

BUILDING ONE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP AT WROUGHTON

PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING STATEMENT

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP | SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP | NOVEMBER 2017 | P16-1396



BUILDING ONE

PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING STATEMENT

THE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP AT WROUGHTON

ON BEHALF OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

**TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 (AS AMENDED)
PLANNING AND COMPULSORY PURCHASE ACT 2004**

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PLANNING | **DESIGN** | **ENVIRONMENT** | **ECONOMICS**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies a request for pre-application advice submitted by Pegasus Group on behalf of the Science Museum Group (SMG). Pre-application advice is sought for the erection of a collections management facility on land at the Science Museum Group at Wroughton (SMGW). This project – called “Building ONE” – is the SMG’s single largest project for twenty years.

Background to Development

- 1.2 SMG comprises: -

- The Science Museum, London
- The Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester
- The National Railway Museum, York and Shildon
- The National Science and Media Museum, Bradford
- The Science Museum Group Wroughton, Swindon

- 1.3 SMG holds the nation’s preeminent collection of science, technology, engineering, medicine, transport and media. The collection is astonishingly diverse – encompassing everything from aeroplanes to anatomical votives. Together these objects tell the story of our world – from the Indus Valley civilisation over 3000 years ago to the cutting-edge microchips that power our connected planet today. The SMG’s mission to inspire futures includes bringing the management of its world-class collection into the 21st century. They seek to continually evolve and improve how people engage with the astonishing stories of creativity, progress and humanity embedded in the collection and transforming how it is cared for, accessed and shared with global audiences. This revolutionary, once-in-a-lifetime project is called *ONE Collection*.

- 1.4 The Wroughton site is already acknowledged as a primary collections storage facility for SMG, currently housing approximately 35,000 large objects. The site is owned by the Board of Trustees of the Science Museum. A second site, at Blythe House in West Kensington, London currently provides alternative storage for 320,000 objects of historic international significance. Blythe House forms part

the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) estate and is leased to SMG, and is shared with the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum.

- 1.5 SMG must vacate Blythe House by the end of March 2023 due to the sale of that premises by DCMS. The Government's decision to sell Blythe House now presents a unique opportunity for SMG to make significant progress towards relocating the collections stored in inadequate conditions at Blythe House, and in the majority of the life-expired hangars at Wroughton, into a purpose-built collections management facility. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for SMG to invest at Wroughton, and further demonstrates the commitment to using the Wroughton site as a sector leading national collections centre. There is no doubt that the development proposal will raise the profile of the site, Wroughton and Swindon, as a location of international significance in the heritage sector.
- 1.6 Building ONE will set a benchmark for museums in sustainable collection care and lead the way in foregrounding the national and international significance of Britain's scientific and cultural heritage. It will also accommodate managed public visits.
- 1.7 The ONE Collection project is ambitious in scope, with wide-ranging impacts. The core activities are: -
- Constructing a purpose-built collections management facility at Wroughton. This 26,000 sq m footprint building will house over 80% (approximately 340,000) of the SMG's Collection in stable, accessible conditions. The building will be low-energy and operationally efficient and set new standards for sustainable collection care.
 - Cataloguing, digitising and re-locating 320,000 objects from Blythe House to Wroughton. SMG's rapid digitisation programme will be unprecedented for the science heritage sector and will create the one of the first and most extensive scientific collections to be universally accessible online. These records are the bedrock of SMG's vision for new forms of digital access and engagement.
 - Engaging audiences with the stories embedded in SMG's collection through a wide-ranging programme of participation projects, public events, art commissions and online content. This programme will be designed to

ensure more of the SMG collection becomes better understood, used and admired, by everyone from students to scientists, engineers, historians, enthusiasts, designers, architects and artists.

- 1.8 SMG vision to develop this site and expand its ambitions in the creation of a national collections centre for the storage and management of heritage collections has already been supported by the Secretary of State for Department for Communities and Local Government in his Decision Letter [and Inspector's Report] relating to the permitted Swindon Solar Farm. It was also acknowledged during the solar park Inquiry that the northern and eastern clusters of buildings represent the most important areas of the site for the development of new storage facilities. This application proposal accords with this vision.
- 1.9 The new building will allow the SMG to relocate the objects contained within the site's life-expired hangars and from the inadequate stores at Blythe House. By relocating the collection from the existing hangars to the new building SMG will for the first time be able to provide optimal storage conditions for the vast majority of the collection within its care, and support the care of other institutions collections throughout the sector. Furthermore, the vacated dilapidated hangars can then be refurbished to create additional facilities for the museum sector. This cannot be achieved with the collections in situ, and without this new facility, the hangars and the collections held within them are at significant risk.
- 1.10 This Statement has been prepared to aid the Council's consideration of this pre-application request and sets out the development proposal in more detail. The subsequent sections of this Statement are divided into: -

Section 2: *Site and Surrounds*

- 1.11 This section contains a description of the application site and its environs.

Section 3: *The Proposal*

- 1.12 This section contains a description of the proposal and the development parameters that would form part of any formal planning application.

Section 4: *Planning Policy Context*

- 1.13 The planning policy context for the site includes both national policy guidance and the statutory development plan which comprise the Swindon Local Plan 2026.

Brief explanations of the key policies pertaining to the development proposal is contained within this section.

Section 5: *Principle of Development*

- 1.14 The fifth section discusses the issues surrounding the principle of development which are considered to be important to the Council's high-level assessment of the pre-application submission. Considerations are addressed in turn and explained in the context of the relevant planning policy outlined in the previous section.

Section 6: *Conclusions*

- 1.15 This provides the concluding comments in relation to the pre-application proposal.

Supporting Documentation

- 1.16 It is envisaged that any formal planning application submission would be supported by the documentation set out below. Please clarify if such documents would be required and are adequate to satisfy the Council's local validation requirements for the planning application.

- Planning application drawings;
- Planning Statement;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Ecological Assessment;
- Drainage Strategy and Flood Risk Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Ground Conditions Assessment;
- Heritage and Archaeological Statement;
- Transport Statement; and

- Statement of Community Engagement¹.

¹ Consultation with the local community and key stakeholders is being progressed in tandem with the pre-application submission to Swindon Borough Council.

2. THE SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

The Wider Site – The Science Museum Group at Wroughton

- 2.1 The SMGW occupies a former RAF airfield base (operational from the 1930's to the 1970's) and is located approximately 6.5km south of the centre of Swindon and 1.4km south of the intervening village of Wroughton. The SMGW has occupied the site since 1980.
- 2.2 The site extends to 220 hectares (545 acres) and contains the remnants of the former RAF Wroughton military air base including the runways, hangars and associated buildings, as well as woodland and private open space used for sheep grazing. The site also houses the Swindon Solar Farm on the southern half of the site and the 'Hive' research facility for the University of Bath.
- 2.3 The landscape context surrounding the site, is open and rural, with both arable and pasture farmland that extends to the higher land to the south, known as Barbury Hill and its associated chalk scarp. To the north of the wider SMGW site lies a further scarp slope that is heavily wooded, separating the site from the village of Wroughton. Further to the north lies the M4 motorway corridor and the market town of Swindon, located at the head of a wide valley known as the Vale of White Horse. The remainder of the land to the north of the Site is interspersed with small local roads that link numerous small villages and farmsteads.
- 2.4 To the east and west of the site is a continuation of arable and pastoral farmland located between two scarp slopes that are approximately 3km apart, along with the villages of Broad Hinton, Chiseldon, the hamlet of Uffcott and residential areas of Thorney Park, Langton Park and Beranburh Field.
- 2.5 To the south, the landform steepens as it climbs the escarpment that is for the most part open, with limited vegetation. Further to the south and beyond the escarpment the open agricultural landscape continues as part of the Marlborough Downs, interspersed with occasional equestrian centres (paddocks and grass race tracks), with a few local roads connecting the settlements of Avebury and Marlborough at an approximate distance of 7.0km.

Planning Unit

- 2.6 The site is a single planning unit that is in use for museum related activities. All other activities on the planning unit, such as the lease of hangars for storage purposes, the solar park, the research facilities, the use of runways for research and storage activities and use of managed grasslands for grazing are ancillary to the main use.

The Development Site & Previously Developed Land

- 2.7 The development footprint of Building ONE is located in the northern half of SMG's site and occupies a parcel of managed grassland located between the taxiways and runways. The 2014 Public Inquiry for the solar park confirm the PDL status of the entire planning unit whereby the Inspector and the Secretary of State both agreed that the entire curtilage of the previously developed land extends out to the perimeter fencing of the unit and includes the grasslands in between the former runways and taxiways. The Secretary of State decision also specified that the improved grasslands within the site cannot be regarded, in its own rights, to have a high environmental value.

Access

- 2.8 Vehicular access to the site is currently provided via an existing priority T-junction at Red Barn Gate from the A4361 Devizes Road. It is understood that the existing access has an achievable visibility splay of 215 metres to the nearside kerb looking to right at the junction at a setback of 2.4 metres and a visibility splay of 172.7 metres looking to the left. The unnamed access road continues southbound for approximately 170 metres to a gated access leading to the SMGW site. The unnamed access road forms a cul-de-sac approximately 370 metres to the south. The carriageway measures approximately five metres and the road is subject to the national speed limit.
- 2.9 The A4361 Devizes Road runs parallel to the western boundary of site. Within the vicinity of the site, the A4361 is a single carriageway road and travels in an approximate north-south direction and connects Swindon town centre with Devizes, via the A361 to the south of the site. The A4361 Devizes Road also serves as a bus route from Swindon to Devizes, via Wroughton.

Designations

- 2.10 The development site is located within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which covers an area of approximately 668 sq miles between Reading and Swindon to the east and north, and Andover and Devizes to the south and east.
- 2.11 The Avebury World Heritage Site (WHS) is located at an approximate distance of 7.5km from the development site.
- 2.12 There are thirteen scheduled monuments within 5km of the proposed development Site including a grouping centred on Barbury Castle and includes adjacent field systems and earth works approximately 1.25km at their closest point to the south.
- 2.13 There are no local landscape designation within or immediately adjoining the proposed development site.

Planning History

- 2.14 The SMGW has an extensive planning history. The industrial context of the site originates from the 1940s. Work on Wroughton Airfield began in 1939 and was completed in 1940, for aircraft storage, with its use escalating throughout World War II. In 1943 two further runways were added. In the post-war years the site was used for adapting aeroplanes, as a repository for aircraft waiting to be scrapped, and for servicing helicopters. The latter function gave way to the Royal Navy taking over the site in 1972.
- 2.15 The planning history for the site is complex and the key recent applications and permissions are identified below.
- 2.16 **Planning Permission S/17/0153:** Refurbishment of Hangar C3. This included the complete refurbishment of the hangar by way of removing and replacing the existing asbestos cement cladding. The application was submitted on 26 January 2017 and duly granted on 7 June 2017.
- 2.17 **Planning Permission S/16/1994:** Erection of a 2.4-metre-high perimeter fence and erection of 10 no. CCTV cameras at the Wessex RXCA Hangar. The application was submitted to the Council on 17 November 2016 and duly granted on 16 March 2017.

- 2.18 **Planning Permission S/13/0809:** Large scale ground mounted solar park granted on 18th March 2015 by Secretary of State Direction (Ref: APP/U3935/V/14/2216792).
- 2.19 **Planning Permission S/14/1755:** This consent effectively relates to the variation of condition 1 imposed on S/14/1755 which extended the temporary planning permission from November 2014 to November 2015.
- 2.20 **Planning Permission S/14/1710:** The proposal is to construct an enclosure for an environmental chamber on the site of the existing Building Research Park and the HIVE. The application was submitted on 2 October 2014 and approved on 28 November 2014.
- 2.21 **Planning Permission S/14/0344:** This implemented planning permission relates to the change of use from disused runway/ events space to a short-term research and development facility for the testing automated barrier systems for Dartford Tunnel barrier upgrades. The change of use supports the ambition shared by both the Science Museum and members of the Swindon business community and Borough Council officers to see the site used to enhance the Research and Development. The application was submitted on 1 March 2014 and granted on 9 May 2014. A temporary planning permission was secured until 30th November 2014.
- 2.22 **Planning Permission S/13/0079:** This implemented planning permission relates to the construction of a two-storey experimental building, a single storey materials store and up to sixteen single storey experimental 'pods'. Buildings are for the purpose of evaluating the environmental performance and durability of novel, low carbon, low environmental impact construction materials and systems, and to develop effective monitoring and management technologies. The application was submitted on 17 January 2013 and approved on 6th March 2013.
- 2.23 **Non-Material amendment** was approved on 26 February 2014 which related to the reorientation of the main building and the 16 pads.
- 2.24 **Planning Application S/12/0717:** Change of use of land and buildings from indoor leisure karting (Class D2) to a mixed use comprising indoor leisure karting (Class D2) and car auction site (Sui Generis) and associated works at C2 Hangar. The application was registered on 17 May 2012 and refused on 12 October 2012.

- 2.25 **Planning Permission S/12/0327:** Installation of solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on land north of Hangar D2 at the Science Museum. The application was received on 3 March 2012 and permission was duly granted on 16 April 2012. The permission relates to the installation of 50kw solar arrays on land associated with the Science Museum.
- 2.26 **Planning Permission S/10/0727:** Erection of 2 wind turbines, 1 Erection of 2 no. small wind turbines, 1 no. tracking solar array, 1 no. fixed solar array, 1 no. solar array mounted on one of 3 no. control cabins and ancillary development. The application was submitted on 13 May 2010 and planning permission was duly granted on 7 July 2010.
- 2.27 **Planning Permission: S/10/0656:** Refurbishment of Hangar C1. This included the complete refurbishment of the hangar by way of removing and replacing the existing asbestos cement cladding. The application was submitted on 30 April 2010 and duly granted on 8 July 2010.
- 2.28 **Planning Permission S/08/1903:** Temporary use of runways for vehicle storage and erection of a temporary unit (maximum 12 months). The application was received on 27 September 2008 and temporary planning permission granted on 8 January 2009. Planning permission has not been implemented.
- 2.29 **Planning Permission S/07/2942:** Change of use from museum (Class D1) to data storage facility (sui generis) at Hangar L3. The application was submitted to the local planning authority on 10 December 2007 and planning permission for the change of use was duly granted on 4 March 2008. Planning permission has not been implemented.
- 2.30 **Planning Permission S/06/2678:** This implemented planning permission relates to the change of use of existing building to library and associated works. The application was received on 30 October and permission granted on 21 December 2006.
- 2.31 **Planning Application S/05/3110:** Outline application for the storage, conservation and display of the National Museums' collections in an educational and inspirational manner; incorporating the phased delivery of a purpose-built national collections centre with ancillary catering, retailing and accommodation facilities; sustainable business enterprise and sustainable research and development; all to be integrated within a restored and managed landscape, use

classes D1, B1, C1, Sui Generis and ancillary A1 and A3 - Means of Access not reserved. The application was received on 25 October 2005. The application was considered by the Planning Committee on 23 May 2006 whereby it was resolved that the Director of Planning be authorised to grant planning permission following the referral of the application to the Department of Community and Local Government and, amongst other issues, subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement. The application was subsequently withdrawn.

- 2.32 **Planning Permission S/05/2827:** This implemented planning permission related to the temporary change of use from 30 November 2005 to 23 December 2005 (24 days) from Museum Storage (B8) to Christmas Party Event (Sui Generis). The application was submitted on 20 September 2005 and approved on 25 November 2005.
- 2.33 **Planning Permission S/05/0457:** This implemented planning permission relates to the change of use from engineering workshops to conservation workshop and exhibition spaces with associated visitor facilities. The application was submitted on 9 February 2005 and permitted on 20 June 2005.
- 2.34 **Planning Permission S/04/2664:** Change of use of Hangar C2 to indoor leisure karting. The application was submitted on 12 July 2004 and subsequently permitted on 24 November 2004.
- 2.35 **Planning Application S/01/3694:** Use of all existing buildings and central areas of the runway for corporate and commercial driving events for a maximum of 45 days in each calendar year. The application was submitted on 29 November 2001 and subsequently withdrawn.
- 2.36 **Planning Application S/01/3839:** Use of buildings and central area of runways for commercial events for a maximum of 20 days in each calendar year. The application was submitted on 29 November and subsequently withdrawn.
- 2.37 **Planning Permission S/00/0036:** Related to the continued use without complying with condition 10 of permission T97.949/RJ at C2 hangar. The application was submitted on 11 January 2000 and permitted on 7 August 2000.
- 2.38 **Planning Permission T/97/0949:** Change of use from storage to leisure karting centre at C2 hangar. The application was submitted on 23 July 1997 and permitted on 8 December 1997.

- 2.39 **Planning Permission S/02/3921:** Renewal of previous temporary planning permission T97/0949RJ for leisure karting and associated use at C2 hangar. The application was submitted on 11 December 2002 and permitted on 11 June 2003.
- 2.40 **Planning Permission S/00/1472 (Outline):** Demolition of the former RAF Princess Alexandra Hospital site (development area was circa 26.3 hectares) and redevelopment consisting of conference facilities, residential, office and community uses together with associated open space. The application was submitted on 18 July 2000 and outline permission granted on 22 April 2002. Separate reserved matters applications were then approved for office development, residential units, and conference centre.
- 2.41 **Planning Permission S/03/1966:** Erection of conference centre (reserved matters) at the former RAF Princes Alexandra Hospital site. This reserved matters application was submitted on 10 June 2003 (pursuant permitted outline masterplan S/00/01472). The reserved matters were approved on 19 November 2003.
- 2.42 **Planning Permission S/03/0880:** Erection of office development (reserved matters pursuant to permitted outline masterplan S/00/01472). This reserved matters application was submitted on 17 March 2003 and approved on 9 December 2003.

Planning History Summary

- 2.43 The planning history set out above gives recognition that the principle of improving and providing additional collections management and educational facility at the SMGW has previously accepted by the Swindon Borough Council².
- 2.44 The planning history demonstrates that the site is a unique site within the AONB whereby the policy and development control position is one of fostering appropriate development that is linked to the Science Museum Group as opposed to restricting development.

² As per resolution to grant of Planning Application S/05/3110

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.1 The development proposal relates to the erection of a collections management facility measuring approximately 289m by 91.5m and providing a development footprint of 26,000 sq m with up to 9,000 sq m of additional mezzanine together with associated car parking, servicing and access arrangements. The maximum height of the collections management facility would be 12m.

3.2 The storage unit will be subdivided into the following areas (note these dimensions are approximate): -

<i>Use</i>	<i>Space</i>	<i>Footprint</i>
Stores	Object Store	23,534 sq m
	Collections Study	200 sq m
	Conservation Workshop	500 sq m
	Photography Studio	160 sq m
	Conservation Freezer	116 sq m
	Conservation Laboratory	200 sq m
	Conditioned Store	On mezzanine
	Special Collections Store	160 sq m
Services & Welfare	Staff Welfare	70 sq m
	Toilets	30 sq m
Logistics	Inward Transit	250 sq m
	Loading Bay	320 sq m
	Transit Storage	260 sq m
	Outward Transit	200 sq m
Total		Mezzanine 9,000 sq m
		Building Footprint 26,000 sq m

Access and Trip Generation

- 3.3 The development proposal will utilise the existing access arrangements, namely the priority T-junction at Red Barn Gate from the A4361 Devizes Road to the west of the site and then via the site's internal access roads. The internal access routes will follow the existing established routes to the development site.
- 3.4 The applicant anticipates a maximum of 15,000 visitors per year to the Building ONE facility. These would approximately be made up of: -
- Public tours operating on 2 days (2 tours concurrently, 3 times a day) of the week for 30 weeks of the year. On a pre-booked basis (c. 11,000 visitors);
 - School visits facilitated on 2 days of the week for 30 weeks of the year on a pre-booked basis (c.3,000 visitors); and
 - Up to 6 collections researchers 5 days a week for 30 weeks of the year on a pre-booked basis (c.1,000 visitors).
- 3.5 Visitors would arrive by a combination of personal vehicles, coaches and public transport. There would be approximately 35 additional vehicles arriving at site each day, primarily in off-peak times.
- 3.6 Vehicles would be accommodated in existing on-site parking areas with the wider site, the proposal would also provide an additional 12 no parking spaces including 2 DDA spaces.
- 3.7 Non-SMG staff accessing Building ONE by appointment would park at the existing visitor area on site before being escorted to the proposed building.
- 3.8 Traffic associated with the delivery and collection of objects stored at the Building ONE facility will reflect current site operations. The additional collections transport impacts would be minimal, and this is reflected in the proposed layout design which only provides a single loading bay. The additional collections management traffic is expected to be circa three to four HGV movements and three to four LGV movements per week. The majority of these deliveries will take place outside peak hours.

Staffing Arrangement

- 3.9 On completion of the new collections facility, SMG staff numbers are likely to increase from its existing levels of around 20 staff per day to around 50 staff per day working across the site and within the new facility. This may vary at time to time dependant on projects and programme.

Vision

- 3.10 Building ONE will help realise the ONE Collection vision for the SMG collection and enable new generations to discover its relevance to them. These are some of the new ways people will engage: -

An online 'discovery tool' for the endlessly curious

- 3.11 The development proposal represents a true step-change in digital access to the collection. The proportion of objects available to view online will jump from 5% to 75%. Hundreds of thousands of new records will become immediately available through a fast, effective search function. The SMG ambition is to ensure the diversity and richness of the collection is discoverable by everyone – not just those with a particular question in mind. They will invest in an intuitive online tool which visualises the extraordinary wealth of objects of different sizes, forms, materials and ages, and invites users on serendipitous journeys through the collection.

Inspiring international audiences

- 3.12 Building ONE will allow SMG to unleash the collection's most compelling stories. Online, the SMG can weave together extraordinary objects, historical events and powerful people stories into rich multimedia narratives. These will become the go-to destination for exploring the impacts of science on our lives. Evidence shows that the demand for stories about our collection is particularly strong among international audiences – revealing the potential of Building ONE to reach new and more diverse people. A 2016 research study undertaken by Frankly, Green + Webb showed that 67% of visits to the content-rich narratives on the Science Museum website were international (the percentage of international visits to the museum landing page was just 43%). The figures for the National Science and Media Museum reflected this trend too, with 42% of visits to the online collection being from international users.

Educational Resources

- 3.13 This project will transform the SMG Collection into a unique, flexible and accessible learning resource. The digitised collection will complement galleries and programmes across the SMG's museums and, crucially, reach those who are unable to visit. It will be available free of charge to teachers and their students to explore and discover, guided by learning resources that link aspects of the curriculum to particular objects. The applicant will invest in research into how new digital technologies – including 3D scanning – can enhance the classroom experience, for example seeing objects in incredible detail or printing replicas to handle.

From 'behind-the-scenes' to everyone's screen

- 3.14 There is something special about seeing behind-the-scenes. Evaluation of public tours of Blythe House, and wider sector audience research, fully endorse the unique insights and connections that arise from viewing collections in store. While public access to both Blythe House and Wroughton are currently severely limited, the Building ONE collections management facility will enable regular public tours, including educational trips by schools within the Swindon and Wiltshire administrative areas. The SMG will maximise the public benefit by making the facility, as well as the collection, accessible remotely to a virtual global audience – for example extending our partnership with Google Street View to enable people to walk amongst the collection and delivering live-streamed curator-led tours.

Effective Collections Management.

- 3.15 The collection stored at Building ONE forms the backbone of the exhibitions and galleries displayed at the Group's sites around the country. The improved access to these objects as a result of the new facilities, the digitisation and the organised way they will be stored drives real efficiencies in both cost and time, creating a truly game-changing way in which the SMG can turn around objects for display. This shift-change in the way the collections are housed in the building, will enable a much more extensive and rapid loans program – benefiting other museums and galleries both nationally and internationally.

4. PLANNING AND POLICY CONTEXT

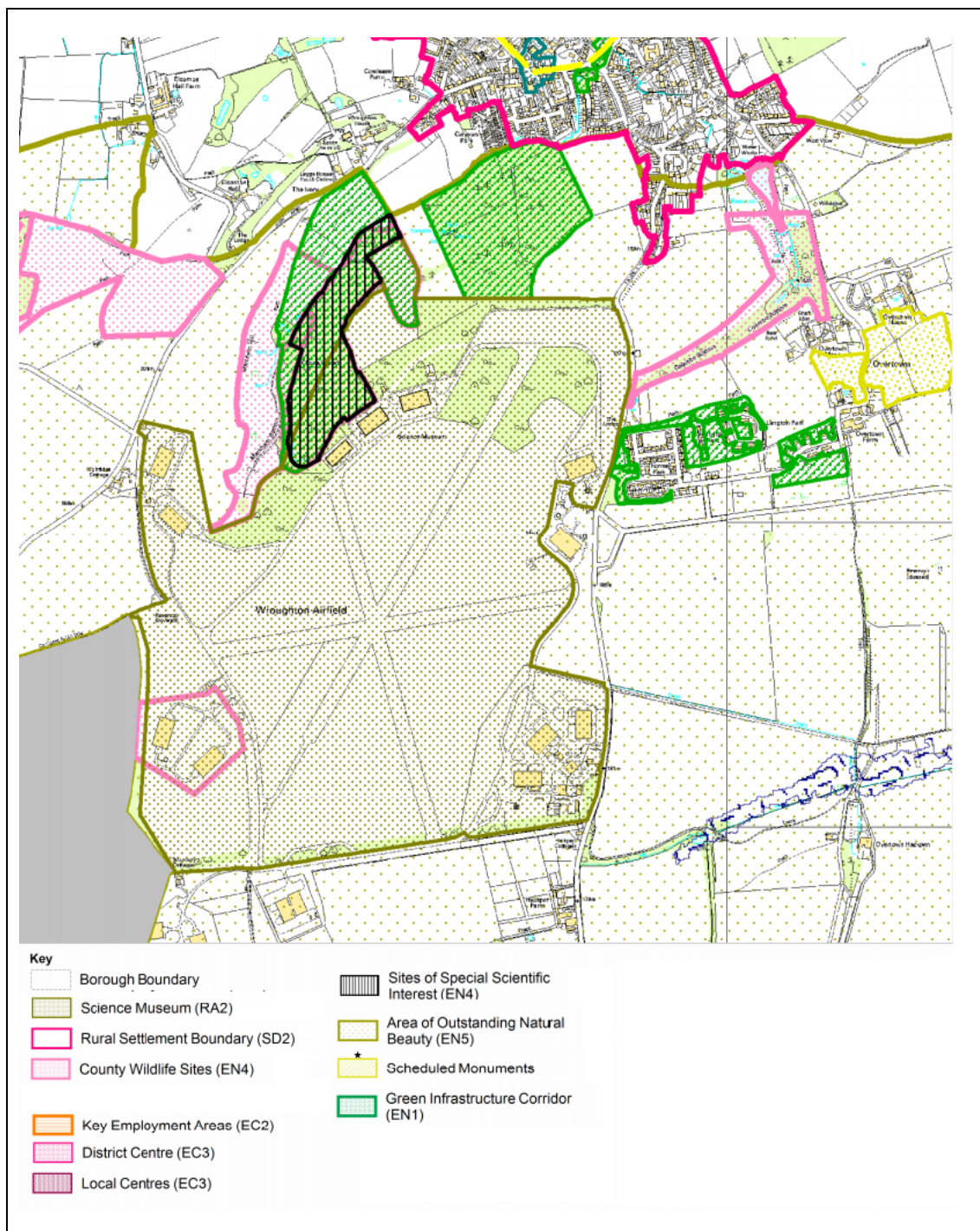
- 4.1 This section of the Planning Statement identifies the national and local planning policy and guidance pertinent to the application site and development proposal. The plan-led approach to development as enshrined by Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, requires development proposals to accord with the adopted development plan unless material consideration indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 Government's Planning Practice Guidance on Determining Planning applications (last updated 1 September 2015) sets out what may be a material consideration. Paragraph 8 of the guidance states ***"A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g. whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission). The scope of what can constitute a material consideration is very wide and so the courts often do not indicate what cannot be a material consideration. However, in general they have taken the view that planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so that the protection of purely private interests such as the impact of a development on the value of a neighbouring property or loss of private rights to light could not be material considerations"***.
- 4.3 The components of the Development Plan pertinent to the application site and development proposal comprises: -
- The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (adopted March 2015).
- 4.4 The material planning considerations include: -
- National Planning Policy Framework (published March 2012);
 - National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended);
 - Written Ministerial Statement Planning for Growth; and
 - Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2026 (April 2016).

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (adopted March 2015)

- 4.5 The Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 was adopted in March 2015 and sets out the local policy framework to deliver sustainable growth to 2026 and beyond. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.6 The Local Plan includes Policies Map which shows the administrative area to which the policies contained in the plan relate. The relevant extract of the Policies Map pertinent to the development site is set out below and shows how the site is located outside Wroughton's settlement boundary and within the SMG's land use allocation.

Illustration: Extract of Local Plan Policies Map



4.7 The policies relevant to the application site and change of use are listed below, the dominant policies are identified in bold: -

- **Policy RA2 Wroughton [and the Science Museum]**
- **Policy SD1 Sustainable Development Principles**

- **Policy SD2 Sustainable Development Strategy**
- Policy SD3 Managing Development
- Policy CM3 Integrating Facilities and Delivering Services
- **Policy CM4 Maintaining and Enhancing Community Facilities**
- Policy TR2 Transport and Development
- **Policy EN5 Landscape Character and Historic Landscape**

4.8 Each policy is discussed in turn below.

4.9 As the site is located within the SMGW's landholding, it is prudent to consider its namesake policy. **Policy RA2** states (inter alia): -

Development at Wroughton shall be in accordance with Policies SD1 and SD2 and should support the following local priorities at Wroughton: -

- Maximise opportunities associated with the Science Museum to benefit Wroughton and the Borough through: (i) Realising tourism benefits associated with the Science Museum; and (ii) Allowing expansion of museum related activities and enabling development providing the benefits of the development are delivered sustainably and do not conflict with other policies in the Local Plan.

4.10 The thrust of the Policy, with regards to development opportunities at the Science Museum, is to deliver proposal which benefit Wroughton and the Borough. The development proposal contributes towards both of these requirements. The policy goes on to identify how enabling development would be promoted providing the benefits of the development are delivered sustainably and do not conflict with the other policies of the Plan.

4.11 In this instance, the development proposal includes the creation of a new purpose-built facility to enable the SMG to facilitate the preservation, conservation and engagement of its stored collections in line with its duty of care under the National Heritage Act 1983.

4.12 The Policy makes reference to **Policies SD1 and SD2** and these are discussed in turn below.

4.13 **Policy SD1** relates to the delivery of sustainable development and sustainable communities. The policy sets out sustainable development principles which should be followed by proposals and states: -

To enable the delivery of sustainable development and support sustainable communities in the Borough all development proposals will: (i) be of high quality design; (ii) promote healthy, safe and inclusive communities; (iii) respect, conserve, and / or enhance the natural, built and historic environments; (iv) assess and address the impact of climate change through mitigation and / or adaption measures; (v) provide or contribute to the assessed local and borough wide infrastructure and service requirements; (vi) contribute to the retention of jobs and growth of the local economy and complement Town Centre regeneration; (vii) be accessible by walking, cycling and/or public transport; and, (viii) use land and resources (such as water, energy, minerals and waste) in an efficient and effective way.

4.14 The amplification to the policy, at paragraph 3.7 of the Local Plan, states ***“Policy SD1 sets out the development principles which underpin this Local Plan and the development proposals which will come forward in the Borough. They represent a sustainable and balanced approach to the provision of new development and respond to [amongst other things] the need for new development to contribute to sustainable and balanced growth and change for the better in the borough”***. The development proposal would meet these requirements.

4.15 **Policy SD2** sets out the sustainable development strategy of the Development Plan. It states that development proposal in locations outside the settlement boundaries will be permitted where, amongst other things, it is in accordance with other policies of the Plan permitting specific development in the countryside. This in turn leads us to Policies CM4 and CM3.

4.16 **Policy CM4** is also pertinent as the collections management facility will provide an exemplar visitor experience. It is envisaged that Building ONE would generate a maximum of 15,000 visitors per year. These would approximately be made up

of public tours, school visits on a pre-booked basis. The Policy states (inter alia):

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a. Proposals for new or extended community facilities will be supported, particularly where: the site is located within or adjacent to existing settlements; it is accessible for all members of the community and promotes social inclusion, and if possible they can be co-located with other community uses.

- 4.17 The reasoned justification to the Policy, at paragraph 4.303, states ***“Proposals for new facilities or the extension of existing community facilities will be supported where they promote the principle of creating and/or maintaining sustainable communities, for example through the co-location of services on a single site. The development of new sites should be located within or adjacent to existing settlements, and be well located to the intended catchment population to maximise the opportunity to travel to these facilities by sustainable transport means, particularly walking and cycling”***
- 4.18 Paragraph 4.308 goes on to list examples of community facilities and these include: ***“museums and art galleries”***. As stated elsewhere in this statement, the SMG site at Wroughton is located adjacent to existing settlement and therefore receives the full support of Policy CM4.
- 4.19 Through **Policy CM3** the Council will seek to encourage the delivery of flexible multi-use buildings.
- 4.20 **Policy SD3** sets out how the Council will take a positive approach when considering development which reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Through this policy the Council will always seek to work proactively and jointly with applicants to find solutions which means the proposal can be approved wherever possible, and to secure proposals that improves economic, social and environmental conditions, and promotes health and well-being for those people living and working in Swindon Borough.
- 4.21 Through **Policy TR2** the Council will seek that development proposal are located where there is good public access in order to reduce the need to travel by car. The amplification to the Policy, at paragraph 4.197 of the Local Plan, states (inter alia) ***“in all cases development should provide a level of access that is***

appropriate to its location, and the type and nature of the vehicles that will use it”.

4.22 **Policy EN5** deals with landscape character and historic landscapes and states: -

a. Proposals for development will only be permitted when:

- the intrinsic character, diversity and local distinctiveness of landscape within Swindon Borough are protected, conserved and enhanced;
- the design of the development and materials used are sympathetic to the surrounding landscape;
- unacceptable impacts upon the landscape are avoided; and,
- where other negative impacts are considered unavoidable, they are satisfactorily mitigated.

b. In meeting the requirements of EN5a, applicants for development should demonstrate how they have taken into account Landscape Character Assessments and assessed the potential impact of the proposal upon the following attributes of the landscape:

- existing landscape form, features, topography and character;
- the contribution of the landscape to biodiversity and wildlife;
- local geology and geo-diversity;
- views, visual amenity and the landscape setting;
- valuable historic and heritage areas and assets;
- environmental amenity such as tranquillity & noise, pollution and light pollution; and,
- the existing social, physical, economic and environmental roles and functions of the landscape at the local and strategic scale (for example as a place of cultural and leisure activity, living, employment and separation of settlements).

c. The North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally recognised area of landscape protection. Proposals within the Borough which are within and or abuts the North Wessex Downs AONB must accord with relevant criteria set out in the AONB Management Plan and paragraph 115 and 116 of the NPPF. Proposals outside the AONB should not adversely affect its setting.

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.23 The National Planning Policy Framework was adopted by Central Government on 27th March 2012. Within the “Ministerial Foreword” it states that ***“the purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development”***. Further, the Ministerial Foreword notes that ***“sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations”***.
- 4.24 The Minister goes on to state ***“In order to fulfil its purpose of helping achieve sustainable development, planning must not simply be about scrutiny. Planning must be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which we live our lives. This should be a collective enterprise. Yet, in recent years, planning has tended to exclude, rather than to include, people and communities. In part, this has been a result of targets being imposed, and decisions taken, by bodies remote from them”***.
- 4.25 The document stipulates that ***“sustainable development is about positive growth - making economic environmental and social progress for this and future generations”***. Following on from this the Ministerial Foreword notes that ***“development that is sustainable should go ahead, without delay – a presumption in favour of sustainable development is the basis for every plan, and every decision”***.
- 4.26 The NPPF is clear that planning decisions must be made in accordance with Planning Law.
- 4.27 **Paragraph 2** states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless

material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 2 continues note that that the National Planning Policy Framework ***“is a material consideration in planning decisions”***.

4.28 **Paragraph 7** confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: Economic, Social and Environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles (inter alia): -

- An Economic Role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- A Social Role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities... with accessible local services that reflect the communities needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An Environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.

4.29 **Paragraph 8** advises that in order to achieve sustainable development, economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

4.30 **Paragraph 10** notes that plans and decisions need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas.

4.31 In applying the NPPF’s presumption in favour of sustainable development, and the test at **Paragraph 14** in particular with regards to decision taking; **it is duly noted that the proposed development accords with the development plan and as such the application should be approved without delay.**

4.32 **Paragraph 17** of the NPPF sets out 12 core land-use planning principles which should underline both plan-making and decision-taking. The land-use principles pertinent to the development proposal and development site are: -

- Take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs;
- Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions;
- encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- encourage the reuse of existing resources, including conversions of existing buildings; and
- proactively drive and support sustainable economic development and identify and then meet the development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth.

4.33 **Paragraph 19** confirms the Government's commitment to supporting sustainable economic growth and that ***"planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth and therefore significant weight should be placed on the move to support economic growth through the planning system"***.

4.34 **Paragraph 28** duly promotes the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. It states that planning policies should support economic growth to create jobs and prosperity by taking a positive approach to sustainable development.

4.35 On the issue of community involvement **Paragraph 66** identifies how local planning authorities should look more favourable upon proposals that take account of views of the community.

4.36 **Paragraphs 69 to 78** of the Framework specifically consider how the planning system can play an important role in facilitating and creating healthy communities. It states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools. The same must be true for other educational

establishments; such as that proposed through this development proposal. Indeed, it guides local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to development that will widen choice in education³.

- 4.37 As the site is washed over by the AONB, Paragraph 116 of the NPPF is specifically pertinent to this application and states: -

Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas [including AONBs] except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- (i) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;
- (ii) the cost of, and scope for, developing elsewhere outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and
- (iii) any detrimental effect on the environment, landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

- 4.38 **Paragraph 197** of the NPPF repeats how local planning authorities should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 4.39 **Annex 2** of the Framework defines previously developed land as: -

Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface

³ The Framework, para 72.

structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.”

- 4.40 Overall, the NPPF confirms that the primary objective of development management is to foster the delivery of sustainable development, not to hinder or prevent it. Local Authorities should approach development management decisions positively – looking for solutions rather than problems so that applications can be approved wherever it is practical to do so.
- 4.41 Under the NPPF, one of the core principles is the need to support and deliver healthier communities including widening the choice in education facilities. The application proposal would achieve both of those things.
- 4.42 The Government’s overarching vision throughout the NPPF is that the planning system does everything it can do to support sustainable economic growth whereby there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended)

- 4.43 The SMG has a statutory obligation under the National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended) to care, preserve and add to the objects in their collection.
- 4.44 As defined in the 1983 National Heritage Act, SMG’s charitable objectives are to: -
- Care for, preserve and add to the objects in its collections;
 - Secure that the objects are exhibited to the public;
 - Secure that the objects are available to persons seeking to inspect them in connection with study or research; and
 - Generally, promote the public’s enjoyment and understanding of science and technology and of the development of those subjects, both by means of the Board’s collections and by such other means as they consider appropriate.

Written Ministerial Statement Planning for Growth

- 4.45 On 23 March 2011, the Chancellor of the Exchequer issued a call to action on growth, and published the Written Ministerial Statement on '*Planning for Growth*'⁴ which presented an ambitious set of proposals to help rebuild Britain's economy. The Ministerial Statement emphasised how the planning system has a key role to play in this, by ensuring that the sustainable development needed to support economic growth is able to proceed as easily as possible. Government's clear expectation is that the answer to sustainable development and growth should wherever possible be 'yes'.
- 4.46 The Written Statement states ***"The planning system has a key role to play in this, by ensuring that the sustainable development needed to support economic growth is able to proceed as easily as possible. We will work quickly to reform the planning system to achieve this, but the Government recognises that many of these actions will take some months to deliver, and that there is a pressing need to ensure that the planning system does everything it can to help secure a swift return to economic growth."***
- 4.47 The Statement also confirms that: ***"When deciding whether to grant planning permission, local planning authorities should support enterprise and facilitate economic and other forms of sustainable development"***.

Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 – 2026 (April 2016)

- 4.48 The Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan is at an advanced stage whereby the Report of the Independent Examiner to Swindon Borough Council on the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan was published on 4 April 2016. Paragraph 1.2 of the Plan identifies how the objectives and views within the plan have come from ideas, views and opinions of Wroughton's residents who have engaged in the plan making process.
- 4.49 Paragraph 1.5 goes on to identify the visions that shape the plan, those pertinent to the application proposal and application site are set out below, these are: -

⁴ The Written Ministerial Statement dated 23 March 2011 was presented within a Letter to Chief Planning Officer '*Planning for Growth*' dated 31 March 2011 (document has not been replaced by the NPPF).

- Encourage development of brownfield land and the use of derelict sites;
- Maintain and encourage improvements to educational facilities; and
- Support and enhance the local economy.

4.50 The development proposal would contribute towards all these requirements.

4.51 **Policy LE5** of the Neighbourhood Plan replicates Policy RA2 of the Local Plan and encourages the expansion of Science Museum related activities and enabling development.

4.52 The Building ONE facility will become a key accessible facility within the local community and which will support local engagement with the collections, further integrate the site within the community and provide additional community facilities. It is clear the development proposal is aligned with one of the key visions of the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2026.

5. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 This section of the Statement contains a high-level appraisal of the development proposal against the relevant material planning considerations. These considerations have been derived from an understanding of the site and its surrounds and the policy analysis of the previous section.

Principle of Development

- 5.2 The SMG has a statutory obligation under the National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended) to care, preserve and add to the objects in their collection.
- 5.3 The Wroughton site is already acknowledged as a primary collections storage facility for the SMG. A second site, at Blythe House in West Kensington, London, is leased from the Government by SMG and provides alternative storage for 320,000 objects of historical, international significance of the collection. However, the Government's decision to sell Blythe House now presents the opportunity for the SMG to make significant progress towards its vision of relocating the inadequate Blythe House stores to a purpose-built facility at Wroughton.
- 5.4 Policy RA2 gives explicit support for development proposals that seek to maximise the opportunities associated with the SMG to the benefit of Wroughton and the Borough throughout. In addition, the Policy is firmly supported by Wroughton Parish Council⁵ who in turn carried over this vision to their Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2016 to 2026 (adopted April 2016). As stated elsewhere in this statement, the policy objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are all derived from the views and opinions of Wroughton's residents who have engaged in the plan making process.
- 5.5 The development will bring clear economic benefits to Wroughton and the surrounding area and it is expected that the positive economic impact will be important at the local level during the construction and subsequent operation of the collections management facility.
- 5.6 The development will provide employment and business opportunities for component suppliers / installers and those involved in construction, transport and

⁵ REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION INTO THE SWINDON BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN dated 5 February 2015, paragraph 196

logistics. Where possible through the procurement regime, local businesses will be contracted for relevant parts of the scope of works over the period of construction, such as labour, construction materials, and plant. There will be additional induced impacts during the construction period with any incoming construction workers (engineers, project managers etc) spending their wages at a local level (restaurants, retail stores etc) and using local accommodation. The wider 'knock-on' effects can in turn support the supply chain of other activities such as the spending habits of retail operations and accommodation providers.

- 5.7 One operational, the staffing levels at the site will increase from 20 on site staff to circa 50 site staff. This will include a wider variety of skilled roles from educational officers to conservation officers. This would provide a significant boost to employment at a local level.
- 5.8 Additional financial benefits that will be delivered as part of the scheme include the resultant taxes (including corporation Tax, Employer National Insurance, Irrecoverable VAT, Income Tax, Employee National Insurance and non-domestic business rates). Whilst these exchequer impacts have not been quantified they duly provide economic benefits.
- 5.9 Furthermore, the extant Development Plan, at paragraph 4.294 identifies how ***"The Science Museum at Wroughton is also an important visitor attraction and heritage asset. The Borough Council supports development in support of the museum activities as long as they are in line with the sustainability principles and in accordance with other policies in this plan as set out in Policy RA2"***.
- 5.10 Overall, there is no doubt that the expansion of the SMG related activities is fully supported at both the Council and community level and this includes the provision of the collections management facility.

Exceptional Circumstances

- 5.11 The applicant understands that the proposal would be viewed as a major development in the AONB and that paragraphs 115 and 116 of the Framework would therefore be engaged. A formal planning application submission for the development proposal would therefore confirm how the development cannot be met by developing outside the AONB or in any other way, and that the proposed development would be in the public interest and in accordance with government

policy on the natural environment. We consider there are four key areas that contribute towards the exceptional circumstances and these are

(i) ***the unique nature of the site***

- 5.12 Given that the SMGW has a specific land holding, they are unlike other developers who can consider alternative sites as part of their scheme development process. The cost and scope of developing elsewhere is not an option for the SMG since it will not secure the financial model required to allow it to preserve, conserve and engage its stored collections for the enjoyment of our and future generations. Furthermore, the nature of the site itself lends exceptional benefits to the storage and management of the national collections including; low risk of flooding, clean air and the existing secure boundary. It is also pertinent that the accessibility to the national road network, minimised relocation and transport costs and availability of existing infrastructure (such as internal site roads, offices etc) reduces the cost impact of this project on the public purse.

(ii) ***community support***

- 5.13 The local support also demonstrates the public interest that prevails at the local level which contributes towards the exceptional circumstances driving this development proposal.

(iii) ***development for the Science Museum Group to assist in the preservation of other collections***

- 5.14 The relocation of these objects and the potential for other national institutions to store their objects at Wroughton continues to raise the profile of the site as a location of international significance in the heritage sector and this itself contributes towards the exceptional circumstances.
- 5.15 The relocation of the objects and collections from Blythe House in West Kensington is a necessity. This is due to the sale of Blythe House by the Government. The entire premises must be vacated by March 2023. This includes the stored collections of the other tenants of the premises - the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum. Due to the complexity of the building, need for three museums to relocate simultaneously and the fragility & significance of the objects, the relocation programme is protracted. SMG must start this element of the programme in the spring of 2020, to meet the Government's

deadline for vacant possession. Therefore, the new facilities need to be complete, and operational, by January 2020 to acclimatise and facilitate mobilisation prior to first movement of the objects.

- 5.16 SMG's vision to develop this site and expand its ambitions in the creation of a national collection centre providing storage and management for its collection has already been supported by the Secretary of State for DCLG in his Decision Letter [and Inspector's Report] relating to the Swindon Solar Farm. As part of SMG evidence for the solar park it was identified how the existing infrastructure at the site does not provide the correct standards for storage and the refurbishment and new build offer the only solutions to SMG aspirations. This project is therefore the realisation of a once-in-generation opportunity to create essential new facilities at Wroughton.
- 5.17 The new building will allow the SMG to relocate the objects contained within the site's life-expired hangars. The structures, and materials from which the hangars were constructed, are now at end of life – the concrete hangars are spalling concrete as the reinforcing bar within the castings corrodes and expands, creating a safety risk for people and the collections. The vast steel doors have rusted through in places and are inoperable in many of the hangars. The roofs on the hangars are losing their bitumen-sheet coverings and bad weather often results in leaks within the buildings. Drainage from the roofs and soak-a-ways are now blocked and inaccessible in many locations, causing localised flooding in and around buildings. Most of the brick-built ancillary buildings have leaks around parapet walls. The tarmac capping on roads and runways is cracked and missing in places. These issues are a major concern to SMG given the importance of what is stored at the site and the requirements placed on SMG under the National Heritage Act 1983 (as amended). By relocating the collection from the existing hangars to the new facility SMG provide optimal storage conditions for the collection and allow the vacated dilapidated hangars to be properly refurbished for reuse. This cannot be achieved if the collections remain in situ.
- 5.18 It was also acknowledged during the solar park Inquiry that the northern and eastern clusters of buildings represent the most important areas of the site for the development of new storage facilities. The application proposal accords with this vision.

(iv) ***Public interest***

- 5.19 The new facility will transform the SMG collection into a unique, flexible and accessible learning resource (available free of charge to teachers and their students), create efficiencies in the way the objects can be used for exhibition within the Groups museums and beyond, and facilitate extensive, well managed, inspiring physical access. The digitised collection will complement galleries and programmes across the SMG museums and, crucially, reach those who are unable to physically visit.
- 5.20 The development proposal is considered to be an acceptable form of development at this location as it allows SMG to move forward towards maximising the opportunities of the site that will benefit this and future generations of Wroughton and the wider Swindon Borough. For these reasons, it is unquestionable that the development proposal accords with the dominant local plan policies, namely Policies RA2, SD1, CM5 and EN5.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 For the reasons outlined in this draft Pre-application Planning Statement, it is considered that the application proposals are entirely consistent with the relevant planning policies and guidance at the local and national levels.
- 6.2 The Wroughton site is already acknowledged as a primary storage facility for the SMG. A second site, at Blythe House in West Kensington, London, is leased from the Government by SMG and provides inadequate storage for 320,000 objects of historical, international significance of the collection. However, the Government's decision to sell Blythe House now presents the opportunity for the SMG to make significant progress towards its vision of relocating the objects in the inadequate Blythe House stores, and the life expired hangars, into a purpose-built facility at Wroughton, and creating a national collections centre that provides an exceptional national resource for use by the public physically and online. This project will also allow SMG through a later programme of works to refurbish the hangars for re-use. The Local Plan seeks to maximise the opportunities associated with the SMG site to the benefit of Wroughton and the Borough by allowing expansion of museum relates activities and enabling development providing the benefits of the development are delivered in a sustainable way and do not conflict with other polices of the plan.
- 6.3 The delivery of a purpose-built collections management facility, which is of national importance, would secure tangible benefits for Wroughton and the wider Borough and represents a significant case in favour of the application proposal.
- 6.4 Overall, the proposals are entirely suitable to the site and its surrounds; consistent with Planning Policy and all relevant material planning considerations; and will achieve a high-quality design as envisaged by the applicant and as required by the Local Planning Authority.

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