

Part I

Executive Member: Councillor S Boulton

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 12 JUNE 2018
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING AND
GOVERNANCE

6/2018/0729/CN

ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE HAWKSHEAD LANE NORTH MYMMS HATFIELD
AL9 7TA

HAWKSHEAD CAMPUS MASTERPLAN

APPLICANT: Royal Veterinary College

(Welham Green & South Hatfield)

1 Site Description

- 1.1 The Royal Veterinary College (RVC) is the UK's largest, oldest and only independent veterinary school and a leading provider in veterinary education. The RVC has three sites: the Camden campus where the College has been located since its inception in 1791, the Hawkshead campus since the 1950s and Boltons Park Farm, also in North Mymms, which has operated for more than 45 years.
- 1.2 The Hawkshead campus was originally created as a field station to complement the main campus in Camden, but has grown since the 1950s and is now where the veterinary medical and veterinary nursing students and veterinary specialists-in-training spend much of their time.
- 1.3 The campus houses clinical and research facilities as well as a substantial portion of the College's administrative functions. Small animal and equine hospitals operate continuously and provide access to clinical caseload for students to gain the necessary experience to graduate with the clinical skills to enable them to practice independently as they enter the profession.
- 1.4 There are currently (2017) approximately 1,050 students based at Hawkshead campus together with 675 staff. Some 300 students occupy residential accommodation on campus with the majority of the remaining students living in the immediate vicinity.
- 1.5 The buildings on the Hawkshead Campus fall broadly into three categories of use. Those on the western side of the site are predominantly in residential use comprising student halls of residence, staff housing and the indoor sports centre. In the central zone are the educational buildings while to the east of the site are buildings providing clinical services and animal accommodation. The eastern area also comprises car parks to the south of the Queen Mother Hospital which provides parking, principally for visitors and workers within the hospital and further to the east parking principally for students and staff.

- 1.6 The Hawkshead Campus is vital to the RVC's rural operations and is currently identified as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt where all but minor development should come forward in the context of a development brief.

2 The Proposal

- 2.1 The RVC's Hawkshead Campus Masterplan has been developed in response to a need for clarity regarding forthcoming development for stakeholders including the local community, parish councils, Hertfordshire County Council and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The Masterplan is intended to inform development projects between 2018-2028 and will serve as planning guidance for development control purposes, therefore, it must be the subject of public consultation and approved by the Council.

- 2.2 The Masterplan identifies a package of short and medium term interventions that will be further developed through consultation. As a whole, it seeks to provide a vision for the campus that enhances the green infrastructure, reflects its location in the Green Belt, improves the built environment, encourages connections and places of exchange whilst facilitating the removal of buildings that detract from the campus and are no longer fit for purpose. The proposed approach aims to promote development that is efficient, of high quality, and sustainable. The key principles of the Masterplan are:

- *the numbers of students based at Hawkshead will increase to approximately 1,200 while staff numbers remain broadly stable*
- *the College will meet head-on the challenge posed by direct competitors and will do all in its power to develop sustainably*
- *the College will focus on improving its built estate primarily to improve the student experience, but will also seek to improve the teaching and learning, research and clinical environment for staff and clients*
- *the College will strive to retain its position in the university world rankings and its accreditations with professional bodies*
- *the College will seek to minimise the environmental impact of its buildings and Operations*
- *the College will seek to improve the quality of its buildings, many of which are in very poor condition*
- *the College will continue to strengthen its community engagement*

- 2.3 Five key sites have been identified for development potential, which have been summarised below:

Site A (target completion 2021)

At the heart of the campus new build here will provide replacement accommodation following demolition of the Main Clinical Block along with additional space to accommodate an expansion in student numbers. The key functions of Site A are:

- Teaching and lecture rooms
- Research laboratories
- Research 'write-up' space
- Academic staff offices
- Break-out areas

- Anticipated GIA approximately 6,500 – 7,000sqm

Site B (target completion 2019)

Re-purposing of the maintenance workshop (old stable block) with a modest extension. The project will provide better configured social space and allow the ground floor of Hawkshead House to be used as support office and admin functions which are better suited to its domestic scale cellular rooms. The new student union will form a nucleus of social/living functions alongside the refectory, Sports and Wellbeing Centre and student residential zone. The key functions of Site B are:

- Student union bar and lounge areas
- Student union office space and shop
- WC's
- Anticipated GIA approximately 100sqm

Site C (target completion 2021-24)

Located to the east where further 1950's buildings are to be demolished and includes existing yard spaces and the horse manège. This site covers the broad area bounded by the Equine Hospital to the north, Queen Mother Hospital to the south, the Major Developed Site boundary to the east and the central north south access road to the west. The key functions of Site C are:

- Replacement Boot Room and Obstetrics Barn
- Research laboratories and offices
- Potential long term delivery of new clinical space
- Anticipated GIA approximately 7,650sqm

Site D (target completion 2019)

Site D is made available by removal of the temporary Kalanisi office building situated close to northern boundary of the Major Developed Site. The key functions of Site D would be a new screened maintenance yard.

Site E (target completion 2022-27)

Site E is the land on and around Odiham Hall student housing. The key functions of Site E is new student housing, potentially up to 80 units.

- 2.4 The Masterplan also includes key initiatives for outside spaces and routes which have been summarised below:

Hard surfaces

- Rationalise car parking and 'green' with new trees
- Ensure pedestrian priority via surface treatment and traffic calming
- Formal maintenance yard - screened from views
- Relocate manège when proposals for Site C come forward

Soft landscaping

- Additional tree planting within hard areas
- Protection and enhancement of green 'fingers'
- New boundary planting to screen and fragment views into the campus
- Maximise use of native species.

- Enhance bio-diversity

Greening the campus

- Retention and reinforcement of 'green' fingers through campus
- Enhanced boundary planting as 'green screen' to buildings
- New woodland on east side of campus
- Horse assessment and physio manège relocated
- Tree planting within new courtyard parking areas associated with new buildings

2.5 Future planning applications will utilise the Masterplan context as a reference for individual proposals identified by the Masterplan in order that the need, spatial context and implications of any proposals can be understood by all stakeholders.

2.6 It is proposed that the Masterplan is reviewed and if necessary updated every two to three years. This review would be carried out with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and key stakeholders including North Mymms Parish Council.

3 Reason for Committee Consideration

3.1 This application is presented to the Development Management Committee because the RVC Masterplan will serve as planning guidance for development control purposes and has more than just local interest.

4 Planning Policy

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF)

4.2 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 (Local Plan)

4.3 Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016 (Emerging Local Plan)

5 Site Designation

5.1 The Hawkshead Campus lies within Green Belt and the Mimms Valley Landscape Character Area and the Watling Chase Community Forest as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6 Representations Received

6.1 The Masterplan has been advertised by site notice and neighbour notification letters. One representation has been received from a neighbour objecting to the Master Plan due to the increase in traffic on Hawkshead Road. The objection referenced a number of concerns relating to the existing highway, which included the speed limit; inadequate signage; the narrow width of the carriageway; and the lack of a pavement or cycle lane for large stretches of the road.

7 Parish Council Representations

7.1 *“North Mymms Parish Council (NMPC) acknowledges that the RVC have instigated dialogue with NMPC and understand the need for spacing improvements at the RVC Hawkshead campus as they move forward.*

NMPC also acknowledge that the Master Plan proposal 2018/0729/CN is intended as a reference to enable understanding of need, spatial context and improvements and is for use of all stakeholders. The RVC wish this document to be a material consideration for future planning applications. NMPC have carefully considered the outlines drafted in this document and wish to comment as follows:

- 1) NMPC note the Master Plan will be reviewed every 3 years with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) and NMPC.*
- 2) NMPC note the minor alterations to the proposed Major Development Site (MDS) boundary including the overspill of the ménage to the east boundary.*

NMPC will not support any future development outside the MDS which would encroach on Green Belt land and will actively object to any proposals beyond the red line, however, provided the proposed ménage maintains the appearance of an agricultural field, utilising appropriate materials, this addition would be considered favourably.

- 3) NMPC acknowledges that certain buildings within the MDS are reaching the end of their life or are no longer fit for purpose and will need to be replaced. However it is important that the location and massing of new buildings must be sympathetic to the locality, not only of the Green Belt but the surrounding area.*

The use of design and materials which are more in keeping with the agricultural setting, rather than looking for architectural awards for difference, would also be considered more favourably.

- 4) Prominent views on the RVC site, as indicated within the document pages showing “very good quality buildings” is a subjective of opinion. Many units are visible from Brookmans Park and surrounding roads where they appear incongruous. It would therefore seem better that future proposals, especially at corners and boundaries, are given careful consideration as to their visual impacts and be more in keeping with a rural setting.*
- 5) NMPC are pleased to be in discussion with the RVC about local traffic and travel issues affecting the site and the North Mymms community. Parking is a major issue throughout the Borough and NMPC respectfully suggest it would seem prudent to utilise the opportunity when constructing new buildings to incorporate undercroft parking arrangements.*
- 6) NMPC note the intent, as part of the proposed Master Plan, to add screening/planting, including trees and a woodland area all of which is beneficial. However, we note that certain corners to the north of the MDS will be open; therefore the buildings will be visible from Brookmans Park and recommend consideration of careful planting to continue to allow views but which from the RVC soften the view across the valley from the distance of the neighbouring village.*
- 7) NMPC note the commitment of sustainability across many of the elements required in the further development of the site and commend these initiatives trusting they will be integrated sympathetically.*

NMPC want to see the RVC continue to be a world class facility as well as a good local employer and good neighbour in the community and welcome dialogue at all stages to ensure people and businesses flourish and thrive in this Parish.

The Master Plan appears to form a good foundation for future planning applications where further detail will be available for consideration and NMPC look forward to observing progress on the proposed enhancements of the RVC Hawkshead site.”

8 Analysis

8.1 The main planning issues to be considered are:

- 1. The principle of the development within the Green Belt (NPPF & Local Plan Polices GBSP1, RA5, RA6, RA7 & Emerging Policy SP3 and SADM34)**
- 2. Impact on the highway network and parking provision (NPPF & Local Plan Policy M14 & Emerging Policies SP4, SADM2, SADM3, SADM12)**
- 3. Sustainable Development (NPPF & Local Plan Policy SD1 & Emerging Policies SP1, SP8, SP10)**

1. The principle of the development within the Green Belt

- 8.2 The Hawkshead Campus is identified as a Major Developed in the Green Belt Site, in both the current adopted Local Plan and the emerging Local Plan, where all but minor development should come forward in the context of a Masterplan which has been agreed by the Council.
- 8.3 Saved Local Plan Policy RA7 states that proposals for new development at the Hawkshead Campus, will be permitted if they fulfil the criteria set out in saved Policies RA5 and RA6. Wherever possible, development should be located within the Major Site boundary and proposals outside of this boundary must meet the test of very special circumstances.
- 8.4 Policy RA5 states that limited infilling within Major Developed Sites in the Green Belt will be permitted subject to the following criteria:
- (i) The proposal will have no greater impact on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt than the existing development;*
 - (ii) The building should not exceed the height of the existing buildings;*
 - (iii) The proposal should not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site;*
 - (iv) The proposal should be brought forward in the context of a master planning brief for the site;*
 - (v) Any new development must be acceptable in terms of its impact on the highway network, including highway safety.*

- 8.5 Policy RA6 states that complete or partial redevelopment will be permitted within the boundaries of the Major Developed Sites subject to the following criteria:
- (i) Proposals should have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of land including land within it, and wherever possible should have less impact;*
 - (ii) Proposals should make a positive contribution to achieving the objectives for use of land in the Green Belt set out in paragraph 4.7*
 - (iii) Proposals should not occupy a greater footprint of the site than the existing buildings, excluding temporary buildings, open spaces with direct external access and areas of hard standing, unless this would achieve a height reduction to the benefit of visual amenity;*
 - (iv) Buildings should not exceed the height of the existing buildings;*
 - (v) The proposal should be brought forward in the context of a master planning brief for the site as defined in paragraph 15.15;*
 - (vi) The preparation of a Green Travel Plan when required under Policy M3, to include measures to control vehicle movement and increase travel to and from the site by alternative modes of transport; and*
 - (vii) Any new development must be acceptable in terms of its impact on the highway network, including highway safety.*
- 8.6 The Local Planning Authority's Draft Local Plan was submitted for examination on the 15 May 2017 and, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Annexe 1, para 216, decision makers may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans. Future development Proposals would therefore need to comply with the criteria set out in emerging Policy SADM34 Development in the Green Belt. This is a refined version of existing policy which identifies the Hawkshead Campus as a Major Developed Site wherein limited infill development or replacement buildings can occur. This policy also repeats that, other than minor development, proposals should come forward in the context of a Masterplan which has been agreed by the Council.
- 8.7 The emerging Plan proposes to include minor modifications to the Major Developed Site to recognise development previously permitted and/or implemented and more accurately reflect ownerships adjacent to the campus. It should be noted that the revised Major Developed Site is still subject to the outcome of the Local Plan examination and therefore may remain unchanged. Therefore the weight to be afforded to this will depend on the timing of individual planning applications and the prevailing policies at that time.
- 8.8 Unless covered by the exceptions set out in the NPPF (para 89) it is recognised that development proposals outside the Major Developed Site boundary represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 8.9 The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

- 8.10 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 8.11 In accordance with saved Policies RA5, RA6, RA7 and emerging policy SADM34, proposals for limited infilling or partial/complete redevelopment will need to be assessed against the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Notwithstanding this, the proposals set out within the Masterplan accord with the provisions of Policy SP3 setting out the settlement strategy and Green Belt boundaries.

2. Impact on the highway network and parking provision

- 8.12 An objection has been received from a neighbouring occupier due to the increase in traffic on Hawkshead Road. The objection also referenced a number of concerns relating to the highway safety and pedestrian/cycle accessibility.
- 8.13 The impact of proposals on transportation, car parking and the contribution to sustainable travel is key to the development of future planning applications. The location of the Hawkshead campus presents challenges in maintaining an appropriate balance between ensuring that the operational needs of the site are met and promoting alternative forms of travel. Given the campus's rural location and relatively poor direct public transport, cycling and walking links, there is currently a heavy dependence on the car.
- 8.14 The College has been proactive in dealing with these challenges and maintains a comprehensive Travel Plan to encourage sustainable travel amongst its staff, students and visitors across both its Camden and Hawkshead campuses. As part of existing permissions in line with College strategy Travel Plan monitoring is undertaken on an annual basis by the RVC in liaison with the County Council's Highways Department.
- 8.15 As well as ensuring that information is available to staff, students and visitors through a variety of formats and media, a number of key measures have been developed over time to respond to the transport needs of the campus. These measures include a free shuttle bus service which operates in a loop between the campus and key destinations in Potters Bar including the rail station, with a total of 30 services per day, starting at 0630 and finishing at 2000. The shuttle bus has been implemented alongside strict car parking management policies to control parking on the site, with both staff and students requiring a permit to park.
- 8.16 Historically, there have been issues with RVC related parking taking place on the verge on Hawkshead Lane in the vicinity of the College. To resolve this, a new car park was built on the eastern extent of the campus and parking restrictions were introduced on Hawkshead Lane to prohibit parking, except for a localised section of residents' permit parking to the west of the College. While helping to accommodate displaced parking from Hawkshead Lane, the capacity of the car park was set at 5% lower than observed demand to encourage mode shift. The College has recently managed a further mode shift by implementing a reduction

in the number of student permits and will implement a further reduction for the 2018-19 academic year.

- 8.17 Together with the shuttle bus and parking strategy, there are a number of other initiatives in place to encourage a sustainable approach to transport. Full details of these initiatives are included under Section 9 of the Masterplan.
- 8.18 As set out above, saved Policies RA5 & RA6 require any new development to be acceptable in terms of its impact on the highway network, including highway safety. All future planning applications which come forward in the context of this Masterplan will also address the need for sustainable travel in accordance with emerging Policies SP4, SADM2, SADM3 and SADM12.

3. Sustainable Development

- 8.19 Saved Policy SD1 states that proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied and they accord with the objectives and policies of the Development Plan. Emerging Local Plan Policy SD1 seeks to bring about sustainable development in the borough by applying the following principles:
- *The need to plan positively for growth in a way which supports economic growth, increases the supply of housing and helps to reduce social and health inequalities in the borough - whilst recognising environmental and infrastructure constraints.*
 - *That new development should contribute to the creation of mixed and sustainable communities which are well planned, promote healthy and active lifestyles, are inclusive and safe, environmentally sensitive, accessible, culturally rich, vibrant and vital, well served, and built to high design standards reflecting local character.*
 - *That the location of new development should deliver a sustainable pattern of development which prioritises previously developed land; minimises the need to travel by directing growth to those areas with good transport networks and which are well served by jobs, services and facilities; protects areas of highest environmental value; and avoids areas of high flood risk.*
 - *That the natural and heritage assets of the borough should be protected and enhanced and its natural resources used prudently.*
 - *That adaptation and mitigation principles relating to climate change are incorporated into the design and construction of new development which include energy and water efficiency measures, the use of low carbon and renewable energy, the provision of green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems (SUDs).*
- 8.20 At the heart of the NPPF is a 'golden thread' which is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF outlines, in its introduction, three aspects to sustainable development, of which there are three dimensions: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles. The NPPF does not require

development to jointly and simultaneously achieve planning gain in each of the three considerations. It is sufficient for all three to be considered and for a balance between benefit and adverse effects to be achieved across those three areas.

- 8.21 In this instance, the combined benefits of the Masterplan meet the three strands of delivering sustainable development as required by the NPPF. Specifically, the development of the Hawkshead Campus will have an economic benefit during the construction phase and a long term benefit as a major employer within the borough. Through the implementation of the Masterplan the RVC will seek to maintain and increase employment numbers as appropriate whilst encouraging continued inward investment in order that the RVC continues to make a positive contribution to the local economy.
- 8.22 Proposals set out within the Masterplan will adopt sustainable design and construction principles. The RVC will submit a BREEAM (or similar accreditation) Pre-Assessment Report on the sustainability performance of individual buildings as part of any relevant planning application. For residential proposals within the Major Developed Site, the RVC will submit a Sustainable Design Statement that will address Local Plan policies including those on movement and sustainable travel, ecology and the environment and set out how these have been incorporated into design development in a holistic and integrated manner.
- 8.23 The provision of services and use of facilities as set out in the Masterplan will have a role in the RVC's social contribution. This, together with the environmental impact, mitigation and enhancement measures will need further consideration, on a case by case basis, as part of the content and development of forthcoming planning applications.
- 8.24 As a whole, the vision for the campus set out in the Masterplan is considered to afford benefits in all areas of sustainability and is in accordance with the aims and objectives of saved policies of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission 2016 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

- 8.25 The Masterplan represents a strategic approach to development which has been prepared in the context of the development of the new Local Plan and the proposed revision to the Major Developed Site boundary. It is intended that the principles and policies, contained in the emerging Local Plan, will guide the design of development and the content of future planning applications that will be submitted in the context of this Masterplan. Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that applications may come forward before the Local Plan is adopted, in which case the current adopted Local Plan contains saved policies that are relevant to applications, in particular RA5, RA6 and RA7. The Masterplan will, if agreed by Members, be utilised by officers as a material consideration for future planning applications at the Hawkshead Campus.
- 8.26 Recognising the location of the campus in the Green Belt, future planning applications will be developed in the context of the location of the campus within a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt. Proposals other than those for minor

development should come forward in the context of this Masterplan (development brief) for the campus as agreed with the Council.

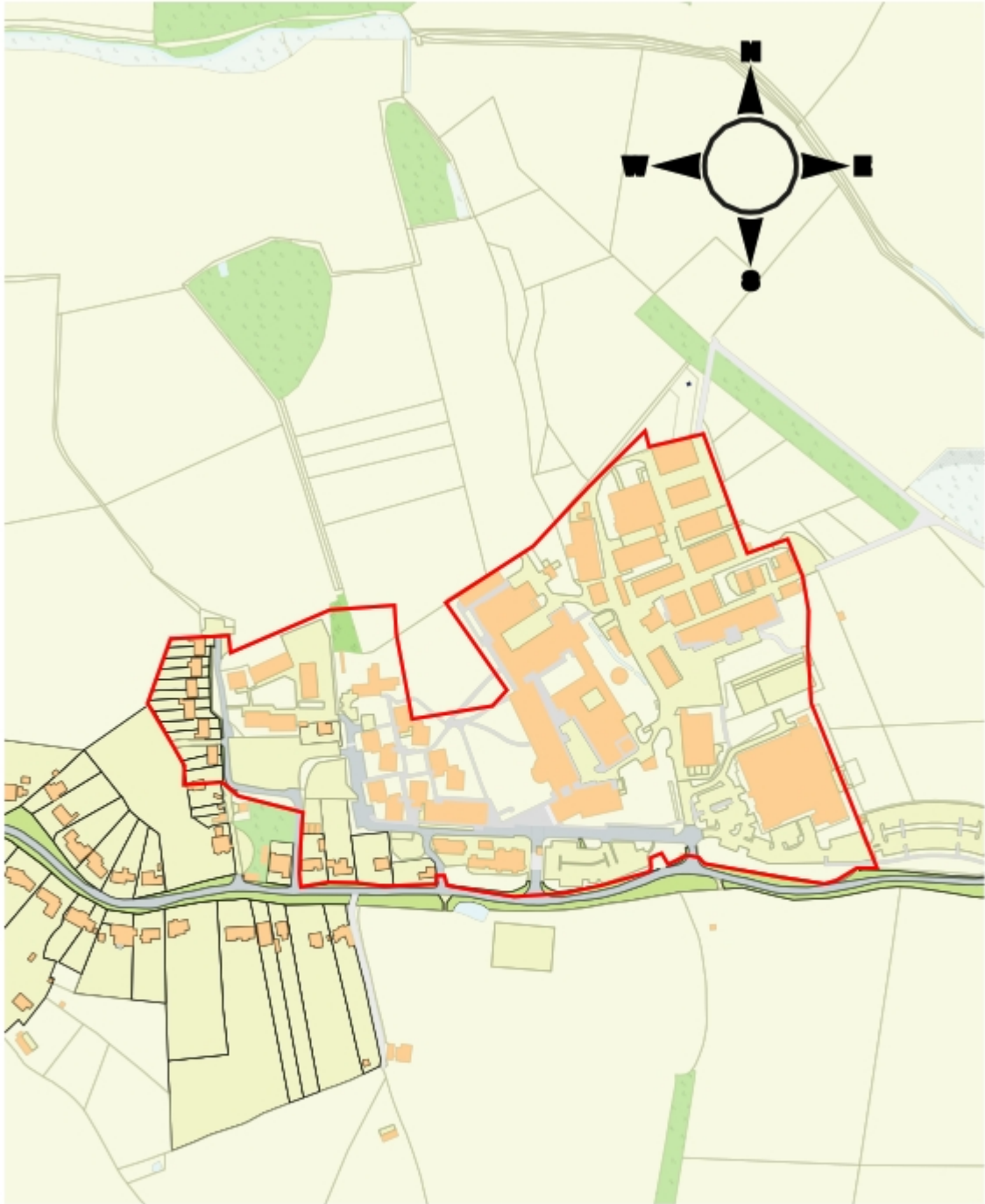
- 8.27 In terms of monitoring, it is anticipated that this Masterplan will accurately set out the overarching needs, drivers and objectives of the RVC over the short term (to 2028). In order to ensure that the Masterplan remains a document that reflects the implementation of the RVC's strategy and objectives and can adapt to changing circumstances in the delivery of education and research, it is proposed that the Masterplan is reviewed and if necessary updated every two to three years. This review would be carried out with WHBC and key stakeholders including North Mymms Parish Council.


9 Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Hawkshead Campus Masterplan is agreed.

Mark Peacock (Development Management)

Date: 10/05/2018



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|  <p>WELWYN HATFIELD</p> <p>Council Offices, The Campus Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 5AE</p> | Title: Royal Veterinary College Hawkshead Lane North Mymms Hatfield | | Scale: DNS |
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