Application No: 16/2706C

Location: JODRELL BANK OBSERVATORY, MACCLESFIELD ROAD, LOWER WITHINGTON, CHESHIRE, SK11 9DL

Proposal: Erection of new single storey research and administration building and associated landscape, car parking and road works.

Applicant: University of Manchester

Expiry Date: 07-Sep-2016

SUMMARY
The proposals are an acceptable form of development within the Open Countryside, and have full support from Historic England and the Council's Conservation Officer. The proposals will improve and expand existing scientific facilities at Jodrell Bank to improve it into the future.

It is considered that the unique nature of the proposals to house the international headquarters of the SKA at the site meets local planning policy in terms of its Open Countryside designation.

The proposal will significantly boost employment at the site in the scientific field, and therefore is a unique opportunity locally.

The proposal is considered to be economically, socially and economically sustainable.

It is considered that the proposed development would be very positive in terms of contributing to the local rural economy and supporting local businesses. The proposed development will attract visitors from the local area and from further afield to use the facility and to attend conferences and seminars as the global headquarters for the SKA. This therefore makes a positive economic contribution.

The benefits in this case are:
-The proposal will provide the global headquarters for the SKA Organisation, specialising in radio astronomy, to accompany the existing radio astronomy work that takes place at Jodrell Bank.
-The development would provide significant economic benefits through the provision of employment during the construction phase, job creation during the operation of the facility and benefits for local businesses.
-The proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the highway network.
-There will be no adverse impact on residential amenity

The development would have a neutral impact upon the following subject to mitigation:
-There will not be an adverse impact on the Grade I listed building
-There is not considered to be any significant drainage or flood risk implications raised by this development.
-The impact upon trees is considered to be neutral as this can be addressed through

mitigation.
- No detrimental landscape implications from the proposed development.
-The impact on protected species and biodiversity is considered to be acceptable subject to appropriate mitigation.
-The impact upon the residential amenity/noise/air quality/landscape and contaminated land can be mitigated through the imposition of planning conditions.

It is not considered that there are any adverse impacts of the development.

It is considered that the proposal represents a sustainable form of development when assessing the three strands of sustainability, therefore the proposal accords with the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. Therefore for the reasons mentioned above the application is recommended for approval.
SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION
APPROVE

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is the Jodrell Bank Observatory which is set in an isolated location in Lower Withington located within Goostrey Parish. The observatory, which is home of the Sir Bernard Lovell telescope which, at the time of its construction 1952-57, was the largest steerable radio telescope in the world and approximately 60 years after its construction remains the third largest. The outstanding significance of the telescope has been recognised through its designation as a grade I listed building, which places it in the top 2.5% of the most significant listed buildings in England. The site has a series of buildings on it forming part of the University of Manchester research facility.

The SKA (Square Kilometre Array) project has an office at the site, and has been based at the site since 2012. The SKA located their headquarters at Jodrell Bank in 2012 and in 2016 took the decision to expand their presence on the site. SKA Organisation is an international science project that operates in the field of radio astronomy. Although there are regular interfaces with the Jodrell Bank Observatory, SKA operates their own scientific equipment, independent of the Lovell of MKII telescopes.

The Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre is also present at the site which is a public outreach arm and hosts approximately 150,000 visitors per year, it is part of the University of Manchester.

There are two vehicular accesses to the Jodrell Bank site, the northern access is the main access to the site for staff and visitors, however there is a secondary access to the south of the site onto the A535 which is subject to alterations as part of this application.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposals include the development of the SKA headquarters to make Jodrell Bank the global headquarters, this extends the presence of the Square Kilometre Organisation at the Jodrell Bank Observatory and forms an important milestone in the preservation and enhancement of the scientific research capabilities at this historic site.

The building will adjoin the existing SKA building at the site, and will be located between the

existing SKA building and the Jodrell Bank Observatory buildings. There will be a central landscaped courtyard, the new headquarters increases the provision for staff from 65 workstations to 159 staff and visitor desks. The building includes a council chamber for international board meetings which can be used as a lecture theatre for science conferences. The building will have a floor area of 2835sq.m, the building will be an irregular shape to create the courtyard in the centre. There will be 3 small v-shaped alcoves on the north elevation which will have small gardens within them, to allow a greater level of natural light into the north facing part of the building. The building measures 7m high at the highest point with a single storey. This element of the building is for the council chamber/lecture theatre. The remainder and majority of the building will measure 4m in height with a flat roof.

The proposals include to the southern part of the site improvements to the existing access road, and the introduction of a formal overflow car park, to provide 75 spaces. The proposed car park will be located partially over an area which is currently covered by trees, the area of trees were planted as part of an experimental planting project, the trees are within very close proximity to each other. The proposed southern access allows for a turning head and passing places and leads to the overflow car park. The proposals then include a bound gravel footpath from the overflow car park to the SKA headquarters. The northern access to the site will provide access to the main new car parking area to serve the building, an additional 47 bays will be provided for staff and visitors along with a smaller 17 bay car park. There will be a coach drop off area to the east of the SKA buildings. The two accesses to the site will not be connected for vehicles, the southern access will serve the overflow car park only, and not the wider site.

There will be 4 disabled car parking spaces located within the courtyard area.

The proposals include various areas of landscaping, with formal and informal areas of planting and outdoor spaces for staff and visitors to the SKA complex.

Planning History

11573/3 New exit door to control building, approved 03/07/1980
15543/3, New offices to be erected on roof of control building, approved, 18/01/1984
18351/3, New office on roof of existing control building, approved, 12/02/1987
22115/3, First floor office labs extension, approved, 11/04/1990
12346/3, Extension to existing control building to provide 2 additional offices, approved, 17/12/1990
10/0875M, Erection of two buildings to provide new visitor facilities and associated works, approved, 30/04/2010
11/4001M, Erection of a single storey office building, car parking, cycle parking and associated works, approved, 13/02/2012
13/1092C, Erection of external lighting to approach and car parking between Jodrell Bank Control Centre Building and SKA Project Office, approved, 31/05/2013
13/1519C, Replacement of lift cars and associated lift gear to 2no goods lifts within the towers of the Lovell Telescope at Jodrell Bank, Approved, 01/07/2013
13/5068M, Erection of a new free-standing single storey building to form part of the existing Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre and associated external works. Erection of a permanent canopy structure over the existing terrace of the Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre Cafe. Extension of the existing timber decked terrace, Approved, 28/01/2014

14/4350M, New build, single storey building providing short-term overnight accommodation for up to six visiting scientists, Approved, 02/12/2014
15/5496M, Demolitions, refurbishment, two storey extension and landscaping to the Grade 1 Listed Observatory Building at Jodrell Bank. The project will include restoration of the retained facades; demolition of several extensions added in the 1960's; internal demolitions, remodelling and extension of the retained buildings to better suit their contemporary use, Approved, 08/03/2016
15/5498M, Listed building consent for demolitions, refurbishment, two storey extension and landscaping to the Grade 1 Listed Observatory Building at Jodrell Bank. The project will include restoration of the retained facades; demolition of several extensions added in the 1960's; internal demolitions, remodelling and extension of the retained buildings to better suit their contemporary use, Approved, 08/03/2016

POLICIES

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework
14 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
17 Core planning principles
Part 7 – Requiring good design
109 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Part 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
131Heritage Assets
134 Heritage Assets
186-187 Decision Taking
188-190 Pre-application engagement and frontloading

Local Plan Policy

Para 215 of The Framework indicates that relevant policies in existing plans will be given weight according to their degree of consistency with The Framework.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan
BE1 - Design Guidance
BE2 - Preservation of Historic Fabric
BE15 – Listed Buildings
BE16 – Setting of Listed Buildings
BE17 – Preservation of Listed Buildings
GC5 – Countryside beyond the Green Belt
GC6 – Outside the Green Belt, Areas of Special County Value and Jodrell Bank Zone
GC14 – Jodrell Bank

Congleton Borough Local Plan
GR1 – All developments
GR2 – Design
PS8 – Open Countryside
PS10 – Jodrell Bank protection policy
E16 – Visitor and tourism

BH2 – Listed Buildings

Emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy
MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development
PG1 Overall Development Strategy
PG5 Open Countryside
SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East
EG2 Rural Economy
SE1 Design
SE3 Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SE4 The Landscape
SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
SE7 The Historic Environment
SE9 Energy Efficient Development
SE13 Flood Risk and Water Management
SE14 Jodrell Bank
CO1 Sustainable Travel and Transport
CO4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

CONSULTATIONS

Councillor Comments – No comments received

Historic England – The current application has been the subject of pre application advice with Historic England. The proposals submitted for consideration, remain unchanged from those previously reviewed and as such we will reiterate our earlier advice. Jodrell Bank is a world renowned complex of huge scientific importance, preserving evidence of numerous phases of the development of, and scientific research into, Radio-astronomy. It is the home of the Sir Bernard Lovell telescope which at the time of its construction, between 1952 - 57, was the largest steerable radio telescope in the world and approximately 60 years after its construction still remains the third largest. The outstanding significance of the telescope has been recognised in its designation as a grade I listed building, which places it in the top 2.5% of the most significant listed buildings in England. The importance of the site as a whole, is recognised in the complex's inclusion on the UK tentative list for World Heritage Status. In recent years the Observatory has also become the home of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project. This is an international project to building the world's largest radio telescope and represents the next phase of the development of radio-astronomy on an international scale, complimenting the pioneering nature of the science already undertaken at the site. As such, the project could be argued to add further to the overall significance of the observatory in line with the National Planning Policy.

Framework paragraph 131, which sets out that there is the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of a heritage asset. Having considered the proposals we believe that the proposed location of the building is acceptable; as too is the scale, being restricted to a single storey structure due to the proximity to both the telescope and the significant control building. The intention to replicate the materials found on the existing SKA building is also welcomed as they provide a good foil to the more striking red brick of the control building. We do, however, have some reservations with the projection forwards of the building towards the

telescope. At present the built line of the existing structures forms a curved line which frames the telescope. It is appreciated that the recently approved scheme would project forward of this line, but having raised concerns in our comments with that proposal, those concerns must be reiterated here. However, we are of the view that the harm caused by this forward projection is minor and would be viewed as less than substantial harm, National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 134.

It is also proposed as part of the scheme to enhance the landscaping around the whole of this section of the site, including in front of the control building. We believe these proposals could notably improve the appearance of the control building, whilst creating a visual link between the two distinct projects run on the site. As such, we are supportive of this proposal.

In conclusion, on the whole Historic England believe the current scheme to be well considered and would only cause only a minor level of harm to the setting of the Grade I listed Telescope, which is due to the forward projection of the new building.

Recommendation
We recommend that the application is determined in line with the relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Flood Risk Management Team - The site is located in flood zone 1; however, there are some areas of surface water within the site of the proposed development caused by topographical low spots. The risk of flooding from this source will need to be appropriately mitigated and assessed then shown in the appropriate submitted documents before development can commence on site.

Before construction starts the developer should be made aware that, in line with Part H of the Building Regulations, the surface water drainage options should be considered in the following order:

1. into the ground (infiltration);
2. to a surface water body;
3. to a surface water sewer, highway drain, or another drainage system;
4. to a combined sewer.

No objections subject to conditions.

Highways – No objection is raised.

Environmental Health - No objections subject to conditions and informatives.

United Utilities – No objections subject to conditions

Goostrey Parish Council – The Parish Council has no objections to the building however we are very concerned about the entrance/exit onto the public highway which is very close to a blind bend on a busy road, which is dangerous even if the visibility splays are adequate because it is not possible to see around the bend. Can we ask what highways have to say on this issue.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Ventilation and Extract Statement
Environmental Noise Survey Report
Interim Habitat Report
Travel Plan
Climate Change and Sustainability Statement
Design and Access Statement
Flood Risk Assessment
Arboricultural Report
Transport Statement
Tree Retention and Removal Plan

The project vision as set out in the Design and Access Statement:
-The building should encapsulate the energy, enthusiasm and excitement of the SKA project
An inspirational building to reflect the science and vision behind the SKA project
-Express the global and multicultural organisation and team, become s symbol for SKA Organisation
-Somewhere to encourage social interaction and chance encounters to enhance communication and collaboration
-A place with its own identity yet does not turn its back on Jodrell Bank
-A building to be proud of and that meets the functional requirements
-Ability to receive high profile visitors
- A place that creates a sense of belonging for all members of SKA Organisation
-A space to collaborate, generate and exchange ideas
-A seamless work experience

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Key Issues
-Principle of development
-Sustainability
-Heritage Asset
-Design
-Landscape Impact
-Trees
-Ecology
-Highways
-Amenity
-Flood Risk
-Radio Interference
-Employment
-Economy of the wider area
-Planning Balance
-Recommendation

Principle of Development

The site as a whole lies within both the former Congleton Borough and Macclesfield Borough. However the Lovell Telescope and associated control buildings are located within the former Congleton Borough including the area of the site associated with this development is within the Open Countryside where development is restricted. However the Jodrell Bank site as well as being a state of the art radio astronomy research facility which includes the SKA Organisation who are also based at the site, is a very popular tourist attraction, this proposal will expand the workforce of researchers at the site by provision of additional workspaces. Policy PS8 does allow exceptions within the Open Countryside including facilities for outdoor sport, recreation and tourism, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the countryside and maintain or enhance its local character and development for employment purposes in accordance with policy E5.

Policy E5 states that proposals for the expansion or redevelopment of existing businesses can be acceptable providing the business is appropriate to the rural area or is essential to the continuation of operations which are already on site and there are no suitable buildings that could be reused, that the site is not allocated for any other purpose and that it complies with other relevant policies in the plan. It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with policy E5 and the relevant criteria within.

The Jodrell Bank site is a University of Manchester campus specialising in radio astronomy, the SKA Organisation, whilst separate to the Lovell Telescope Observatory, specialise in radio astronomy, the SKA Organisation already have a base at the site, however Jodrell Bank won an international bid for the site to become the headquarters for the SKA Organisation. It is considered that the development of the proposed building, would enhance significantly the current facilities at the site and will provide a council chamber and lecture facilities, along with space for additional staff working on the project. The building is large, however this will provide a significant enhancement and will provide appropriate facilities for national and international seminars in relation to radio astronomy. The proposed building has been sympathetically designed for its surroundings, and is an appropriate facility within the Open Countryside as it is requires a rural location in order to reduce interference from outside sources and will enhance an existing site specialising in the field of radio astronomy. It is considered that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the Open Countryside and the proposals accord with policy PS8 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan.

Sustainability
Sustainability is the golden thread running through the National Planning Policy Framework, and proposals for sustainable development should be approved without delay. There are three strands to sustainability, social, economic and environmental.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Employment and Education

The proposed development will expand and enhance the existing facilities at the SKA, and will provide for research and educational development, and will provide a headquarters for the SKA Organisation. The NPPF states that Local Planning Authorities should plan positively for

the location, promotion and expansion of clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries. This proposal will create greater employment opportunities at the site and will allow research and development in radio astronomy alongside the existing research at the site.

There are crossovers with education at the site as it is owned and has close links to the University of Manchester which operates the Lovell Telescope Observatory at the site.

The Design and Access Statement states that the SKAO Headquarters will provide educational and outreach opportunities to the estimated 30,000 school children and 160,000 members of the public who visit the Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre annually, via displays, workshops and events at the Discovery Centre; as well as the possibility of holding lectures for up to 175 people in the purpose-built SKAO Headquarters auditorium.

Heritage Asset

The NPPF states that heritage assets should be conserved so they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations. The Lovell Telescope and associated control building are Grade I listed, and therefore careful consideration of the design of this building as it will directly face the Lovell Telescope. The proposals have been subject of detailed pre-application discussions with both Historic England the Council's Conservation Officer.

This building sits adjacent to the grade I telescope, as such there needs to be careful consideration of the impact of this new building upon the setting of the listed building. The applicant entered into pre-application discussions with the Conservation Officer and advice has been taken on board.

The proposal is consistent with pre-application discussions, as such it is considered that the integrity of the telescope and its setting has been preserved, therefore this new work would not harm the existing setting.

Whilst Historic England does have concerns regarding the proximity of part of the building in relation to the Lovell Telescope, they do not consider that this will have a detrimental impact on the heritage asset and therefore are supportive of the proposals. The Conservation Officer has raised no objections subject to detailed conditions. It is therefore considered that due to the carefully designed scheme it will not have a detrimental impact on the Grade I Listed telescope. Therefore the proposals accord with policy BH4 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan.

Social Sustainability Conclusion

The proposals for the facility will make an important contribution to education and research whilst providing unique employment opportunities, the building will be a state of the art research facility and an international headquarters for the SKA, the proposals will provide a unique science facility locally as part of the University site and will allow for a relationship to be developed between Lovell Telescope Observatory and the SKA.

Therefore it is considered that the proposed development will make a social contribution to the local area and is therefore socially sustainable.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Design

The proposed design has been formulated to extend the current SKA building, it has been designed to be unique whilst adjoining the existing SKA building and to not detract from the heritage asset. The design includes the council chamber therefore has a higher area to accommodate this. The design of the building will wrap around a central courtyard. The materials to be used will be modern which include glass and steel doors, flat membrane roof with light covered ballast covering and composite metal cladding to match the existing building and aluminium windows and curtain walling.

The materials will be at a contrast to the more traditional buildings on site which contain the control room, labs and offices of the main observatory building.

The proposed design is modern to reflect the nature of the SKA project and is considered to be acceptable. The proposal is in accordance with policy GR2 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan.

Landscape

The proposals have been carefully designed to sit low in the landscape and to not detract in any way from the Lovell Telescope, the proposals include the enhancements to the access road to the south and the development of the overflow car park and additional car parking at the main SKA site. The Landscape Officer has commented on the proposals and no objections have been raised in relation to the scheme as a whole, and the landscaping proposals have been assessed and are considered to be acceptable.

Trees

The proposal will require the removal of rows the plantation woodland to accommodate the proposed overflow car park. The trees were planted around 40 years ago as part of the former botanical research station and have not been thinned. As part of pre application discussions it has been advised that a consequence the removal of these trees will likely increase the risk of windthrow of the remaining three rows of trees and will require monitoring to determine any likelihood of future instability.

It is considered that the compensation for the loss of the trees can be secured through replacement planting elsewhere.

A proposed footpath from the southern car park to the SKA building will pass thorough the RPA of a number of retained trees. The proposal to construct the footpath using a no dig cellular confinement system as suggested in the Arboricultural Report generally accords with standard practice contained in BS5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations*

It is proposed to carry out some local widening which will impact upon the outer edge of the Root Protection Area (RPA) of a number of retained trees. The Arboricultural Statement proposes that whilst such work will not have a significant impact upon trees, the work will be subject to an agreed Method Statement which will include arboricultural supervision. It is agrred that this approach generally accords with BS5837:2012 and would be acceptable.

Four proposed parking bays will be constructed within the Root ProtectIon Area (RPA) of a mature Oak (T25) to the northwest section of the tree. Whilst this represents nearly 20% of the overall RPA, it is considered that given the trees current condition and overall vitality, the proposed construction of the car parking utilising a cellular confinement system and reduced/no dig methodology to minimise the impact on the trees rooting environment is considered appropriate here.

Ecology

Great Crested Newts

Great Crested Newts have been recorded at a number of ponds within 250m of the proposed development including the on-site pond that would be lost as a result of the proposed development. I advise that in the absence of mitigation the proposed development would have an HIGH magnitude adverse impact upon great crested newts as a result of the loss of aquatic and terrestrial habitat and the risk posed to animals during the construction phase.

Article 12 (1) of the EC Habitats Directive requires Member states to take requisite measures to establish a system of strict protection of certain animal species prohibiting the deterioration or destruction of breeding sites and resting places.

In the UK, the Habitats Directive is transposed as The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. This requires the local planning authority to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions.

It should be noted that since a European Protected Species has been recorded on site and is likely to be adversely affected by the proposed development, the planning authority must consider the three tests in respect of the Habitats Directive, i.e. (i) that there is no satisfactory alternative, (ii) that the development is of overriding public interest, and (iii) the favorable conservation status of the species will be maintained. Evidence of how the LPA has considered these issues will be required by Natural England prior to them issuing a protected species license.

Current case law instructs that if it is considered clear, or very likely, that the requirements of the Directive cannot be met because there is a satisfactory alternative or because there are no conceivable “other imperative reasons of overriding public interest” then planning permission should be refused. Conversely if it seems that the requirements are likely to be met, then there would be no impediment to planning permission in this regard. If it is unclear whether the requirements would be met or not, a balanced view taking into account the particular circumstances of the application should be taken.

Alternatives

The alternative would be for the project for the SKA expansion to not go ahead, this is the most logical location for the development due to the existing presence of the SKA at the site and the radio astronomy connections at Jodrell Bank.

Overriding public Interest

The proposals would bring about a state of the art research facility providing employment in radio astronomy research and development which is a unique scientific opportunity, and would enhance and expand the existing SKA presence at the site. It is considered therefore this is in the wider public interest for the project to go ahead.

Mitigation

In order to compensate for the loss of the existing pond the applicant is proposing to create two new ponds surrounded by an area of suitable great crested newt terrestrial habitat. The risk posed to the animals themselves would be mitigated by removing and excluding newts from the footprint of the proposed development using standard best practice methodologies under the terms of a Natural England license.

It is advised that the proposed mitigation and compensation is acceptable and likely to maintain the favourable conservation status of the local great crested newt meta-population.

On the basis of the above it is considered that requirements of the Habitats Directive would be met.

Badgers

A number of badger setts have been recorded around the site, most of which were in inactive at the time of the latest survey. One of the active setts is located immediately adjacent to proposed works and could potentially be disturbed during construction related activities. In order to avoid badgers being disturbed during works the applicant is proposing to temporarily close this sett until works are complete. This would be undertaken under the terms of a Natural England license.

It is considered that the submitted badger mitigation method statement is acceptable.

Reptiles

There are no records of reptiles being present in the broad locality of this application site, however the submitted phase one habitat survey has identified some lower quality habitat suitable for this species. It is advised, considering the extent of habitats affected by the proposed development and the lack of records in the local area that reptiles are not reasonable likely to be present or affected by the proposed development and so no further action is required in respect of this species.

Trees with bat roosting potential

A number of trees on site have been identified as having potential to support roosting bats. Based upon the submitted tree survey report it appears that some of these trees may be lost as a result of the proposed development.

It is advised that any trees identified as having potential to support roosting bats should be subject to a detailed survey to determine the presence of roosting bats and a report submitted to the LPA prior to the determination of the application.

A conclusion on this matter will be reported to the committee as part of an update.

Lighting
In order to ensure that there are no adverse impact resulting from the lighting of the scheme I recommend that if planning consent is granted a condition should be attached requiring any proposed lighting to be agreed with the LPA.

Nesting Birds

It is recommended that a condition is attached in relation to nesting birds

Highways

The highways issues at the site formed part of the pre-application discussions, CEC highways have provided detailed comments on the highways matters at the site. The proposal is within the grounds of Jodrell Bank and includes an extra 1585sqm of gross floor area of research building and an increase of around 148 employees.

Access
The site has 2 accesses; one for the north off Bomish Lane for visitors and employees, and another from the south off the A535 for employees only. The proposal is for all employees to use the southern access. The southern access is narrow with an approximate width of 3.5m and visibility onto the A535 is sub-standard.

Highway works are currently taking place at the southern access and were due for completion on 8th July. This will increase the access width from 3.5m to approximately 6m, for 7m into the site, and it will also improve visibility to reflect current standards.

Whilst these works will soon be complete if not already complete, additional amendments to the access, within the site, have been proposed to accommodate the additional vehicle movements associated with the additional staff. These include widening of the access for a further 50m into the site, beyond the initial 7m mentioned above, as shown on the submitted plans. Further into the site access, vehicle passing areas have been proposed.

A capacity assessment using industry standard software has been carried out that shows the southern access will be adequate to accommodate the additional vehicle movements.

An accident assessment has been carried out that showed 4 accidents have occurred along the A535 in the vicinity of the site but these have been over 100m to the west of the site and 300m to the east.

Given the accident assessment and the existing and proposed improvements, the proposed access is considered acceptable.

Parking
The proposal includes an additional 141 car parking spaces, including 2 disabled spaces, bringing the total provision to 189 spaces. The proposal does not fall within any particular land

use and parking standards therefore don't exist. The parking provision has therefore been compared to an office B1 use.

If it were a B1 use with the same floor area, the parking requirement would be 201 spaces which is only slightly over that proposed. In addition to this, the travel plan of the existing staff show that just over 50% of staff arrives to the site by car. It can be assumed that this proportion will be reflected with the new staff members also. 16 cycle parking spaces are also proposed.

The additional parking provision is considered sufficient.

Traffic Impact
The proposal will accommodate an extra 148 staff member. A travel survey of existing staff shows that 54% arrive by car and the rest as a car passenger or by more sustainable modes such as shuttle bus, public transport or by walking.

It is safe to assume that these proportions will be carried through to new staff. The proposal will therefore result in approximately 1 additional vehicle trip per minute during each of the morning and evening peak hours. This additional traffic will not have a severe impact upon the highway network.

Therefore highways have raised no objections to the proposals.

Amenity

Environmental Health have been consulted on the application and have raised no objections in terms of air quality, noise or contaminated land. It is not considered that the proposed development will have a detrimental impact on the amenity of local residents. Due to the location of Jodrell Bank, there are very few residents locally who could be affected by proposals on site. The site has long accesses from both the north and south, therefore activity on site is a considerable distance away from residents. It is considered that the proposals will not have a detrimental impact on the amenity of residents.

Flood Risk

The proposed development is not considered to cause flooding or be at risk from flooding, the application is accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment, and the Council's Flood Risk Team have assessed the application, and has concluded that the proposal is acceptable in these terms subject to suitably worded conditions. United Utilities have been consulted on the application with regard to drainage matters, and have raised no objections subject to conditions. Therefore it is not considered that the proposal will exacerbate or be at risk of flooding in the future subject to suitable drainage techniques being implemented on site.

Radio Interference

Jodrell Bank is vulnerable from radio interference from external sources, which can impact on the effectiveness of the very specialised equipment at the site, hence the rural location of the site. Therefore it is important that new development within close proximity to the site does not

interfere and have a detrimental impact on the equipment. The impact on this as been addressed in the design and access statement which is set out below.

At the current time the University uses a range of measures on the Jodrell Bank site to control potential radio frequency interference including but not limited to operational and equipment restrictions, policies applied to staff and visitors, and shielding/modification of equipment and buildings, all of which are subject to continuing review and verification. These measures are jointly managed by the Jodrell Bank Observatory, which operates the radio telescopes both at Jodrell Bank and at remote sites associated with the e-Merlin National Facility, and the SKA Organisation.

It is therefore considered that as the SKA will be within the University site, the University will have control over the building in terms of radio frequency interference, and therefore will not create problems, which externally controlled sites can.

Environmental sustainability conclusions

It is considered that the proposed development is environmentally sustainable. The accessibility to the site is not excellent due to its deliberate isolated location, however this is not the only factor when assessing sustainability. The proposed use will not have a detrimental effect on ecology, the site does have protected within close proximity however it is considered that the mitigation put forward makes the proposal acceptable. Some trees will be lost as a result of the proposals however, it is considered that suitable replacement planting will be able to mitigate this loss. The proposals are acceptable in terms of landscaping, highways matters, flood risk, amenity and radio interference.

Therefore it is considered that the proposal is environmentally sustainable.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Employment

The proposed development will generate employment of 135 full time employees and 26 part time employees, which will give a total of equivalent full time places of 202 at the site. This is a significant increase as the site currently employs 54 equivalent full time members of staff.

This level of additional employment at the site accords with the aims of the Congleton Borough Local Plan which states that in order to support a prosperous rural economy the Council will *'encourage the sustainable development of dynamic, high skill, high value added economy which embraces new technologies, enhances and safeguards the quality of life of the communities of the Borough and enables them to fulfil their potential'*.

It is considered that the additional employment to be generated by the proposals is a significant benefit, and will provide employment in a specific scientific field which is unique.

Economic Benefits

The Design and Access Statement sets out the economic benefits of the proposed development for the wider area:

As the central hub of an intergovernmental organisation running the world's largest radio telescope, the SKA Observatory (SKAO) Headquarters will become a major international facility located within the Cheshire Science Corridor.

The Design and Access Statement states that in 2015, the SKAO spent close to £400,000 in the local area – a number that is set to grow – providing substantial economic opportunities to local businesses in terms of hospitality, transport, catering and more. In terms of employment opportunities, SKAO will recruit up to 80 new staff from around the world in the next few years. By 2025, SKAO staff will contribute an estimated £3.7million annually to the local economy and invest an estimated £10 million in the local property market.

In addition to this, the site will accommodate groups for seminars and conferences, particularly for international delegates, therefore many people may visit and stay overnight, which will provide a boost to accommodation providers locally. It is considered therefore that it would enhance the local rural economy, which key Council, local and national objectives as set out in the emerging CELPS and the NPPF.

Economic sustainability conclusions

The proposals will result in additional employment which is a social and an economic benefit, in the short term employment will be greater through the construction of the site along with an economic boost locally through the increase in employees to the area. It is considered that the proposals will make a meaningful contribution to the scientific community locally by expanding and enhancing a state of the art research facility.

THE PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSIONS

The proposals are an acceptable form of development within the Open Countryside, and have full support from Historic England and the Council's Conservation Officer. The proposals will improve and expand existing scientific facilities at Jodrell Bank to improve it into the future.

It is considered that the unique nature of the proposals to house the international headquarters of the SKA at the site meets local planning policy in terms of its Open Countryside designation.

The proposal will significantly boost employment at the site in the scientific field, and therefore is a unique opportunity locally.

The proposal is considered to be economically, socially and economically sustainable.

It is considered that the proposed development would be very positive in terms of contributing to the local rural economy and supporting local businesses. The proposed development will attract visitors from the local area and from further afield to use the facility and to attend conferences and seminars as the global headquarters for the SKA. This therefore makes a positive economic contribution.

The benefits in this case are:

-The proposal will provide the global headquarters for the SKA Organisation, specialising in radio astronomy, to accompany the existing radio astronomy work that takes place at Jodrell Bank.
-The development would provide significant economic benefits through the provision of employment during the construction phase, job creation during the operation of the facility and benefits for local businesses.
-The proposal is not considered to have a detrimental impact on the highway network.
-There will be no adverse impact on residential amenity

The development would have a neutral impact upon the following subject to mitigation:
-There will not be an adverse impact on the Grade I listed building
-There is not considered to be any significant drainage or flood risk implications raised by this development.
-The impact upon trees is considered to be neutral as this can be addressed through mitigation.
- No detrimental landscape implications from the proposed development.
-The impact on protected species and biodiversity is considered to be acceptable subject to appropriate mitigation.
-The impact upon the residential amenity/noise/air quality/landscape and contaminated land can be mitigated through the imposition of planning conditions.

It is not considered that there are any adverse impacts of the development.

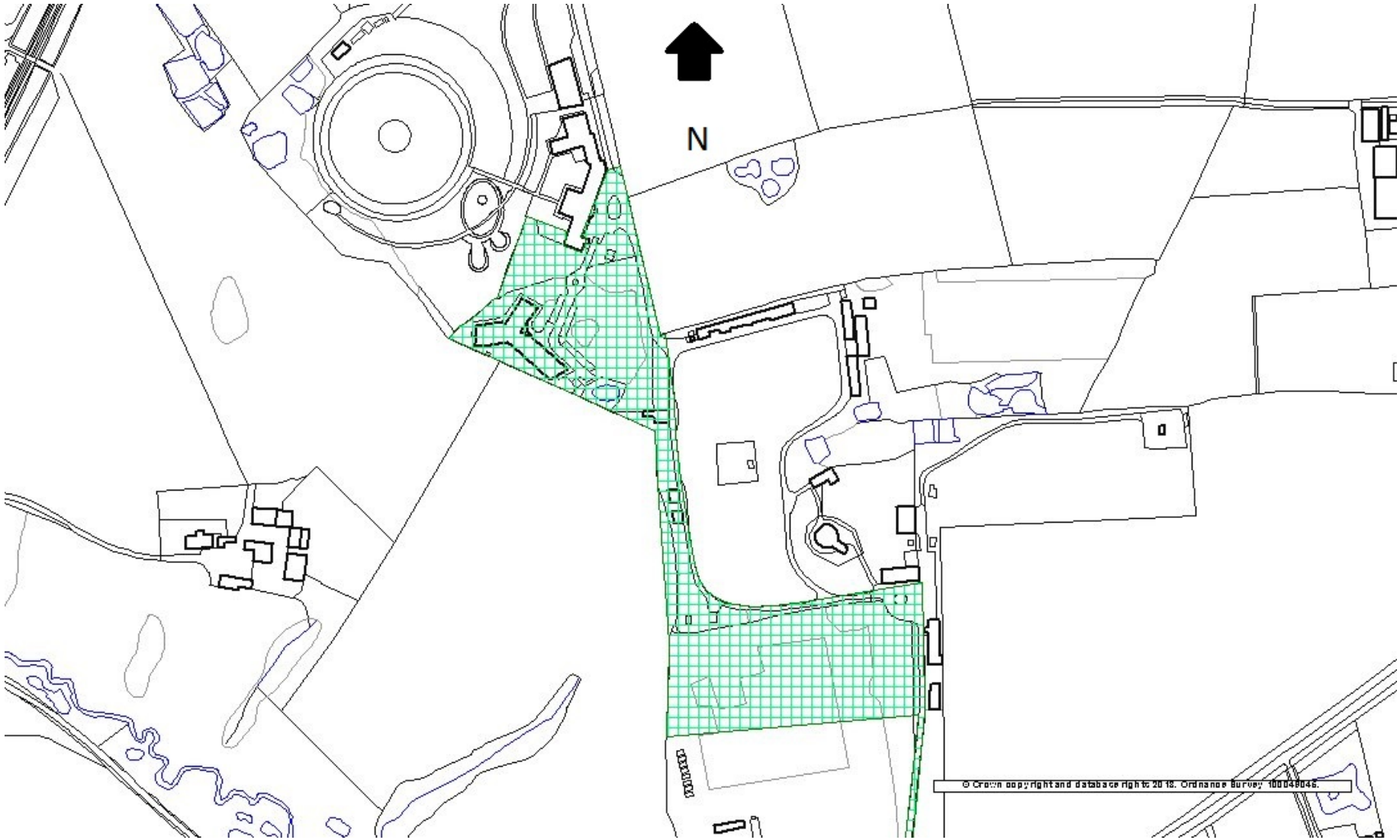
It is considered that the proposal represents a sustainable form of development when assessing the three strands of sustainability, therefore the proposal accords with the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. Therefore for the reasons mentioned above the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to conditions

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials as details in application
4. Details of boundary treatments
5. Drainage strategy/design
6. Management of surface water drainage scheme
7. Sustainable drainage management plan to be submitted
8. Tree retention
9. Tree protection
10. Method statement/construction specification (footpath from car park to SKA building)
11. Method statement/construction specification (widening of access roads adjacent to retained trees)
12. Method statement/construction specification (car parking adjacent to Oak T25)
13. Landscaping submission of detail
14. Landscaping implementation
15. Landscaping A11LS
16. Development in accordance with Great Crested Newt habitat plan

17. Development in accordance with recommendations in Badger Survey
18. Lighting Scheme to be agreed
19. Nesting birds
20. Foul and surface water shall be drained on separate systems.
21. Pile foundations
22. Dust control
23. Floor floating (polishing large surface wet concrete floors)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