 Fundamental to the mitigation and biodiversity enhancements of the site during the operational phase is the Landscape Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) and the soft Landscape Scheme (SLS). The LEMP sets out the creation of new habitat features, and enhancement of existing habitats, to offset the impacts of habitat losses, as a result of the proposed development, to achieve biodiversity net gain. The SLS includes further habitat creation to offset the impacts of habitat losses.

6.87 A net gain in biodiversity will be achieved through the proposed development.

6.88 ***The proposed development complies with policies ESD10 and 11 of the CLP.***

How the Development Contributes to Sustainable Development

6.89 Central to both local and national planning policy is the commitment to sustainable development. The NPPF includes three objectives in achieving sustainable development; the economic objective; the social objective and the environmental objective.

6.90 The following table summarises how the proposed development meets these objectives.

Table 5: How the SH Facility Contributes to Sustainable Development

Economic Objective See Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022) for further details.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital Investment of £80M into the economy; • Indirect investment in local construction companies; • Operational: Net GVA generation of £60m per annum to Oxfordshire's economy, up to £820m by 2040 • Operational: GVA generation of £360m for the wider UK economy by 2040.
Social Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of 670 Construction jobs • Creation of c1,126 permanent operational jobs²; • Creation of a range of skilled and unskilled jobs; • Career progression opportunities for staff; • Through the TOMS frame work create social values TOMs is a framework that seeks to deliver social values through specific themes: Promoting Local Skills and Employment (jobs); Supporting Growth of Responsible Business (Growth); Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities (Social), and decarbonising and safeguarding our world (Environment). • Retention of existing 553 jobs in Oxfordshire that would be lost if the application site did not come forward. • Work place facilities that include canteen, gym and outdoor space to assist in maintaining good levels of health within the workforce; • Open space to include a Trim Trail; • Improvements to cycle routes to enable/encourage staff to cycle to work to assist in maintaining good levels of health of the workforce; and, • Provision of cycle parking and showers to enable/encourage staff to cycle to work to assist in maintaining good levels of health of the workforce.

² SH is projected to employ 1,345 staff at its new facility, when potential displacement and supply chain multiplier are taken into account, the anticipated job generation is 1,126 – page 2 of the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment SQW (January 2022).

Environmental Objective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved infrastructure to reduce the impact of trips generations, reduce the impact of traffic on the local highway, and reduce pollution by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved cycle infrastructure: internal and provision of shared pedestrian/cycle path that runs adjacent to the southbound carriageway of the A41, which will connect with the National Cycle Network at Wendlebury Lane. - The inclusion of dedicated pedestrian/cycle crossing points within the signalised access, which will not only provide effective links to bus stops but also provide significant safety benefits for people that currently use Footpaths 398/1/20 and 161/4/20. - Upgrading the bus stops that are currently located adjacent to Footpaths 398/1/20 and 161/4/20. - Car and cycle parking that is consistent with the standards and guidance that is outlined in Section 3. - Operating a Travel Plan that will encourage residents to make use of more sustainable modes of transport when travelling to/from the site - Ecology – provision of a net gain in biodiversity. - Climate Change: The proposed development is resilient to climate change, through for example use of SUDS and being built to high sustainability standards. - Include SUDs that will ensure that the site will manage its surface water drainage in a sustainable manner, designed with additional capacity (40%) to ensure that the development will not increase the risk of flooding in the site or surrounding area; - Achieve a minimum EPC rating A; - Be delivered to 'net zero carbon in construction' to accord with the UK Green Building Council's definition; - Achieve a minimum rating of BREEAM Excellent for the fit out certificate; - Incorporate substantial on-site renewable energy generation through solar PV coverage on the roof; and - Provide Electric Vehicle Charging points for staff and visitors.
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6.91 It is acknowledged that the development will involve the loss of some [20] hectares of greenfield land; some 13 trees and lengths of hedgerow which are categorised in the Ecological Appraisal. These losses have to be set into context with proposals for new landscaping. It is anticipated that within the developed part of the site and the structural landscaping some 2211 trees will be planted along with 15,152 shrubs. The loss of the trees and hedgerows is considered not to be significant in the context of the proposal for extensive landscaping.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 SH has outgrown its existing facilities in Eynsham and has undertaken a search for its new manufacturing, research and production facility. To meet its bespoke operation within the required

timeframe for delivery, the only option for SH to remain in Oxfordshire is to develop the parcel of land known as Symmetry Park Oxford North.

- 7.2 The site chosen meets the requirements of Siemens Healthineers whilst also ensuring the operation can continue to operate in Oxfordshire within the existing wider cryogenic cluster.
- 7.3 It has been demonstrated that the proposed SH operation will not compromise the Councils employment strategy and the delivery of the employment strategic sites included in the CLP.
- 7.4 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making this means that a proposal accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.
- 7.5 Policy SLE1 is responsive to situations where economic development is not able to be accommodated on committed employment, and in consequence the release of an unallocated site may be justified. The detailed Site Assessment robustly establishes that this investment cannot be accommodated on any committed employment sites or within or on the edge of the Category A Village. No urban land stands idle which might accommodate this scale of development.
- 7.6 In these circumstances it is necessary to demonstrate exceptional circumstances to justify releasing an unallocated site for new economic development and to demonstrate that the criteria of Policy SLE1 are satisfied. It is submitted that the policy tests of SLE1 have been fully satisfied, and that the proposals comply with other relevant policies from the Local Plan. The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the development plan when read as a whole.
- 7.7 If the LPA consider that this proposal is not compliant with provisions of a relevant policy, then an assessment has to be made as to the degree of any conflict and its significance when reading the development plan as a whole. Should there be policy conflict with the provisions of the development plan, it does not mean that an application has to be refused planning permission. The planning system is plan-led not plan determined. Material considerations such as the socio-economic benefits from this proposal would have to be weighed against the identified policy conflict. A decision then has to be made as to where in considering sustainable development, the overall public interest lies.
- 7.8 The LPA would be entitled to make a decision in favour of this proposal even if the proposed development is considered to be in conflict with the development plan.
- 7.9 The proposed development is considered to accord with policies contained within the development plan specifically policy SLE1 which is most relevant to the proposed development. It will result in economic benefits within the surrounding area including increased spending, retention of existing jobs and creation of new jobs. It will also retain an important business within Oxfordshire that forms part of the wider cryogenic cluster. On this basis it is felt that the proposals should be supported by officers and members alike.