

16.0 University of Surrey

Introduction

- 16.1 The University of Surrey was founded in 1965 from its origins in the Battersea College of Technology. At that time the University was actively encouraged and invited by the Borough Council and County Council to locate in Guildford. The University currently occupies a 35 hectare site to the north of Guildford Town Centre on Stag Hill, together with housing at Hazel Farm and limited facilities at Manor Farm. The University has a national and international reputation in a number of key fields, is rated to be within the upper quartile of universities in the UK and has the best graduate employment record.
- 16.2 The University is one of the major employers in Guildford and has 8,000 full time equivalent students and 2,500 staff. Over the next 25 years the University wishes to expand its numbers to 12,500 full-time equivalent students.
- 16.3 There are several reasons why the University needs to expand. The University, in common with other higher education establishments, is under increased pressure to develop and grow. Government policy continues to emphasise the key role played by higher education in the national economy and has a present target to reach a participation rate of one in three school leavers taking a place at university by the year 2000. This inevitably means rising student numbers. The Government is also committed to upgrading research facilities to stay abreast of international competition. The University is also committed to both enhancing its reputation and to maintaining its national position. The consequence of stagnation would be a loss of funding, reduced employment, less expenditure in the local economy and the loss of impetus as a research based University. The University considers that if it cannot achieve development and growth it will cease to be a major force and will begin to decline.

- 16.4 In the light of the above the University of Surrey is considering its longer-term future development and wishes to pursue a programme of expansion. As the existing campus at Stag Hill is nearing capacity the University wishes to pursue its expansion on its land at Manor Farm. Previous Development Plans designated Manor Farm within the Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. The University has demonstrated its need for expansion onto land at Manor Farm and the Borough Council is satisfied that these circumstances constitute the exceptional circumstances required to revise the Green Belt boundary as proposed in Proposal U1.
- 16.5 The Borough Council and University recognise the existing problems associated with traffic congestion in the western corridor approaches to the Town Centre and in the vicinity of Park Barn. The University expansion should not exacerbate these problems and in the longer term the development should provide opportunities for improved links into the Town Centre, particularly for non-car based transport modes.

Objectives

- 16.6 The objectives of the Policy in this Chapter are:
1. To assist the continued growth of the University of Surrey within an agreed planning framework;
 2. To facilitate the future expansion of the University by providing a site for a campus at Manor Farm.

Planning History

- 16.7 Manor Farm was included in the University's original outline planning permission granted by the then Minister of Housing and Local Government in 1965. The Minister granted permission for the development for University purposes of 33.6 hectares at Stag Hill and 115 hectares at Manor Farm. Doubts have been raised as to whether the permission could be implemented

because of the development of the Research Park, an expansion to the Royal Surrey Hospital and the construction of the Post House Hotel on land that formed part of the original 1965 permission relating to Manor Farm. Notwithstanding whether or not this permission is extant, the fact that outline planning permission was granted by the Minister is a very important material consideration in favour of further University development at Manor Farm.

- 16.8 Existing University development has already taken place at Manor Farm, including outdoor sports facilities and planning permission was granted in July 1997 for the Human Psychopharmacology Research Unit (as a departure from current planning policy).

National Planning Guidance

- 16.9 Previous Development Plans relating to Manor Farm designated the site within the Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 Green Belts (PPG 2) lists those uses that are appropriate within the Green Belt. The University's proposals are not included in this list. If inappropriate development is proposed "very special circumstances" would have to be shown to justify the granting of planning permission.
- 16.10 PPG 2 refers specifically to further educational establishments. Paragraph C16 is of particular relevance, this states, *"it is Government policy to encourage more people to undertake higher and further education. There has been a large increase in student numbers and further increases can be expected. The lack of a reasonable alternative site outside the Green Belt (whether within the urban area or elsewhere) for the proposed expansion of a higher and further education establishment located in or adjacent to the Green Belt should be taken into account in preparing or reviewing a development plan. Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances, after consideration of development opportunities within urban areas."*

- 16.11 The implication of the advice in PPG 2 is that the lack of a reasonable alternative site outside the Green Belt for the proposed expansion of a higher and further education establishment may constitute "exceptional circumstances" and justify taking land out of the Green Belt.
- 16.12 When the 1965 planning permission was granted there was no Green Belt designation at Manor Farm. The Green Belt was first formally designated at Manor Farm in the 1987 Local Plan. The University did not object to the designation because Green Belt policy at that time allowed development by "institutions standing in extensive grounds". The present inconsistency arose in the revised PPG2, published in 1995, in which the definition of "development which will be appropriate" was changed to exclude new development for institutions standing in extensive grounds.
- 16.13 Another key issue raised by national planning guidance is that of sustainable development. Planning Policy Guidance Note 13 - Transport, encourages local plans to identify sites for new development that minimise the length of journeys that have to be made, especially by cars, to utilise that development. The guidance highlights universities as offering particular opportunities for the sustainable location of facilities and states that local plans should enable new student accommodation to be provided in locations accessible to the university campus. This guidance would point to the University's activities taking place within close proximity of the existing Stag Hill Campus.

Assessment of Alternative Sites

- 16.14 The University has carried out a planning audit of alternative sites. A number of criteria were used to assess the possible sites, these included the following:
- Size (at least 40 hectares is required)
 - Land ownership

- Compatibility with PPG 13 Transport
- Compatibility with surrounding land uses
- Proximity to Stag Hill Campus
- Proximity to the Surrey Research Park and the Royal Surrey Hospital
- Landscape sensitivity
- Land availability
- Compatibility with Planning Policy
- Site constraints and opportunities

16.15 The University examined all of the available options identified by the Borough Council. None of the sites meet the selection criteria. In particular, all of the sites would be worse than Manor Farm in terms of achieving a sustainable form of development. The Borough Council consider that exceptional circumstances exist to amend the Green Belt boundary to meet the University's needs. These are:

- There are no alternative sites outside of the Green Belt which meet the University's long-term requirements. The University has undertaken an audit of alternative sites, in consultation with the Borough Council, which confirms that Manor Farm is the most appropriate location. The Stag Hill campus is very close to capacity and could not cope with the proposed scale of development anticipated over the next 20 years.
- The existence of the 1965 planning permission.
- The University, in common with other higher education establishments, is under increased pressure to develop and grow. Government policy continues to emphasise the key role played by higher education in the national economy. This inevitably means rising

student numbers. The University is also committed to both enhancing its reputation and to maintaining its national position. The consequence of stagnation would be a loss of funding, reduced employment, less expenditure in the local economy and the loss of impetus as a research based University. The University considers that if it cannot achieve development and growth it will cease to be a major force and will begin to decline.

16.16 Having considered the University's need for expansion in the context of national guidance and the lack of alternative sites outside of the Green Belt, the Local Plan therefore proposes to exclude land at Manor Farm from the Green Belt to allow development for University purposes, including teaching, new staff and student residencies and other ancillary uses. Development at Manor Farm will be phased in accordance with a master plan and development brief prepared in consultation with the University, local residents and other organisations.

16.17 In an attempt to overcome any additional pressure on the existing housing supply within the Borough, the University will be expected to provide student and some staff accommodation resulting from the proposals included in this Plan on the Manor Farm site. It is acknowledged that the expansion of the University of Surrey will require consideration in the emerging revised Surrey Structure Plan.

Proposal U1
UNIVERSITY OF SURREY

Land at Manor Farm and adjoining, as shown on the Proposals Map, will be taken out of the Green Belt

On land at Manor Farm defined on the Proposals Map development will be permitted for university purposes including teaching, new staff and student residencies and other ancillary uses to meet the University of Surrey's future expansion requirements provided that:

Continued

1. The development is phased in accordance with a master plan and development brief approved by the Council as local planning authority and incorporating the principles of sustainable development;
2. Prior to the preparation of development proposals for the site, an environmental appraisal is undertaken and appropriate mitigating measures agreed by the Council to safeguard areas of high grade agricultural land, archaeological features, the scheduled ancient monument, protected species, existing woodland and hedgerows, views from the area of outstanding natural beauty and elsewhere in the area of great landscape value and to provide for advanced structure planting;
3. The University adopts a long term green travel plan approved by the Council which achieves no significant increase in car based movement, agreed targets for modal choice and sustainable development principles;
4. Provision of significant areas of open space in accordance with the policies in this plan;
5. The amenities of the occupants of nearby buildings are protected.

The Borough Council will seek from the University, planning benefits where they are needed to enable development to go ahead or where they are necessary from a planning point of view and are directly related to the proposed development.

Development for general housing or employment use not required for the purposes of the University set out above will not be permitted on the defined land.

- 16.18 The total area of land to be taken out of the Green Belt is 63.3 hectares. Proposal U1 covers 59.6 hectares, 1.2 hectares is allocated for hospital uses under Policy CF6 and 2.5 hectares is occupied by the existing Hotel. The urban area boundary has been amended to include the Hotel.
- 16.19 The Borough Council considers that land at Manor Farm offers the most sustainable location to accommodate additional University development. By allocating a new site in close proximity to the existing Stag Hill campus, students and staff will be encouraged to make trips between the new and existing facilities on foot or by bicycle. The potential to enhance existing bus services in this part of the Town will also encourage the use of alternatives to the car.
- 16.20 The Borough Council and University acknowledge the existing problems associated with traffic congestion in the western corridor approaches to the Town Centre and in the vicinity of Park Barn. The Manor Farm proposals offer a major opportunity to radically influence the travel patterns of University staff and students together with those of Research Park companies. The above Policy requires the University to produce a Green Travel Plan that addresses these issues. The aim will be to produce a largely car free campus with a strong emphasis on buses, cycling and walking as the principal methods of travel. The University intends to develop a comprehensive package of proposals with the objective of achieving no significant (less than 5%) net increase in car travel as a result of the development at Manor Farm. The Borough Council, together with Surrey County Council, the Highways Agency and University of Surrey, has agreed the following as a basis for addressing the transport implications of the University's proposed development of the Manor Farm site. This has been drawn from the University's Strategic Transport Study and summarises the key elements of the subsequent Agreed Statement on Traffic, Transport and Access Issues made between Surrey County Council, the

- Highways Agency and University of Surrey.
- a) The University shall confine the increase in traffic generation from the Manor Farm site to no more than 5% of the base University and Research Park traffic movement.
- b) The University implements a comprehensive Green Travel Plan, which expands upon their existing plan for the Stag Hill Campus, and which covers all their existing and proposed developments at Stag Hill and Manor Farm.
- c) The University introduces and maintains a Green Travel Plan for existing and proposed developments on the Surrey Research Park.
- d) The University submits a detailed Transport Assessment for each and every phase of their development of Manor Farm based on prevailing transport conditions at the time and implements the necessary transport infrastructure on an agreed basis between Guildford Borough Council and the relevant highway authorities.
- e) The University, in consultation with interested parties, will consider incorporating the access and egress to Beechcroft Drive within their proposed infrastructure for the Manor Farm development.
- f) The University encourages owners / occupiers within the Research Park to reduce levels of parking on site to current parking standards for existing and unimplemented permissions.
- g) The University assesses the need for, and funds the implementation of required extensions or alterations to the on street parking restriction on all adopted roads within the walking distance of both campuses and the Research Park.
- h) The University in preparing its Master Plan for Manor Farm shall withhold development on a 10 metre wide belt of land immediately adjacent to the A3 trunk road for a period of 10 years from the adoption of the Local Plan by Guildford Borough Council. In the event that all or part of this land is required by the Highways Agency in connection with its improvement of the adjoining A3 then the Agency shall demonstrate the need for such land to all interested parties.
- 16.21 Notwithstanding this, Manor Farm should not be looked at in isolation, there should be an "Integrated Transport Management Policy" for the Borough as a whole, which provides for increased and effective public transport. The West Guildford Transport Corridor Study, which was commissioned by Surrey County Council and partly funded by the Borough Council and the University, has examined a range of options for public transport. The study concluded that Park and Ride, a Park Barn station and a Variable Light Railway System (VLRS) can be considered viable. The Study recommended that further investigation into the VLRS be undertaken.
- 16.22 Further detailed analysis is required regarding any traffic and movement impact of the expansion. As a starting principle development should not worsen the existing traffic problems and improvements should be actively sought.
- 16.23 Prior to the development of the site the University will be expected to produce an Environmental Appraisal which ensures that areas of high-grade agricultural land, archaeological features, the scheduled ancient monument, protected species, existing woodland and hedgerows are safeguarded from development, where practicable.
- 16.24 Development of the Manor Farm site is likely to be visually prominent, particularly from the A3 and parts of Onslow Village. However, by retaining and enhancing areas of mature woodland, providing

extensive earth moulding and new landscaping and controlling the detailed siting, massing and heights of new buildings the visual sensitivity of Manor Farm can be respected.

16.25 A detailed master plan and development brief will be produced by the Borough Council, in consultation with the University and local residents to guide the phasing, types and location of development that will be permitted on the allocated site. These will deal with other planning issues, such as public access, landscaping and environmental protection. Planning permission will only be granted for development that accords with the master plan and development brief.

16.26 The Borough Council and the University are committed to providing a development that maximises the benefits to the community as well as directly to the University itself. The University has indicated that they:

1. Intend to continue to encourage a high level of community use of all its sporting, artistic, educational and social facilities;
2. Would like to explore how best appropriate parts of its Blackwell Farm lands might be further opened up to the community (including the possibility of a country park);
3. Will provide buildings of the highest architectural quality, which are energy efficient and sustainable;
4. Will create a high quality environment with landscaping, planting and amenity space;
5. Will work in partnership with the Borough Council and County Council to achieve sustainable transport arrangements including the development of practical solutions to transport problems in the West Guildford corridor and in the residential areas adjacent to the University;

6. Will enter into an option arrangement with the Borough Council to provide a site on Manor Farm for a public park and ride facility;
7. Will explore ways of alleviating the Beechcroft Drive access problems;
8. Will extend the support it gives to local schools and organisations;
9. Will in the longer term, consider relocating the student residences at Hazel Farm to Manor Farm.