

**Application No:** W 12 / 0766

**Town/Parish Council:** Stoneleigh  
**Case Officer:** Penny Butler

**Registration Date:** 25/06/12  
**Expiry Date:** 24/09/12

01926 456544 penny.butler@warwickdc.gov.uk

**Stoneleigh Park, Stoneleigh Road, Stoneleigh, Kenilworth**

Outline Planning Application for the development/redevelopment and use of buildings at Stoneleigh Park to provide a science, business, technology and innovation park (Use Class B1a) and B1b) equine facilities, livestock and agricultural facilities, education and learning (Use Class D1), research (use Class B1b), sustainability and energy, exhibitions, show grounds, hotel and conference facilities (Use Class C1/D1), animal husbandry and animal hospital, visitors centre, camping facilities, together with other ancillary uses and activities including retail, leisure and catering, and associated roads, footpaths, cycle routes, junctions improvements, parking, servicing and landscaping (including off site highways infrastructure) which support the functioning of the Park and demolition of some buildings and infrastructure. FOR LaSalle Investment Management

-----

This application is being presented to Committee due to the number of objections and an objection from the Parish Council having been received.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Planning Committee are recommended to grant planning permission subject to conditions and the completion of a legal agreement following referral to the National Planning Casework Unit due to the scale of development within the Green Belt.

**DETAILS OF THE DEVELOPMENT**

The application is in outline, with all matters reserved for future consideration, except access for which full details are given. There are indicative plans which show the locations and scale of proposed development. The application is intended to address the range of land uses that will need to be accommodated at the Park in the future, the extent of new floor space required and the renewable energy objectives over the next 15 years or so. In December 2010, the Royal Agricultural Society of England (RASE) secured investment from La Salle Investment Management (LIM) to safeguard the future of Stoneleigh Park as a centre for rural excellence. LIM has a 150 year lease at Stoneleigh Park and are responsible for the management and development of the Park, whilst RASE concentrates on its role as the champion of rural and agricultural advancement. There is a shared vision between the RASE and LIM to develop the site as a rural innovation science park with an emphasis on sustainability, the environment, agriculture, equine activities and forestry as well as rural businesses and research activities. It is intended for the site to evolve into a national hub for rural and sustainability research alongside an equine centre of excellence and innovation science park. Its show ground events will continue, as will links with farming and higher education.

The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which has modelled the impact of the development on the local and strategic highway network, and a Framework Travel Plan committed to achieving modal shift. Highway improvements are proposed in two stages. Stage 1 involves the creation of a new roundabout at the

main entrance to increase capacity and improve safety, a new Northern entrance at the existing Gate 3 by installing a wider bridge and redesigning the junction with the B4115, and new signage to direct traffic to the new Northern entrance. These works have been recently granted permission. Stage 2 will involve the creation of a new roundabout at the junction of the B4115, the Birmingham Road and the Stoneleigh Road to increase capacity and improve safety. Included within the master plan is the provision of a bus route running through the Park.

The master plan concept identifies the following key character areas.

- **Welcome & Knowledge Exchange**

This zone would be located near the new northern entrance to the site and provide a key way finder for new visitors to the site offering a visitors centre and retail building.

- **Equine Area**

This zone would lie to the South of the Welcome & Knowledge Exchange and provide a National Equine Centre providing specialised care and training for horses and riders, and a Parelli training building. The existing Equine Arena would be improved with links provided to the National Equine Centre to the North-East, and a new British Equestrian Federation building to the East.

- **New Green Square & Active Grand Ring**

This zone is located surrounding the Grand Ring at the centre of the site and includes the highest concentration of new buildings. The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) building recently approved under application W12/0279 stands on the Western side of the Grand Ring. Further proposed buildings include offices, an education centre, a hotel extension, a retail building, and a replacement cafe/retail building for the existing Farmers Fayre building. The retail space not forming part of the replacement Farmers Fayre building is intended to be split between retail aimed specifically at the farming and rural sectors and small scale retail units aimed at serving the needs of those at Stoneleigh Park (e.g. dry cleaners, hairdressers). The hotel currently provides 58 bedrooms which it is proposed to double. A multi storey car park is also proposed to the South of the Grand Ring. Pedestrian only links are to replace some roads and connect the buildings along with improved landscaping to create a visual link between the AHDB building and NFU building.

- **Equine Well-being Centre**

This is sited to the North-West of the site and comprises a number of stables, equine training and veterinary facilities. Permission has recently been granted for this under application W12/0231.

The demolition of some 6,340sq.m of poor quality buildings is also proposed as part of the development. There are 25 buildings in total, including a row of exhibition stands on 4th Street, the existing AHDB offices and RASE office on the corner of 8th Street near the Grand Ring, and other small buildings throughout the site. The approximate floor spaces of the various facilities compared to the existing are as follows:

<b>Building Type/Use</b>	<b>Existing Floor space (sq.m)</b>	<b>% Total</b>	<b>Demolition Floor space (sq.m)</b>	<b>Proposed Floor space (sq.m.)</b>	<b>% Total</b>
Office (B1)	29,182	30%	1,986	5,795	28%
Science Park/RND	0	0%	0	5,795	5%
Agricultural/Equine	15,161	16%	236	6,975	19%
Retail/Wholesale/Cafe	1,817	2%	315	3,165	4%
Hotel	4,771	5%	0	2,070	6%
Visitor Centre/ Education/ Caravan	0	0%	0	3,525	3%
Events / Conference	35,850	37%	2,786	0	28%
Warehouse/ Storage/ Workshop	6,569	7%	0	0	5%
Residential	1,049	1%	0	0	1%
Service/ Infrastructure	1,947	2%	349	0	1%
<b>Total</b>	96,347	100%	6,340	27,325	100%
<b>Percentage Change over Existing</b>	<b>100%</b>		<b>-7%</b>	<b>+28%</b>	

The total floorspace will therefore increase from 96,347 sq.m to 117,332 sq.m, representing an approximate 22% increase. The building footprint is some 83,032sq.m, with the proposal some 94,959 sq.m, which is an increase of the existing footprint of 14%. The footprint in the mid 1980s was some 94,900 sq.m.

Other proposals include the rationalisation of car parking areas, removal of roadside parking and unnecessary road infrastructure, the permanent location of a campsite at the North-Eastern side of the site and improvements to lighting. Parking spaces overall would be increased by 942 spaces, with speed limits introduced within the site and footpaths on main and secondary road networks to improve the attractiveness of the site to pedestrians and cyclists. A lighting strategy has been developed which limits the height and lux of lighting in areas of the site according to the hierarchy of the road and proximity to ecologically sensitive sites and the Abbey. The height of new buildings will not exceed the highest on site (13.3m- GEA building to the North of the Grand Ring) and the proposed building height zones will reflect those currently existing on site, with lowest buildings (0-5m) at the Northern side of the site where land is raised, tallest buildings (10m+) in the central zone where they are furthest from the Abbey and views from Stoneleigh village, and mid height buildings along the Southern side adjacent to the Abbey.

The application was accompanied by an Environmental Statement, which examines the effects of the proposals under the headings of landscape/visual, archaeology and heritage, ecology and nature conservation, noise and vibration, air quality and dust, traffic and transportation, ground condition and land use, water resources and socio-economics and tourism. The report sets out the nature of each impact and the mitigation measures required to reduce these impacts, and then considers the residual effect. No significant residual environmental impacts are anticipated to result

from any aspect of the development, and the proposal will not significantly affect green space within the site, with a less than 2% reduction in green space. The ES states that the development will not significantly affect the characteristics of the openness of the Green Belt. The regeneration will also provide high quality jobs that can be predominantly filled from the local catchment of the Park, but in the absence of the development it is likely that the contribution that the Park makes to the local economy will decline as the fabric of the Park deteriorates, and it becomes harder to attract high quality science-based businesses and event holders to the Park in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

## **THE SITE AND ITS LOCATION**

The Park was formerly known as the National Agricultural Centre (NAC), and adjoins the Grade I Listed Stoneleigh Abbey site which also contains a number of Grade II and II\* buildings, and has been mainly converted into residential use. Stoneleigh Park is surrounded by the Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden of Stoneleigh Abbey and the Deer Park. The site lies a short distance from the village settlements of Ashow, Stoneleigh and Stareton. The outline application covers an area of some 102 hectares.

The site of the proposal is broadly the same as the boundary used in the Local Plan to define this Major Developed Site, with minor exceptions. There is a small additional triangle of land mid way along the North-Eastern boundary containing a dense group of trees, a further small triangle of land near to the Stare Bridge containing two buildings, a second group of trees adjacent to the B4113 Stoneleigh Road and a further triangle of grassland containing several trees between road ways at the southern tip of the site.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

The NAC at Stoneleigh was established following a permission in 1963, as a permanent home for the Royal Show and the activities of the RASE outside London. In 1980 further permission was granted for the activities of the RASE at the NAC controlled by a section 52 agreement (the fore-runner of section 106 agreements), which allowed the holding of the Royal Show, and other shows, demonstrations, conferences and sales with visitors not exceeding 10,000 people. Two general purpose shows were also permitted with no restriction on visitor numbers. In addition to the main planning permission for the site there have been individual permissions for each of the buildings erected there, and for caravans and tents for limited periods of time associated with particular events. The use of adjoining fields for car parking has been carried out as permitted development for temporary uses.

In 2004 (W04/1068) an outline master plan application was submitted for the development of Stoneleigh Park as a centre of rural excellence, designed to become a national and international centre for consumers and producers in the agricultural and rural industries. A major part of the scheme included significant changes to highways providing access to the site. Two small roundabouts were proposed at the junctions of Stoneleigh Road and the two slip roads of the A46 junction. A new road was also to be constructed leading from further down the Stoneleigh Road, across fields to a new roundabout and the B4115. Access to the Park would then have proceeded across the B4115 via a further roundabout and new bridge across the River. This was to be the only entry to the site for visitors, with the existing access on the B4113 being reserved for staff only.

The site was to be divided in zones for particular uses which included:

- Innovation Park at the West of the site including the National Farmers Union building;
- Countryside and Visitor Area at the centre of the site containing visitor centre, catering, educational and retail uses;
- Countryside Zone at the Northern fringe of the site which would be kept open;
- Conference and Exhibition Zone on the Southern boundary adjoining the Abbey, including replacement conference and exhibition buildings up to 10m high;
- National Equine Centre to the North of the main entrance including indoor events arena, two external arenas and associated stabling, veterinary and educational facilities;
- Livestock Zone to the South of the main entrance;
- Other zones included extending the existing hotel, a children's nursery and facilities management.

The approximate floor spaces of the various facilities were as follows:

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Approx Floor space (sq.m.)</b>
Countryside and visitor area	17,175
Conference, exhibition and event	25,000
Enterprise	23,000 + 23,000 redevelopment of existing
National Equine Centre	7,500
Livestock	8,000
Hotel	11,500
Other areas	750
<b>Total</b>	<b>115,925 sq.m.</b>

The existing building footprint was some 81,250sq.m, with the proposal some 82,600 sq.m, an increase of the existing footprint of 1.6%.

The application was considered by Planning Committee in 2005 when it was decided to approve the application as a departure to the Development Plan after reference to the Secretary of State and completion of a legal agreement covering the following issues:

- occupiers of the Innovation Park to be restricted to those involved in agriculture and other uses associated with food production, equine activities and for rural purposes
- occupiers of the retail space to be restricted
- Green Travel Plan
- no public events such as concerts or festivals
- long term landscape management plan
- previous legal agreement to be revoked.

The County Council as Highway Authority and the Highways Agency also required

- the signalisation of the Thickthorn roundabout on the A46
- highway works as proposed in the application
- downgrading of the Stoneleigh crossroads to a priority junction
- alterations at the Gibbet Hill Road/Stoneleigh Road/Kenilworth Road junction (in Coventry)
- directional signage scheme measures to support the Green Travel Plan including improvements to public transport services, and improvements to facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

The legal agreement was never signed, partly due to the withdrawal of funding for the new road from Advantage West Midlands. The application therefore remains undetermined, although to proceed to determination would require the re-submission of up to date supporting information and re-consideration by Planning Committee. The applicants intention is to withdraw this application if the permission is granted.

A number of planning applications have been submitted since LIM have taken over the site which have aimed to address urgent issues affecting current occupiers, or to secure improvements to highway access.

The following are the most recent applications granted permission:

W12/0231- Proposed equine well-being centre

W12/0230- Proposed roundabout junction at main entrance

W12/0229- Improvements to junction with B4115 at Gate 3

W12/0262- Creation of 111 space car park

W12/0279- Erection of two storey office building

W11/1358- Change of use of CASE building from sui generis to B1 office use

W11/1259- Installation of replacement bridge at Gate 3

## **RELEVANT POLICIES**

- DP7 - Traffic Generation (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP8 - Parking (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP9 - Pollution Control (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP11 - Drainage (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP12 - Energy Efficiency (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP13 - Renewable Energy Developments (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP15 - Accessibility and Inclusion (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Sustainable Buildings (Supplementary Planning Document - December 2008)
- Vehicle Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Document)
- SC12 - Sustainable Transport Improvements (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP6 - Directing New Employment (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- RAP10 - Safeguarding Rural Roads (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- SSP2 - Major Developed Sites (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- SSP3 - Stoneleigh Park (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- National Planning Policy Framework
- RAP15 - Camping and Caravanning Sites (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- Policy RR1 Rural Renaissance - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Policy PA3 High-Technology Corridors - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Policy PA4 Development related to Higher/Further Education and Research Establishments and incubator units - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Policy PA14 Economic Development and the Rural Economy - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- Policy PA15 Agriculture and Farm Diversification - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy
- DP1 - Layout and Design (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP2 - Amenity (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP3 - Natural and Historic Environment and Landscape (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DP4 - Archaeology (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)

- DP6 - Access (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP3 - Protecting Nature Conservation and Geology (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP11 - Protecting Historic Parks and Gardens (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)
- DAP4 - Protection of Listed Buildings (Warwick District Local Plan 1996 - 2011)

## **SUMMARY OF REPRESENTATIONS**

**Stoneleigh & Ashow Joint Parish Council** : Acknowledge that the Park needs modernising and welcome investment but raise the following objections:

- **Conflict with green belt policy**

"Need" for expansion of the existing built area in the Green Belt cannot be demonstrated as there is a huge surplus of similar types of development. The large number of developments currently proposed in the narrow gap between Coventry, Kenilworth, Leamington Spa & Warwick is cumulatively devastating and the environmental and highway effects must be assessed to justify Green Belt development. There is currently some 2,200,000 sq.ft available office space in Coventry, and 500,000sq.ft in Warwick District. Proposed new office space in Coventry and Warwick District, in addition to current availability, totals some 7,996,000sq.ft, and does not include proposed employment allocations in the new Local Plan. The average take up of employment land in Coventry and Warwick District totals 350,000sq.ft per annum, which would equate to a 22 year supply. Office development should be located in urban centres unless there are special reasons for locating elsewhere.

### **1. Intrusion into land of special landscape value.**

Stoneleigh Park adjoins the Grade I Listed Abbey within a Grade 11\* Parkland, and one of only 10 such registered parks. The development of Stoneleigh Park has already compromised the value of the Park, creating visual and environmental "nuisance" to residents at Stoneleigh and the Abbey. Increased car parking and roadways with lighting increase the "busyness" of the site and the visual harm to the rural nature of the site and landscape.

### **2. Scale of development.**

The headline figures provided are misleading. Existing buildings comprise a number of pavilion style buildings to accommodate Royal Show exhibitors and administrative buildings. Many are designed to last 25 years, not 100 years which most buildings are designed for, due to the nature of the Park, but it is proposed to replace them with more substantial buildings suitable for general commercial use. In addition, there are a large number of agricultural/equine events/conference and warehouse/storage areas. The aggregate total of offices is 32,991sq.m, and other uses totalling c. 85,000 sq.m. LaSalle state their vision for Stoneleigh Park is to "transport the site into a centre for rural innovation and science with an emphasis on sustainability, the environment, agriculture and equine and forestry as well as rural business and research activities". Following the demolition of redundant buildings, floor space will increase to 30% over a 15 year period, and create 1,500 more jobs from the existing 1,100, a 140% increase. Whilst the overall area is increasing by a not insignificant amount of around 30%, the actual floor area of proposed office space is 66% and employment from the hotel & visitors centre etc. by 90%. The headline figure of 30% is therefore misleading in terms of the increase in employment area as evidenced by the employment numbers increasing by nearly 2.5 times.

### **3. Sustainability of the development**

The Park lies 5 miles from Coventry and Leamington Spa with poor public transport facilities. Most employees will therefore travel by car with access to the site via country lanes. Further development of a green field site when there are numerous brown field sites nearer centres of population is unacceptable.

### **4. Highways.**

A full assessment of highway issues is required to cover traffic generated by all proposed uses including events. Stoneleigh village already suffers severe traffic congestion at rush hours. Any traffic model should assess the combined impacts of proposals at Stoneleigh Park, Abbey Park, Gateway development and developments outlined in the local plan.

### **5. Existing Uses on the Site**

Stoneleigh Park is being promoted as a national hub for rural and sustainability research and equine centre of excellence and innovation science park. This is commendable and it is suggested that show ground events will continue to offer opportunities to showcase knowledge and trade within the agricultural centre. "Field to the plate" experimental work will stimulate agricultural innovation, contribute to sustainable production and encourage the next generation of farmers. Future planning consents should ensure the Park is a research and technology based centre with the ability to showcase agricultural production methods. Use should be restricted by a Section 106 Agreement, based on the recognised Science Park uses defined by the United Kingdom Science Park Association (UKSPA). Uses on the park are already restricted to agricultural based uses but LaSalle's website offers unrestricted industrial/office uses, and there is a current planning application for the CASE Building (W11/1358) to remove an agricultural based business occupancy condition. LIM seek removal of the condition as it is seen as unnecessary and unreasonable (although current occupiers of the building comply), since it could make it hard to find a new occupier. The case being made is therefore questioned and control over uses should remain.

### **6. HS2**

The master plan takes no account of the route through the Park. The land taken up by HS2 in this area is significant and alongside the approved road improvements, equine centre and proposals for Abbey Park, will seriously impact on the open rural aspect. HS2 must be considered in the context of other developments which may result in urban sprawl.

### **7. Rationalisation of existing buildings**

The existing multitude of standalone buildings are energy inefficient. The proposals do not assess current and future carbon footprints, nor assess how these can be reduced (requiring a reduction in buildings through site rationalisation and refurbishment of remaining).

**Old Milverton & Blackdown Joint Parish Council:** Object. Urban sprawl should be avoided and there is no need to expand business parks in the Green Belt since there are already adequate brown field sites for this purpose, nearer centres of population which would not necessitate private car use; further, the District Council is encouraged to take a strategic view of the many proposals currently advocated on the Green Belt between Coventry, Kenilworth and Leamington Spa.



**Kenilworth Town Council:** Comment that, overall, they welcome the proposals but will monitor the application carefully with regard to its ancillary retail, highway, hotel accommodation and other potential impacts on the surrounding areas such as Kenilworth.

**Public response:** Eight objections have been received from local residents raising the following issues:

- 8.** Increased traffic on rural roads. The current use of the site causes unacceptable traffic delays. Approval should be conditional on provision of a direct link to the A46.
- No traffic generating development to take place until planned road improvements have been implemented.
- Account should be taken in the Transport Assessment of HS2 and the nearby proposals for the Coventry & Warwickshire Gateway and Abbey Park
- Following implementation of the planned highway improvements the ad hoc entrance from the B4113 (behind Grovehurst Park) should be closed, car park 5 should be generally closed apart from exceptional events up to 13 days per annum.
- The general office buildings proposed should be located in a more sustainable location, and are not necessary when substantial vacant office space is available in nearby towns and business parks
- The park should remain a centre for agricultural and related matters. The original consent was only permitted to accommodate RASE, and if no longer required then the site should return to agriculture
- Many of the buildings on site were constructed without planning permission and should therefore be discounted from existing use calculations
- Poor transport links to site
- Increased lighting will harm the rural character and setting of Listed Buildings and the Registered Park
- Site adjoins Grade I Stoneleigh Abbey and within Grade II\* Registered Park, with no justification for further encroachment into these areas

Oxalis Planning on behalf of the Coventry & Warwickshire Development Partnership in promotion with the 'Gateway' scheme on land adjacent to Coventry Airport have written in support of the application which is considered to be complementary to the mix of employment generating uses to be delivered at the 'Gateway'. The fragile state of the national and sub-regional economy demands the acceptance of innovative, imaginative schemes which can help to facilitate the necessary recovery, and this project to revitalise Stoneleigh Park falls into this category.

**WCC Ecology:** Recommend conditions requiring the submission of a landscape and ecological management plan, habitat protection, newt and bat mitigation measures, a lighting scheme and bird, badger, and otter notes.

**WCC Highways:** No comments received to date, these will be reported in the addendum.

**WCC Minerals:** The majority of the application site lies within the County's sand and gravel Minerals Safeguard Area (MSA)/Minerals Consultation Area (MCA). Resource information appears to indicate that the northern part of the site is underlain by river sand and gravel from the River Avon although the depth and quality is currently unknown, however, the master plan does not propose demolition or building work on the sand and gravel resource area. It is not necessary for a minerals survey to be

undertaken as the proposal is unlikely to sterilise the sand and gravel resources within the planning application area.

**WCC Development Group:** No comments received to date, these will be reported in the addendum.

**WCC Rights of Way:** No objection. The removal of vehicular traffic from the section of public footpath crossing the Eastern part of the site is welcomed. Any change of surface to the path will require consent and any planting should be at least 2m away from the line of the path. Standard footpath notes are required.

**Highways Agency:** Further information is required from the applicant to fully understand the impact of the development on the strategic road network, in particular relation to the A46 Trunk Road. The HA directs that planning permission is not granted for a period of three months or until such time as the HAs concerns have been addressed or overcome. Further comments will be reported in the addendum.

**Environment Agency:** No objection subject to a condition requiring a surface water drainage scheme based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the site conditions.

**English Heritage:** Welcome the opportunity for redevelopment of the NAC site, and do not object to the principle of redevelopment, but question the extent to which the historic significance of the site, as a former part of Stoneleigh Abbey's landscape park, has been sufficiently acknowledged in the proposed master plan and query whether the plan capitalises on the opportunity to improve the site's relationship with the registered park and listed buildings. There are positive aspects to the plan, such as the retention of the trees, supplementary planting to protect the setting, reduction in the grid-like layout, constrained areas for new development, and retention of the lodge drive. However, the opportunity to demolish some of the buildings along the south-west boundary has not been taken to improve the setting of the listed building. Equally, some of the planting does not appear appropriate for a more informal Repton landscape. More generally, there is little evidence that the masterplan has been informed by the constraints arising from the heritage assets. It is uncertain therefore whether the application complies with the NPPF. English Heritage's interest in the proposal arises from the proximity of the site to Stoneleigh Abbey, a 'heritage asset' of national significance including a number of Grade I Listed Buildings and a Grade II\* Registered Park.

**Warwickshire Gardens Trust:** No comments received to date.

**The Garden History Society:** No comments received to date.

**Conservation Area Forum:** Raise the following issues: Sustainability and traffic generation issues; the demolition of certain buildings and the replacing with larger, taller buildings; density of areas within the site; retention of landscaping and the introduction of non-suburban species; screening to protect the existing adjacent historical landscape; intensification of site with much higher buildings; the alteration of the existing grid pattern within the site is unsuitable within a rural area; positioning of the larger buildings further away from the important historic area adjacent; prefer more buildings to have an agricultural design.

**Warwickshire Wildlife Trust:** No comments received to date.

**Natural England:** The proposal is likely to affect protected species including bats and great crested newts but the proposed mitigation is acceptable.

The LPA should assess the impact on local wildlife sites, consider the objectives of the local Green Infrastructure Strategy and consider requiring biodiversity enhancements.

**Area Engineer (Flood Risk):** No objection subject to conditions requiring drainage details.

**Environmental Health:** No comments received to date.

**Ramblers:** No objection since the line of the public footpath does not appear to be affected by the proposed traffic island. However, the layout plan does appear to show a redirected roadway to it from within the site.

**Warwickshire Police:** No objection but look forward to commenting on reserved matters applications.

**Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service:** No objection subject to condition requiring provision of water supplies and hydrants.

## **Assessment**

The main issues relevant to the consideration of this application are as follows:

- whether the scale of development complies with Green Belt policy;
- whether the uses are appropriate in this location;
- whether the impact on heritage assets and natural environment is acceptable; and
- whether the impact on highways is acceptable.

### Compliance with Green Belt policy

The NPPF (Para.89) states that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate. An exception to this is where it is for the limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brown field land), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development. The relevant purpose for including land within the Green Belt in relation to this case is safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. It should be noted this policy test supersedes the previous tests within PPG2 Green Belts, with reference to Major Developed Sites, and Local Plan Policy SSP2. The test within the NPPF requires openness to be protected but there is no limit imposed on additional floor space through infilling or redevelopment, therefore, the assessment required is a visual one.

There will be an approximate 22% increase in floor space and a 14% increase in building footprint on the site compared to the existing situation, taking into account proposed demolitions and schemes recently approved. The applicant points out that the footprint would be less than 0.1% greater than the footprint of buildings previously on site in the 1980s, and the proposal would only result in the loss of 2% of green space on the site as a whole. It is also confirmed that there would be no buildings taller than the tallest building on site, and the indicative height zones concentrate the tallest development in the most appropriate parts of the site, away from open areas to the North, and the Abbey to the South.

Indicative plans showing the location of new development have been submitted, but details of design and massing would be subject to further reserved matters applications. The proposed increase in floor space would materially increase the developed part of the site, and the lower increase in footprint would be achieved through a combination of development above one storey and the demolition of existing buildings. The Park as a whole is characterised by buildings of various styles and sizes generally concentrated around the centre of the site, with more dispersed development towards the outer fringes and areas of open grassland in between. The layout of development would infill parts of the site not currently occupied by buildings, most notably plots surrounding the Grand Ring, and would spread development to parts of the site not currently developed, to the North-West and North-East of the site where the equine facilities will be located. The minimal increase in footprint compared to what existed on site in the 1980s is noted, however, the test requires no greater impact than the existing development. In terms of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, the development would not extend outside the boundary of the Park, however, the density of development on site would increase and therefore there would be greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt.

However, the relevant test is therefore whether 'very special circumstances' exist to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. This harm includes that by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, and the NPPF (Para. 88) advises that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt. As with the previous outline application from 2004, there are also a number of very special circumstances set out below that must be taken into account. In the case of the present application however, the harm to the Green Belt is considered greater due to the increased quantum of development.

- Stoneleigh Park is a unique facility of national importance. It has been, and will continue to be, governed by its Royal Charter and all of its activities there are in fulfillment of this charter. The planning application fulfills NPPF objectives regarding the national and rural economies, and will potentially create an additional 1,500 jobs in addition to the 1,100 jobs currently on site. The NPPF (Para.19) advises that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth, and that a positive approach should be taken to sustainable new development which contributes towards achieving a prosperous rural economy (Para.28). By providing a viable future for the Park the proposals would ensure current employment levels are not affected and new jobs created.
1. The application will assist in the implementation of key policies within the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, in particular policies RR1, PA3, PA4, PA14 and PA15, (although its intended abolition means it is a material consideration of limited weight), as well as policies SSP2 and SSP3 of the Local Plan that specifically support the redevelopment of the site for employment uses related to countryside activities.
  2. There are a range of uses within the proposals which do constitute appropriate development in the Green Belt, which include the equine and agricultural uses, engineering operations and replacement buildings (totalling approximately 8,000 sq.m). The application has therefore sought to comply with the requirements of the NPPF with regard to the requirements for redevelopment in the Green Belt. In this context, it is considered that the harm by reason of inappropriateness is not significant.

3. Stoneleigh Park is a major existing institution within the District with a long history of use and has been subject of many previous planning applications. The current application is the first time for the current applicants, following the recession, that an opportunity has been available to take a holistic view of the site and to view as a whole what has previously been a piecemeal development of the site. The opportunities this application has created to gradually demolish less attractive buildings and improve the landscape, environment and management of the site as a whole should be weighed against the fact that as a single application, the application goes beyond planning policy in the NPPF related to Green Belts. Replacing poor design with better design is one of the factors of sustainable development referred to in the NPPF (Para.9) and there will be significant improvements to the visual amenity of the site and its operation as a whole.
4. This holistic approach provides off-site opportunities to provide improved infrastructure to ease highway issues associated with the site, which will be of significant benefit to the wider community and the surrounding road network.

For these reasons, it is considered that very special circumstances do exist to clearly outweigh the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, and that the proposal would therefore accord with the NPPF.

#### Appropriateness of uses

As noted above, Policy SSP2 of the Local Plan supports redevelopment in accordance with the defunct guidance contained within PPG2, and therefore the policy is no longer considered to carry full weight in decision making due to its conflict with the NPPF. Similarly, Policy SSP3 requires development within the Major Developed Site to be related to agriculture, equestrianism and other related countryside activities, but since the designation no longer exists in national planning policy, the weight to be afforded to this policy is similarly diminished. Furthermore, the NPPF (para 28) requires local authorities to support a strong rural economy through the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses and enterprises in rural areas.

In terms of the uses proposed, the majority will comply with the policy requirement of SSP3 and it is noted that the current application proposes a higher proportion of agricultural and equestrian uses than the previous 2004 application. However, the application does seek permission for open B1(a) office and B1(b) research and development floorspace not related to countryside activities set out within Policy SSP3. Whilst the impact of the use of the floorspace will be no different whether the occupier is related to countryside activities or not, given the scale of floorspace in this rural location outside of the town centres, it is considered appropriate to set an upper limit on the amount of B1(a) and B1(b) floor space on site and such a condition is recommended limiting this to the totals proposed. This will ensure the proportion of floorspace remains a third of the total floorspace on site, and that the majority of the uses on site will remain in compliance with Policy SSP3.

The application also proposes additional retail and hotel floorspace, although the scale of this is a third of the retail/catering and hotel floor space proposed by the previous 2004 application. It is considered that the scale of these proposed uses would remain ancillary to the overall development and provide an appropriate level of floorspace to meet the needs of the site occupiers, however, a condition is suggested to ensure the retail floorspace remains ancillary in its nature and of an appropriate scale to the location.

## Impact on heritage assets and natural environment

The NPPF states that, when considering the impact of development upon the significant of a heritage asset (Para.132), greater weight should be given to the asset's conservation, the more important the asset is. Stoneleigh Abbey is a Grade I Listed Building whilst its gardens are Grade II\*. The NPPF (Para.134) states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Policy DAP11 only permits development that does not harm the historic structure, character, principal components and setting of Registered Parks and Gardens.

It is considered that the proposed development would not lead to substantial harm to the heritage assets due to the quantum of development proposed, which will be viewed against the context of the existing Historic Park and the minimal loss of green space proposed. The zoning of tallest buildings away from the southern boundary with the Abbey will further minimise harm, as does the general concentration of development within the existing core rather than extending the spread of built development into open areas to the North. The detailed design of any buildings will be crucial in terms of achieving a long term net improvement to this sensitive setting, and the general design principles provided within the Design and Access Statement provide sufficient assurance that this can be achieved on this site. The redevelopment represents an opportunity to improve the setting of the historic park through more appropriate landscaping informed by research into the historic record, a point raised by English Heritage and which can be controlled by condition. This will also provide opportunities for improving biodiversity in accordance with the NPPF (Para.109), and the layout of new development takes into account the location of veteran and mature trees. It is considered that the development would lead to less than substantial harm, therefore this should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal referred to above. The public benefits consist of improvements to the local road network and the improved viability of the Park with it's associated employment benefits for the wider District, which would outweigh this less than substantial harm, and therefore accord with the NPPF. The proposals are considered to comply with Policies DAP4 and DAP11 since there would be no harm to the Listed Buildings and Registered Park. Whilst it is noted that English Heritage consider the proposal has missed an opportunity to demolish some of the buildings that have greater harm on the setting of the listed building and parkland, it is not considered reasonable for the application to be refused on the grounds that it does not improve the setting of the heritage asset as this is not a policy requirement of the Local Plan or the NPPF.

## Impact on highways

The application was accompanied by a Framework Travel Plan and a Transport Assessment. The TA models the anticipated impacts of the proposed development on the local and strategic road network using a number of traffic models. The modelling data demonstrates that in 2026 the highway network will become increasingly busy with delays and significant queuing becoming commonplace. The proposed development will increase trips to and from the Park, especially in peak hours. Proposed highway improvements works include the consented opening up of Gate 3 and the roundabout at the main entrance, and the proposed roundabout at the junction of the B4115, the Birmingham Road and the Stoneleigh Road. Mitigation measures seeking to achieve a modal shift and reduction in number of vehicle movements to the site include the Framework Travel Plan, and internal changes to the Park to make walking and cycling more attractive. The modelling exercises show that

the net impact of implementing the master plan with the proposed mitigation will have a positive highway impact in comparison to the scenario where the development does not take place. The parking assessment concludes that sufficient parking will be available on site to meet the needs of the development.

Both the Highways Agency and the County Council have been involved in pre-application discussion with the applicant regarding the proposed highway works, however, they have submitted holding objections pending the clarification of information and further modelling work. The applicant has provided this information and is it being reconsidered by the HA and WCC prior to Planning Committee. Subject to the provision of satisfactory further information and these consultees withdrawing their objections, the proposals would be considered acceptable in highway terms, subject to their recommendations regarding the required legal agreements and conditions to ensure the carrying out of highway works and sustainable transport measures.

### Other matters

The Sustainability Statement submitted with the application confirms that as a minimum at least 10% renewable energy will be produced by solar PV panels, in accordance with the Sustainable Buildings SPD. However, the site-wide strategy for the provision of renewable energy will be re-appraised at reserved matters stage to maximise the use of available resources and provide value to the development and its users. This approach would comply with Policies DP12 and DP13.

The majority of buildings on the site lie within Flood Zone 1 therefore the development is acceptable in flood risk terms, subject to the conditions recommended by the Environment Agency and District Engineer.

Reference is made by objectors to the implications of HS2 on the proposed development. There are no policies or safeguarding plans in place which would require development to be refused on the grounds of impact on the HS2 proposal. Although it represents a material consideration, therefore, only very limited weight can be given to it at this stage and this is not considered a reason to refuse the application.

A grant of planning permission would need to be accompanied by legal agreements to cover various aspects of the proposals including a Green Travel Plan for employees and visitors, no public events in the nature of pop concerts, discos, folk, rock or other festivals to be held without prior approval, previous legal agreement to be superseded, and implementation of highway works as recommended by the Highways Agency and Highways Authority.

In view of the timetable for intended phasing which has been submitted, it would be appropriate to grant an outline planning permission with a timeframe longer than normally given. This is reflected in the recommendation given below.

### **CONCLUSION/SUMMARY OF DECISION**

In the opinion of the District Planning Authority, the development does prejudice the openness of the Green Belt and is considered inappropriate development however this is outweighed by the very special circumstances put forward in relation to the economic, environmental and infrastructure benefits of the scheme, does not cause unacceptable harm to the Registered Park and Garden or setting of Listed Buildings, would not cause harm to highway safety (subject to the withdrawal of the Highways

Agency representation and receipt of comments from the Highway Authority), and is considered to comply with the policies listed.

## **CONDITIONS**

- 1 Details of the appearance of the building(s), landscaping of the site, layout of the site and its relationship with adjoining development, and the scale of building(s) (hereinafter called 'the reserved matters') shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before any development begins and the development shall be carried out in full accordance with these reserved matters as approved.  
**REASON** : To comply with Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended.
- 2 Application for approval of the reserved matters, accompanied by all detailed drawings and particulars, must be made to the local planning authority not later than the expiration of eight years beginning with the date of this permission. **REASON**: To comply with Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
- 3 The development to which this permission relates shall begin within ten years of the date of permission or within two years of the final approval of the reserved matters, whichever is the later. **REASON** : To comply with Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 4 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details shown on the approved drawing "Proposed Building Height Zones" contained on page 41 of the Design and Access Statement submitted on 25 June 2012, as amended by any reserved matters approval, and there shall be no development within the areas of the site not coloured on this drawing. **REASON** : For the avoidance of doubt and to secure a satisfactory form of development in accordance with Policies DP1 and DP2 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 5 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until a scheme for the provision of adequate water supplies and fire hydrants, necessary for fire fighting purposes at the site, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The development shall not then be occupied until the scheme has been implemented to the satisfaction of the District Planning Authority.  
**REASON** : In the interests of fire safety.
- 6 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict accordance with the details of surface and foul water drainage works that have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details should include:
  5. A demonstration that the proposed site does not increase surface water run from the site and increase flood risk elsewhere in the catchment for both surface water and foul water mechanisms. A betterment in surface water discharge should be provided.



1. Calculations/models of water discharge from the site to demonstrate that flood storage volumes to attenuate surface water runoff for a 1 in 100 year +30% storm event on the site have been considered.
2. Plans defining the areas of impermeable and permeable surfaces of the existing and proposed site including calculations of these areas in a clear plan.
3. Plans showing the existing and proposed drainage systems including levels, sizes, material and construction details in comparison to finished floor and ground levels along with Manhole schedules, cross and long sections of the site.
4. Plans defining the water catchment areas for the site including off site catchment areas including area and time of concentration.
5. Plans showing the proposed construction phase of site and how they will be delivered.
6. Calculations and percolation test results carried out on the site for the infiltration of water (if used).
7. Plans showing overland water flow paths with arrows.
8. Proposals of proposed Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUD's).
9. A report detailing the proposed maintenance of surface water systems for the site into the future.

**REASON** : To ensure satisfactory provision is made for the disposal of storm water and foul sewage and to satisfy Policies DP9 and DP11 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

- 7 The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced unless and until a scheme showing how 10% of the predicted energy requirement of this development will be produced on or near to the site, from renewable energy resources, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. The development shall not be first occupied until all the works within this scheme have been completed and thereafter the works shall be retained at all times and shall be maintained strictly in accordance with manufacturers specifications. Microgeneration equipment no longer needed for microgeneration shall be removed as soon as reasonably practicable.  
**REASON** : To ensure that adequate provision is made for the generation of energy from renewable energy resources in accordance with the provisions of Policy DP13 in the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 8 Before any development commences on site the following shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and any approved mitigation or protection measures shall be put into place prior to and remain in place during any construction work:
  - a] a detailed scaled plan (to a scale and level of accuracy appropriate to the proposal) showing the position of every tree on the site, and every tree on land adjacent to the site (including street trees) that is likely to have an effect upon or be affected by the proposal (e.g. by shade, overhang from the boundary, intrusion of the Root Protection Area etc) with a stem diameter over the bark measured at 1.5 metres above ground level of at least 75 millimetres.
  - b] a schedule of the trees surveyed as specified in paragraph 4.2.6 of British Standard BS5837 - 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction - Recommendations;
  - c] an arboricultural impact assessment, arboricultural method

statement and tree protection plan (to include protection measures during and after construction and any construction exclusion zones) (in accordance with Clause 7 of British Standard BS5837 – 2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition & Construction) which shall also include any proposal for pruning or other preventative works.

**REASON** : To protect and enhance the amenities of the area, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

- 9 Any landscaping (other than the planting of trees and shrubs) including boundary treatment, paving and footpaths referred to in condition one shall be completed in all respects within the first planting season following the first use of any buildings hereby permitted and the tree(s) and shrub(s) shall be planted within six months of that first use. Any tree(s) or shrub(s) removed, dying, or becoming in the opinion of the local planning authority seriously damaged, defective or diseased within five years from the substantial completion of the scheme shall be replaced within the next planting season by tree(s) or shrub(s) of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted. All hedging, tree(s) and shrub(s) shall be planted in accordance with British Standard BS4043 – Transplanting Root-balled Trees and BS4428 – Code of Practice for General Landscape Operations. **REASON** : To protect and enhance the amenities of the area, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 10 A landscape and ecological management plan, including long term design objectives, long term management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the first occupation of the development hereby permitted. The plan should include details of habitat creation measures including creation and management of bat roosting opportunities (e.g. setting up bat boxes), nesting bird opportunities (e.g. setting up bird boxes), the creation of grassland habitat, native tree and shrub planting, creation/enhancement of waterbodies and associated aquatic and marginal vegetation as well as details of on-going management of the whole site for wildlife. Details of species proposed and sourcing of plants should be included as should locations of bird/bat boxes. The plan should also include details of long-term monitoring of the site, including further species-specific monitoring surveys such as additional bat and amphibian surveys 1 year after completion of works. Such approved measures shall thereafter be implemented in full and the landscape management plan shall be implemented as soon as the approved landscaping is carried out and shall not be withdrawn or altered in any way without the prior written approval of the local planning authority. **REASON** : To protect and enhance the amenities of the area, and to satisfy the requirements of Policies DP1 and DP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.
- 11 The development hereby permitted shall not commence until adequate measures have been taken to protect the retained habitats present within the application site, the Stoneleigh Park pLWS/Ecosite 06/37 and all other adjacent designations during development. A barrier, such as a

wire fence, must be erected before works start. This fenced area must include a buffer zone of at least 2-3 metres between the development and the boundary of these designations. Access, or storage of materials will not be permitted within the buffer zone. In order to safeguard retained trees and hedgerows appropriate working practices for trees in relation to construction (BS5837) must be adopted. All watercourses/waterbodies must be protected from potential pollution as a result of construction and during the operational stage of any approved development. Protective measures are to be taken and should be in line with recommendations from the Environment Agency.

**REASON:** To conserve and enhance biodiversity and comply with Policies DP3 and DAP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 and the NPPF.

- 12 The development shall not commence until a detailed schedule of Great Crested Newt mitigation measures (to include timing of works, replacement habitat details, appropriate protection and enhancement of habitat within the applicants' ownership, monitoring and further survey if deemed necessary) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such approved mitigation measures shall thereafter be implemented in full according to the terms of any protected species licence granted in respect of Great Crested Newts.

**REASON:** To ensure the protection of newts and compliance with Policies DP3 and DAP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 and the NPPF.

- 13 The development shall not commence until a detailed schedule of bat mitigation measures (to include timing of works, replacement roost details, appropriate protection and enhancement of bat habitat within the applicants ownership, monitoring and further survey if deemed necessary) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Such approved mitigation measures shall thereafter be implemented in full according to the terms of any protected species licence granted in respect of bats. If any tree removal work is to be carried out on trees with the potential to support roosting bats further/updated surveys must be carried out in accordance with best practice guidelines, by a suitably qualified ecologist to confirm absence of bats prior to tree removal. The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a detailed Lighting Scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. **REASON:** To ensure the protection of bats and compliance with Policies DP3 and DAP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 and the NPPF.

- 14 The development shall be carried out only in full accordance with sample details of the external facing materials for all buildings which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. **REASON :** To ensure that the visual amenities of the area are protected, and to satisfy the requirements of Policy DP1 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011.

- 15 The retail/wholesale/cafe floorspace in use within the application site will be restricted to 4,667 sq.m. at any one time. The applicant will maintain a schedule of occupiers to ensure that this condition is

complied with which will be available for inspection by the local planning authority given one months notice of a request to review the schedule.

**REASON:** To retain control over the retail use of the site in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SSP3 of the Local Plan.

- 16 The development hereby permitted shall not commence until a detailed Lighting Scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the District Planning Authority. Any lighting scheme employed should be sensitively designed across the site, maintaining lux levels at the legal minimum. Lighting should be avoided in the vicinity of existing and newly planted hedgerows, trees (particularly those with potential for bat roosts) and any bat boxes that are installed. Where lighting is necessary in these areas the height of the lighting column should be restricted to reduce light spill onto habitats of value. Any external lighting should employ low pressure sodium lamps with a full cut-off lantern and/or timers. It will be necessary to allow dark periods during the night and maintain links with offsite foraging features by maintaining unlit areas.

Reason: To protect European Protected Species and enhance opportunities for biodiversity at the site in accordance with LPA Policies, NPPF and the Habitats Directive (2010). **REASON:** To ensure the protection of bats and compliance with Policies DP3 and DAP3 of the Warwick District Local Plan 1996-2011 and the NPPF.

- 17 No individual retail unit within any of the retail buildings hereby approved shall exceed 1,000 square metres unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. **REASON:** To retain control over the scale of the retail use of the site in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SSP3 of the Local Plan.

- 18 The Class B1(a) – Office, and B1(b) – Research and Development floorspace in use within the application site will be restricted to 38,786 sq. m. at any one time. The applicant will maintain a schedule of occupiers to ensure that this condition is complied with which will be available for inspection by the local planning authority giving one months notice of a request to review the schedule. **REASON:** To retain control over the quantum of B1 uses on the site in accordance with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SSP3 of the Local Plan.