

**Report to District Development
Management Committee**



Report Reference: DEV-022-2015/16
Date of meeting: 20 April 2016

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Subject: Planning Application EPF/3028/15 – Gunpowder Mill, Powdermill Lane/Beaulieu Drive, Waltham Abbey – Full planning application for the use of parts of the site as an outdoor recreation and activity centre for children together with the erection of new buildings to provide: guest accommodation, dining hall and kitchen, pavilion (changing rooms); and the conversion of several listed buildings to provide further guest accommodation and classrooms, together with a new lake for water based activities and the erection of free-standing activity structures.

Responsible Officer: Graham Courtney (01992 564228)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendation:

That consent is granted subject to the below conditions and the completed legal agreement (Unilateral Undertaking) that ensures:

- 1. That the income from the PGL lease is used for the preservation and enhancement of the whole site (including the SAM/SSSI outside of the application site area), in accordance with the charitable objectives of the Trust.**
- 2. The preparation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) and Access Management Plan (AMP) prior to first occupation of the development and**
- 3. The implementation of the LEMP and AMP from first occupation of the development.**

Planning Conditions:

- 1. The development hereby permitted must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this notice.
Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).**
- 2 The development hereby permitted will be completed strictly in accordance with the approved drawings these being those set out in the Drawing Register (Sheets 1 to 4) submitted with the application.
Reason: To ensure the proposal is built in accordance with the approved drawings.**

- 3** No development shall take place until wheel washing or other cleaning facilities for vehicles leaving the site during construction works have been installed in accordance with details which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved installed cleaning facilities shall be used to clean vehicles immediately before leaving the site.
Reason:- To avoid the deposit of material on the public highway in the interests of highway safety, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy ST4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 4** No development shall take place until a Phase 1 Land Contamination investigation has been carried out. A protocol for the investigation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before commencement of the Phase 1 investigation. The completed Phase 1 report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any necessary Phase 2 investigation. The report shall assess potential risks to present and proposed humans, property including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes, adjoining land, groundwaters and surface waters, ecological systems, archaeological sites and ancient monuments and the investigation must be conducted in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's "Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11", or any subsequent version or additional regulatory guidance.
[Note: This condition must be formally discharged by the Local Planning Authority before the submission of details pursuant to the Phase 2 site investigation condition that follows]
Reason:- To ensure the risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy RP4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 5** Should the Phase 1 Land Contamination preliminary risk assessment carried out under the above condition identify the presence of potentially unacceptable risks, no development shall take place until a Phase 2 site investigation has been carried out. A protocol for the investigation shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority before commencement of the Phase 2 investigation. The completed Phase 2 investigation report, together with any necessary outline remediation options, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to any redevelopment or remediation works being carried out. The report shall assess potential risks to present and proposed

humans, property including buildings, crops, livestock, pets, woodland and service lines and pipes, adjoining land, groundwaters and surface waters, ecological systems, archaeological sites and ancient monuments and the investigation must be conducted in accordance with DEFRA and the Environment Agency's "Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination, CLR 11", or any subsequent version or additional regulatory guidance.

[Note: This condition must be formally discharged by the Local Planning Authority before the submission of details pursuant to the remediation scheme condition that follows]

Reason:- To ensure the risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy RP4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.

- 6 Should Land Contamination Remediation Works be identified as necessary under the above condition, no development shall take place until a detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved remediation scheme unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The remediation scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures and any necessary long term maintenance and monitoring programme. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 or any subsequent version, in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.
- [Note: This condition must be formally discharged by the Local Planning Authority before the submission of details pursuant to the verification report condition that follows]
- Reason:- To ensure the risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy RP4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 7 Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme and prior to the first use or occupation of the development, a verification report that demonstrates the effectiveness of the remediation carried out must be produced together with any necessary monitoring and maintenance

programme and copies of any waste transfer notes relating to exported and imported soils shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval. The approved monitoring and maintenance programme shall be implemented.

Reason:- To ensure the risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy RP4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.

- 8 In the event that any evidence of potential contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified in the approved Phase 2 report, it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with a methodology previously approved by the Local Planning Authority. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme, a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority in accordance with the immediately above condition. Reason:- To ensure the risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other offsite receptors, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy RP4 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 9 All construction/demolition works and ancillary operations, including vehicle movement on site which are audible at the boundary of noise sensitive premises, shall only take place between the hours of 07.30 to 18.30 Monday to Friday and 08.00 to 13.00 hours on Saturday, and at no time during Sundays and Public/Bank Holidays unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason- In the interests of the amenities of noise sensitive properties, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policies RP5A and DBE9 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 10 No works shall take place until a detailed surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on sustainable drainage principles and an assessment of the hydrological and hydro geological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented prior to

occupation. The scheme shall include:
Run-off rates restricted to a minimum of 50% betterment on any areas where new developments are proposed on site.
Storage on site for the 1 in 100 inclusive of climate change storm event for any new developments on site.
An appropriate amount of treatment in line with the CIRIA SuDS Manual C753 for any areas where new developments are proposed.
A drainage plan highlighting final exceedance and conveyance routes, discharge rates and outfalls for the whole site.
Reason:- To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water from site. To ensure the effective operation of SuDS features over the lifetime of the development. To provide mitigation of any environmental harm which may be caused to the local water environment.

- 11 No works shall take place until a scheme to minimise the risk of offsite flooding caused by surface water run-off and groundwater during construction works has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.
Reason -The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 103 states that local planning authorities should ensure flood risk is not increased elsewhere by development. Construction may lead to excess water being discharged from the site. If dewatering takes place to allow for construction to take place below groundwater level, this will cause additional water to be discharged. Furthermore the removal of topsoils during construction may limit the ability of the site to intercept rainfall and may lead to increased runoff rates. To mitigate increased flood risk to the surrounding area during construction there needs to be satisfactory storage of/disposal of surface water and groundwater which needs to be agreed before commencement of the development.
- 12 No works shall take place until a Maintenance Plan detailing the maintenance arrangements including who is responsible for different elements of the surface water drainage system and the maintenance activities/frequencies, has been submitted to and agreed, in writing, by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason-To ensure appropriate maintenance arrangements are put in place to enable the surface water drainage system to function as intended to ensure mitigation against flood risk.
- 13 The applicant or any successor in title must maintain yearly logs of maintenance which should be carried out in accordance with any approved Maintenance Plan. These must be available for inspection upon a request by the Local Planning Authority.
Reason - To ensure that the required maintenance is carried out to ensure mitigation against flood risk.
- 14 Development shall not commence until a drainage strategy detailing any on and/or off site drainage works, has been submitted to and approved by, the local planning authority in consultation with the sewerage undertaker. No discharge of

foul or surface water from the site shall be accepted into the public system until the drainage works referred to in the strategy have been completed.

Reason - The development may lead to sewage flooding; to ensure that sufficient capacity is made available to cope with the new development; and in order to avoid adverse environmental impact upon the community

- 15** **Development shall not be commenced until: a) full details, including anticipated flow rates, and detailed site plans have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority (in consultation with Thames Water) b) Where this development forms part of a larger development, arrangements have been made to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority (in consultation with Thames Water) for the provision of adequate water supplies for the whole of the development.**
Reason: To ensure that the water supply infrastructure has sufficient capacity to cope with the/this additional demand.
- 16** **No burning of materials or operation of machinery shall take place on the former burning ground between 1 February and 31 July in any year; unless the heronry area has first been assessed by a competent ornithologist not more than 3 days before the carrying out of the activity in question and this assessment has confirmed that no breeding herons are present.**
Reason: to avoid disturbance of any breeding herons.
- 17** **The burning ground shall be subject to an appropriate level of remediation and restored to appropriate semi-natural grassland and/or scrub habitat(s) within 6 months of the completion of the programme of treatment of the arisings from the demolition of the east flank buildings.**
Reason: to ensure the timely and sympathetic restoration of this area, which is surrounded by the SSSI.
- 18** **No structures are to be erected within 100m of the SSSI; with the exception of structures the height of which is less than that of the adjacent SSSI trees.**
Reason: to minimise disturbance to the SSSI and, in particular, to avoid disturbance of any breeding herons.
- 19** **No conversion/demolition or preliminary groundwork's of any kind shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority**
Reason - To ensure proper recording of the heritage asset in accordance with Policy HC1 of the Adopted Local Plan.
- 20** **No development shall have taken place until samples of the types and colours of the external finishes have been submitted**

to and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing prior to the commencement of the development. The development shall be implemented in accordance with such approved details. For the purposes of this condition, the samples shall only be made available for inspection by the Local Planning Authority at the planning application site itself. Reason:- To ensure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of visual amenity, in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policies DBE1, HC6 and HC7 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.

- 21 No development, including works of demolition, site clearance ,or investigations / remediation in connection with contaminated land , shall take place until a Tree Protection Plan, and Arboricultural Method Statement in accordance with BS:5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations) has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing. The development shall be carried out only in accordance with the approved documents unless the Local Planning Authority gives its written consent to any variation. Reason:- :- To comply with the duties indicated in Section 197 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and to enable full and proper consideration be given to the impact of the proposed development on existing trees / hedges, so as to safeguard and enhance the visual amenities of the area and to ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and policy LL10 of the adopted Local Plan and Alterations.
- 22 Should any health and safety risks associated with the residential occupation of buildings, from either toxic or explosive substances be identified a report detailing the steps taken to remove such risks together with verification from an appropriate expert that these works have satisfactorily been completed and that no appreciable risks remain shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority, prior to the first occupation of the site. Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of health and safety, given the previous use of the site, and in accordance with policy RP5A of the adopted local Plan.
- 24 Should any possible risk of explosives within the soils at the site be identified during works at the site then full details of the remediation steps required to prevent risk, together with verification from an appropriate expert that the remediation required has been carried out in full shall be submitted to the local planning authority prior to the first use of the site. Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of health and safety, given the previous uses of the site.
- 25 All ground works, deliveries and/or demolition shall be in accordance with the submitted Construction Management Plan

(CMP). The CMP shall be adhered to throughout the construction period.

Reason: To ensure that on-street parking of these vehicles in the adjoining streets is considered and to ensure that loose materials and spoil are not brought out onto the highway in the interests of highway safety.

- 26** The submitted Traffic Management Plan for the site shall be implemented and adhered to throughout the operating life of the development with any changes being agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.
Reason: To ensure that there is no detriment to safety both on the highway and on the site.
- 27** Prior to the first occupation of the development the vehicle parking and turning areas as indicated on the approved plans shall be provided, hard surfaced, sealed and marked out. The parking and turning areas shall be retained in perpetuity for their intended purpose.
Reason: To ensure that appropriate parking and turning is provided.
- 28** No infiltration of surface water drainage into the ground at this site is permitted other than with the express written consent of the local planning authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approval details
Reason: To protect groundwater in line with your policies RP3 and RP4, The Thames River Basin Management Plan, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework
- 29** Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.
Reason: To protect groundwater in line with your policies RP3 and RP4, The Thames River Basin Management Plan, Planning Practice Guidance and the National Planning Policy Framework
- 30** No development shall take place until a scheme for the provision and management of an 8 metre wide buffer zone alongside all watercourses shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme and any subsequent amendments shall be agreed in writing with the local planning authority. The buffer zone scheme shall be free from built development including lighting and formal landscaping; and could form a vital part of green infrastructure provision. The schemes shall include:

**Plans showing the extent and layout of the buffer zone.
Details of any proposed planting scheme (native species only).
Details demonstrating how the buffer zone will be protected during development and managed/maintained over the longer term including adequate financial provision and named body responsible for management plus production of detailed management plan.
Details of any proposed footpaths, fencing, lighting etc.
Reason: Land alongside watercourses is particularly valuable for wildlife and it is essential this is protected in line with policy CP2.
This condition is supported by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 109 and 118**

Report

1. *This application is before this Committee since it is "large scale major" application as defined within guidance issued by the DCLG (Pursuant to The Constitution, Part Two, Article 10 (b))*

Background history of the Site:

2. Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills is considered to be one of the most extensive and significant heritage sites in the Epping Forest District which can trace the history and manufacture of explosives from the 16th to the 20th century. The entire site extends to over 63 hectares (156 acres), most of which is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). The site contains 20 Listed Buildings, many of which are Grade II* listed with one being Grade I listed.
3. Outline planning permission was granted in March 1997 (Ref: EPF/0625/93) for:
 - a) 63 hectares for heritage, leisure and recreation uses with supporting commercial uses, and;
 - b) 3.64 hectares of residential development.
4. This proposal was implemented and the 63 hectares of heritage, leisure and recreation uses became the Royal Gunpowder Mills Visitor Attraction, which was opened in 2001 with the aid of a substantial Heritage Lottery Fund grant.
5. The 3.64 hectares of residential development was allowed as 'enabling development' to subsidise the decontamination of those parts of the site and buildings that would become publicly accessible. Detailed planning permission was subsequently granted and as a result 49 detached dwellings were constructed off of Beaulieu Drive.
6. A further planning permission was granted in 2007 (Ref: EPF/0501/07) for the conversion of the former powerhouse building and entrance lodge to the north of Powdermill Lane, which never formed part of the visitor attraction, to create offices. This development was completed in 2010.

7. It is stated that the current visitor attraction, which is run by a charitable operating company, receives about 20,000 visitors per year as well as 9,000 school children. However, despite this, it is claimed that the operation is not able to generate much more than 60% of its running costs. As a result, since 2002 the Operating Company has required an average grant (subsidy) of £400,000 per annum. This shortfall is currently being subsidised from interest earned on the endowment passed to the Trust from the Ministry of Defence when the site was 'gifted' to the Trust. At the time this endowment was made it was thought that the sum would generate sufficient income to maintain the whole site in perpetuity. However visitor numbers and the income that has been earned from the endowment have proved to be significantly lower than originally predicted, due to falls in interest rates over time.
8. The strategy for the visitor attraction is that it should become self-supporting, however there has always been a need for a separate income to cover the cost of managing and maintaining the remainder of the site, particularly the woodland area. There are legal obligations in respect of the repair and retention of the scheduled structures and listed buildings, however this obligation is currently largely unfunded.
9. In the past the disposal of some buildings not used for the visitor attraction such as the Powerhouse and entrance lodge off Powdermill Lane has provided additional capital, however this strategy is not sustainable in the long term and therefore more innovative approaches are needed to achieve and sustain the financial viability of the operation.

Site context:

10. The Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mill (WARGM) site is located to the northwest of the town of Waltham Abbey and close to the boundary with the Borough of Broxbourne. To the west of the site there is a band of undeveloped open land approximately 800 metres wide, beyond which is the urban town of Waltham Cross. To the north and east of the site is open recreational and agricultural land, while to the southeast and south is the town of Waltham Abbey.
11. The site lies wholly within the Lee Valley Regional Park and to the north of the site are a series of reservoirs, marshland and streams associated with the River Lee. Most of the land to the west and east of the site is owned by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA).
12. The 'red lined' application site covers two separate areas of the existing site – being the Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area (the southern section), which contains the majority of the Listed Buildings on the site, and the New Hill Area (the north-eastern section), which lies immediately to the east of the Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).
13. The Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area measures 10.61 hectares and the total the New Hill area measures 9.27 hectares. Both of the sites fall outside the area of the SAM, with the exception of a single building (L190, located at the north end of Queens Mead) and an open grassed area to the west of Long Walk (also at the north end of Queens Mead).

14. The southern section of the site (which includes Queens Mead and the Eastern Flank) contains the majority of Listed Buildings on the site, as well as a number of derelict former laboratory and several storage buildings that are not listed. This part of the site comprises five distinct areas:
- The existing visitor car parks north of Hoppit Road;
 - Queens Mead – an open, grassed area that provides the setting for the listed former gunpowder incorporating mills;
 - The listed former gunpowder incorporating mills between Queens Mead and Middle Stream;
 - The Eastern Flank area, between Middle Stream and the Old River Lee; and,
 - The open grassed area to the west of Long Walk, at the north end of Queens Mead.
15. The whole site is located within a conservation area that was specifically designated around the entire WARGM site due to the historic significance.
16. The north-eastern section of the application site (New Hill) contains several small process buildings that were previously related to the construction of the adjacent nitro-glycerine factory in 1940. None of these buildings are listed and all are in a poor condition. This area contains a substantial lake that was created from a 'borrow pit' that provided clean soil during the earlier decontamination works of the southern site. The New Hill area was not part of the original WARGM site, however was annexed from the surrounding farmland during the Second World War.
17. The two sections of the application site are dissected by the SAM and SSSI. This does not form part of the application site however, in order to allow PGL staff and guests to walk between the two sites, right of access will be given by WARGM Trust to allow for a pedestrian access route that follows the existing road on the west side of the Old River Lee (from the north-east corner of the Eastern Flank area), up through the Scheduled Ancient Monument via the 'Burning Ground Access Road' to Bridge 11, which crosses the Cornmill Stream at the entrance to the New Hill area. An alternative access route, which avoids the need to go through the centre of the SSSI, is also included within the lease arrangements between PGL and the Trust.

Description of Proposal:

18. The proposal is a joint application made on behalf of both PGL Travel Ltd. and the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Charitable Foundation Limited (hereafter referred to as the WARGM Trust).

19. PGL Travel is an outdoor education provider that specialise in educational activity courses, school trips, French language Courses, children's activity holidays, summer camps and ski trips. They currently have centres throughout the UK, France, Spain and Australia.
20. This planning application seeks approval for the use of parts of the WARGM site as an outdoor recreation and activity centre for children, together with the erection of new buildings to provide: guest accommodation, dining hall and kitchen, pavilion (changing rooms); and the conversion of several existing Listed Buildings to provide further guest accommodation and classrooms, together with a new lake for water based activities and the erection of free-standing activity structures.
21. The existing use of the site and buildings falls within Use Classes D1 (non-residential institutions) and D2 (assembly and leisure). Whilst the proposed use of the site as an outdoor recreation and activity centre also falls within Use Class D2 the inclusion of the proposed accommodation and service buildings would result in the site being 'sui generis' (a use in their own right).
22. The Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area of the application site will contain the new uses associated with the PGL development. All the existing listed former gunpowder incorporating mills to the east of Queen's Mead are vacant and unused with the exception of L157. Four of these (L145, L148, L153 and L149) are proposed for refurbishment, conversion and use as guest accommodation, while the remaining listed former gunpowder incorporating mill (L157 – Grade I listed) will remain as a display space and teaching rooms with shared use by PGL and the existing visitor attraction. Building L134 (former cordite press house, later laboratories) will also be used for additional teaching rooms.
23. The converted former gunpowder incorporating mill buildings (L145, L148, L149 and L153) would provide 176 guest bed spaces and 21 teacher bed spaces. In addition each building would incorporate a lounge area for teachers (except L148) and storage space together with plant rooms. Listed building L134 (Building G) comprises a listed former cordite press house, which would be converted to provide classrooms.
24. At the southern end of Queens Mead, building L168 (Grade II* listed) will be converted to provide a reception area, administrative offices, meeting room, first aid room, IT room, kitchenette and WC facilities for PGL. A new extension is proposed to the east of this building to provide further facilities for PGL, including a dining hall, kitchen, indoor activity space and WCs. This would be erected on the slab of an earlier 1950s building that was later demolished.
25. Buildings L176 and L177 (Grade II* listed) are currently used as a café and WCs and would be used to provide a lounge for use by PGL teachers and staff. The adjoining buildings (L180 and L182) will be used to provide an equipment store and maintenance facility for PGL. Building L167 (Grade II listed) will be used to provide a shop and 'chill-out' zone for PGL guests. This building comprises approximately 202m² of gross floorspace and is a single volume space, which would be unaltered as part of this proposal. At the northern end of Queens Mead buildings L119 and L122 (which are not listed), and buildings L133 and L136 (which are Grade II listed), will be refurbished and converted to provide living accommodation for PGL senior staff members.

26. Several small unlisted buildings at the northern end of Queens Mead are proposed for reuse as equipment stores, hazardous materials store and WCs whilst other small buildings of low heritage value that are in poor condition would be demolished. Building L185, which is currently used by the visitor attraction and houses the restored powder barge, will remain with the WARGM Trust and would continue to be part of the visitor attraction.
27. A full list of the listed buildings on the Queens Mead/Eastern Flank area of the site and their existing and intended uses is as follows:
- L133 - Magazine - later propellant store (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Senior staff accommodation building
 - L134 - Cordite press house (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Teaching rooms
 - L135 - Tray magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - senior staff accommodation
 - L136 - Remote accumulator tower (Grade II Listed) – currently a ‘Wildlife tower’ (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Senior staff accommodation
 - L141 - Sorting house (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store
 - L145 - Group F Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
 - L148 - Group G Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
 - L149 - Group E Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
 - L153 - Group D Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade II* Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Accommodation for guests
 - L154 - Expense magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store
 - L157 - Group C Gunpowder Incorporating Mills (Grade I Listed) – currently exhibition space and classrooms: Proposed use - Teaching rooms
 - L165 - Mineral jelly store (Grade II Listed) – currently storage: Proposed use - Equipment store
 - L167 - Charcoal store, later converted into reel drying stove (Grade II listed) – currently exhibition space: Proposed use - Shop and ‘chill out’ zone for guests
 - L168 - Engine house and mechanics’ shop (Grade II* listed) – Currently the “Mad Lab”, Rocket Vault and exhibition space (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Reception, admin, offices, meeting room, first aid room, WCs
 - L170A - Expense magazine (Grade II Listed) – currently vacant: Proposed use - Equipment store
 - L176 & L177 - Boiler house and dynamo house (Grade II* listed) – currently cafe and toilets (part of existing visitor attraction): Proposed use - Lounge for staff and teachers, toilets
28. A full list of the unlisted buildings and their current and proposed uses is as follows:
- L107 - Petrol store (not listed) – vacant: Proposed equipment store
 - L118 - Preparation room (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
 - L119 - Manager’s office (not Listed) – vacant: Senior staff accommodation
 - L120 - Solvent store (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store

- L121 - Toilet and store (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L122 - Main laboratory (not Listed) – vacant: Senior staff accommodation
- L125 - Electrical store (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L126 - Sewer pump house (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L131 - Solvent store (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L132 - Physical test house/C.C. building (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L137 - Guncotton press house No.2 (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L138 - Magazine (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L139 - Magazine (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L140 - Locker magazine (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L142 - Toilet (not Listed) semi-derelict: Equipment store
- L143 - Cordite incorporating house (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L144 - Solvent and waste store (not Listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L146 - Cordite incorporating house No.2 (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L147 - Fire engine house (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L150 - Concrete air raid shelter (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L151 - Cordite incorporating house No.4 (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L152 - Chemical store/solvent store (not listed) – vacant: Luggage and equipment store
- L155 - Cordite incorporating house No.5 (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L159 - Cordite press house No.5 (not Listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L160 - Charcoal store (not listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded, and demolished
- L164 - Oven room near L148 (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
- L170 - Sewer pump house (not listed) – unknown: Building to be retained and repaired as necessary, no intended use
- L180 - Pipe fitters shop and store (not listed) - Mess room for volunteers (part of existing visitor attraction): Equipment store
- L181 - Electrical substation (not listed) - Electrical substation: No change, location of electricity supply for site
- L182 - Mess room (not listed) - store (Epping Forest District Museum) Maintenance and 'back' office: No works needed
- L185 - Laboratory (later sport & social club) (not listed) - exhibition space (for Powder Barge): Building to remain with WARGM Trust and continued use as part of visitor attraction
- L186 - Locker magazine (not listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L188 - Locker magazine (not listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
- L190 - Climatic test cubicles A & B (not listed) – vacant: Equipment & cycle store
- L191 - Stability test laboratory (not listed) – vacant: COSHH store (hazardous substances)

- L192 - Locker magazine (not listed) – vacant: Building to remain with WARGM Trust with possible use as bat roost
 - L193 - Locker magazine (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
 - L194 - Chemical store (not listed) – vacant: Building to be recorded and demolished
 - L196 - Store (not listed) – vacant: Equipment store
 - L198 - Laboratory (not listed) – storage: Toilet block for guests
29. A number of new buildings would also be erected on the southern part of the site to provide accommodation for PGL guests. These would be erected over the floor slabs of the existing demolished buildings L137, L143, L146, L151, L155 and L159, which are located on the Eastern Flank. In addition, a new building will be erected at the southern end of the Eastern Flank to provide accommodation for teachers and PGL staff.
30. The proposed new buildings comprise four new detached buildings on the Eastern Flank area of the site, to the north and south of the retained listed building L149, and a new building immediately to the east of the listed building L168 at the southern end of Queen's Mead.
31. Accommodation blocks B and C would be situated to the south of retained listed building L149 and would be linked to one another by a central 'entrance core', which contains a meeting space, teaching area, galleried landing and staircase. These would have a ground floor area of 2,003m² and first floor area of 1,936m² (including entrance core area) and would replace existing buildings L151, L155 and L159. Buildings E and F would be located to the north of the retained listed building L149 and would be two storeys in height and would provide guest and teacher accommodation. Building E would have a ground floor area of 920m² and first floor area of 905m² and would replace existing buildings L143 and L146. Building F would have a ground floor area of 1,583m² and first floor area of 1,546m² and would replace existing buildings L137, L166 and L194.
32. A new building is proposed on the Eastern Flank that would be used as a staff accommodation block. This would be situated in the south-east corner of the site and would provide 75 bedrooms for staff working at the centre, together with a large lounge/dining area and entrance lobby. Further accommodation for senior staff would be provided through the conversion of the existing buildings L119, L122, L133 and L136. These buildings are all located at the northern end of Queen's Mead and would provide accommodation for up to four members of senior staff along with their families.
33. A further new building would be an extension to the east of the listed building L168. This would provide a dining hall with covers for up to 540 guests, together with kitchen, preparation and storage areas, staff changing area, office and WCs. The first floor of this building would be contained within the roof area and would provide a single volume space for indoor activities. The existing single storey building (L168) has a gross floor area of approximately 405m² and the new-build extension would add a further 2,150m² of floorspace over two floors.
34. There are several existing buildings within the New Hill Area which will be retained but not used by PGL. These are as follows:

- S2 - Electrical substation (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
 - S5 - Process building (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
 - S6 - Magazine (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
 - S10 - Dark room & office block (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
 - S12 - Chemical store (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
 - S13 - Store (not listed) – vacant: No intended use, make secure
35. The only proposed new building within the New Hill area of the application site is a pavilion, which would comprise showers, WCs and changing rooms. This pavilion building would serve the proposed water-based activities in this location, such as canoeing and raft building. This building would be single storey and provide approximately 256m² of gross floorspace.
36. The New Hill area would also contain large activity structures and features comprising: four zip wires, three areas of tunnel trails and a new lake for raft-building activities. The existing lake would be used for canoeing and other water-based activities.
37. The existing parking arrangements for the application site would continue as existing utilising the current visitor car park to the north of building H7. This is accessed directly from Beaulieu Drive and would provide parking for all staff and visitors of both the visitor attraction and the new PGL centre. In addition, a further car park area to the north of the existing, which has extant planning permission, would be constructed to provide a further 90 car parking spaces.
38. The existing visitor attraction is proposed to remain with its principle facilities consolidated within the existing buildings on the 'Island Site' (buildings A200, A201, A202, A203). This area does not form part of the application site and currently houses the main visitor exhibition, display and orientation spaces, as well as offices for the WARGM Company. Visitors will still be able to access the northern half of the main site via 'land train' and the proposed narrow gauge railway along the west side of Long Walk. It is also possible that, in the near future, building H7 will be able to provide accommodation for the visitor attraction once again, possibly as a location for the displaced visitor attraction facilities south of Queen's Mead (exhibition spaces and visitor cafe). This building is currently let to a local dance group.

Relevant Planning History:

39. There is a long and complex history to the site, much of which relates to the maintenance and repair of the listed buildings. The key previous applications are as follows:
40. OUT/EPF/0625/93 - Outline application for use of land for:- A) 63 hectares for heritage, leisure and recreation uses with supporting commercial uses, and; B) 3.64 hectares of residential development – approved/conditions (subject to S106 Agreement) 27/03/97
41. RES/EPF/0715/97 - Reserved matters application for the erection of 49 detached four (4) and five (5) bedroomed houses, new access road and landscaping – approved/conditions 05/01/98

42. RES/EPF/1135/99 - Reserved matters application for alterations to existing buildings, construction of new toilet block and siting of temporary toilets and landscaping details in connection with use of the site as a museum and heritage site – approved/conditions 07/01/00
43. EPF/1927/99 - Application for alterations to existing buildings, with use of the buildings and site as a museum and heritage site – approved/conditions 07/02/00
44. EPF/0500/07 - Reserved matters application for the development of supporting commercial uses (B1 office accommodation) approved under EPF/21/04. (relating to original outline permission, reference EPF/625/93) – approved/conditions (subject to S106 Agreement) 14/09/07
45. EPF/0501/07 - Conversion and change of use of the Power House and Water Tower into office accommodation (Class B1) – approved/conditions (subject to S106 Agreement) 06/11/07
46. EPF/0950/13 - Change of use of core visitor attraction buildings - A201, A202, A203, L167, L168, L176 and H7 - from D1 Use (museum and visitor attraction) to uses included within both D1 and D2 (assembly and leisure) – approved/conditions 01/08/13

Policies Applied:

47. CP1 - Achieving sustainable development objectives
- CP2 - Protecting the quality of the rural and built environment
- CP3 - New development
- CP6 - Achieving sustainable urban development objectives
- CP8 - Sustainable economic development
- CP9 - Sustainable transport
- GB2A - Development in the Green Belt
- GB7A - Conspicuous development
- GB8A - Change of use or adaptation of buildings
- GB10 - Development in the Lee Valley Regional Park
- HC1 - Scheduled monuments and other archaeological sites
- HC6 - Character, appearance and setting of conservation areas
- HC7 - Development within conservation areas
- HC9 - Demolition in conservation areas
- HC10 - Works to listed buildings
- HC12 - Development affecting the setting of listed buildings
- HC13 - Change of use of listed buildings
- HC16 - Former Royal Gunpowder Factory Site, Waltham Abbey
- NC1 - SPAs, SACs, and SSSIs
- NC2 - County wildlife sites
- NC4 - Protection of established habitat
- RP3 - Water quality
- RP4 - Contaminated land
- RP5A - Adverse environmental impacts
- RST1 - Recreational, sporting and tourist facilities
- RST22 - Potentially intrusive activities
- RST23 - Outdoor leisure uses in the LVRP
- RST24 - Design and location of development in the LVRP
- U2A – Development in flood risk areas
- U3A - Catchment effects

DBE1 - Design of new buildings
DBE2 - Effect on neighbouring properties
DBE4 - Design in the Green Belt
DBE9 - Loss of amenity
LL1 - Rural landscape
LL2 - Inappropriate rural development
LL10 - Adequacy of provision for landscape retention
LL11 - Landscaping scheme
ST1 - Location of development
ST2 - Accessibility of development
ST4 - Road safety
ST5 – Travel plans
ST6 - Vehicle parking

48. The above policies form part of the Council's 1998 and 2006 Alteration Local Plan. Following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies from this plan (which was adopted pre-2004) are to be afforded due weight where they are consistent with the Framework. The above policies are broadly consistent with the NPPF and therefore are afforded full weight.

Consultation Carried Out and Summary of Representations Received:

50. The application has been advertised in the Local Press, site notices were erected and 116 neighbouring properties were written to with regard to the application.

51. 59 letters of OBJECTIONS and or comment have been received.

30 from residents of Waltham Abbey – from the following addresses:-

1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 Gregory Mews,
5 Berthold Mews,
6, 7 Patrick Grove,
3 Mason Close,
1 Highbridge Street, Highbridge Retail Park,
3, 128 Upshire Road,
56 Woollard Street,
Elmlea Sewardstone Road,
12 Elms Close,
15 Farthingale Lane,
62 Honey Lane,
27 Roundhills,
9 Flagstaff Road,
8 Norman Close,
15 Powdermill Lane,
30 Pick Hill,
10 Thaxted Way

The remainder are either from no specified address or are from further afield, but are largely from:-

volunteers and Friends of the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills.

1 from Waltham Abbey Residents Association
1 from Waltham Abbey Historical Society

52. In summary these make the following objections, issues:

- Scale of development is excessive
- Loss of existing visitor attraction buildings to PGL
- Loss of Queens Mead as area for outdoor events
- Impact on economic viability of visitor attraction
- Future of visitor attraction not confirmed
- Impact of activity structures on SAM
- Traffic impact on Beaulieu Drive and junction with Highbridge Street
- Capacity of foul sewer to deal with waste flows from proposed development
- Traffic and pedestrian safety within the site
- Detrimental impact on visitor numbers to Waltham Abbey
- Better to use site for housing (if it is to be developed)
- Noise and light pollution
- Increased traffic at dangerous junction (Highbridge Street)
- Impact from construction traffic
- Site is unsuitable for children's outdoor activity centre
- PGL are not interested in the heritage of the site
- HLF grant is not for 'public benefit'
- Failure of trustees to provide key information
- Contamination
- 'Stress' likely to be caused to fallow deer population
- Existing facilities to be lost cannot easily be replaced elsewhere on the site
- Impact on wildlife and the SSSI
- Loss of car parking
- Loss of public access to heritage/listed buildings
- Loss of education centre (L157)
- Inappropriate development for site of national heritage importance
- Damage to character of the 'industrial landscape'
- Inappropriate new structures and buildings
- Visitor attraction does not need new development
- Development will increase flooding in the local area
- Use of income from PGL should help to fund the visitor attraction

53. **The Lee Valley Regional Park Authority's** comments are reproduced in full below.

(1) The Authority has reservations about the proposed development and its impact on the ecology and landscape of the wider Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills site, including the Waltham Abbey and Cornmill Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). If planning permission is granted then is it is considered that a planning obligation is required to:

- (a) secure the production and implementation of an Ecological and Landscape Management Plan for the WARGM site;
- (b) delivery of the Management Plan be overseen by an advisory Steering Group consisting of representatives from Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mill Trust, Historic England and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority;

(2) the Authority also wishes to ensure further work is carried out to strengthen the existing Ecological Mitigation Strategy and protect the Waltham Abbey Site of Special Scientific Interest and seeks the imposition of the following conditions:

- (a) the “activity structures” to be constructed to the north of Queen’s Mead area and close to the Horsemill Stream should not exceed the height of the trees;
- (b) details of the Access Management plan are submitted in advance of the occupation of the site and that this takes into consideration the potential requirements and activities of the existing visitor attraction;
- (c) in respect of the Waltham Abbey Site of Special Scientific Interest, a buffer is implemented around the potential nest sites leading up to and during the Grey Heron breeding season;
- (d) further work is undertaken to provide suitable replacement bat roosts by incorporating existing roosts into the refurbished buildings;
- (e) appropriate enhancement is provided for Otters either within the Waltham Abbey Site of Special Scientific Interest or on adjacent land within the Regional Park. The Authority would wish to see a significant buffer along the boundary watercourse to the east of the site to maintain a quiet route for movement of aquatic mammals;
- (f) consideration be given to the creation of a new pond to provide additional undisturbed habitat for Great Crested Newts and other species; this should not be stocked with fish and be located in proximity to existing features;
- (g) production of a pro-active land management strategy to actively tackle the issues presented by invasive species in line with on-going management in other areas of the Lee Valley;
- (h) a study is commissioned on the feasibility of a new pedestrian/cycle bridge designed to link the Lee Valley Showground Site with the Royal Gunpowder Mills site; and
- (i) the submission of details of new boundary treatment designed to be sympathetic to the amenities of the Regional Park.

The Authority would wish to be consulted on the above matters in due course.

54. **Waltham Abbey Town Council** OBJECT to the proposal and their comments are set out in full below.

The site is of international importance, the blue print for the installation at Wilmington USA. The site is part of the character of the Town. The Town Council was instrumental in setting up the attraction in the first place, but it is acknowledged that the site is in financial dire straits.

Objections include:

- Drainage: There has been insufficient work done to cover all the points raised.
- Flood Risk: SuDS team reviewed the risk assessment, and it does not comply with standards.
- Rafting Lake – questions regarding the requirement for this as the site is adjacent to a rafting facility.
- Problems over land contamination resulting in conditions required by the EFDC Land Contamination Officer.
- ECC Archaeological Officer requires a full in depth investigation of the site rather than a desk top exercise due to its importance.

- Loss of visitors to the site will have an adverse impact on the number of visitors to the Town Centre.
 - The vehicular access is not suitable for the number of coaches envisioned.
 - Air quality testing should be carried out due to high contamination levels on adjacent land.
55. **Broxbourne Borough Council** was consulted as a neighbouring Authority and has raised NO OBJECTION to the proposals.
56. In addition to the general consultations, specialist advice has been sought from the following;
- Environment Agency
 - Historic England
 - Natural England
 - Essex County Council – Flood and Water Management
 - Essex County Council – Historic Environment Advisor
 - Essex County Council – Highways
 - Essex Bat Group
 - Essex County Council – Infrastructure Planning
 - Epping Forest District Council – Trees and Landscape officer
 - Epping Forest District Council – Environment and Neighbourhood Manager
 - Epping Forest District Council – Contaminated Land officer
 - Epping Forest District Council – Drainage and Water Team
57. The responses from these consultees are explained under the headings within the Issues and Considerations section below.

Issues and Considerations:

Principle of the development:

58. The NPPF sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and states how they are to be applied. The core theme of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. In terms of decision-taking for Local Planning Authorities this means:
1. “Approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay; and
 2. Where the Development Plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:
 - a) Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in this framework as a whole; or
 - b) Specific policies in this framework indicate that development should be restricted.”
59. The importance of this site has long been recognised and the adopted Local Plan has a specific policy relating to development of the site, Policy HC16, which states:
- “The Council will encourage proposals for the restoration and reuse of buildings on the former Royal Gunpowder Factory site (identified on the Proposals Map) provided that:

- The proposals relate to the use of the whole site and recognise its unique heritage and nature conservation value;
 - The key buildings and structures are preserved through sensitive conversion and reuse;
 - The proposals incorporate satisfactory decontamination measures;
 - A gunpowder heritage museum/interpretation centre is created with associated visitor/education facilities on site; and
 - The amount and location of any new development is justified, to the Council's satisfaction, as either:-
 - a. Replacement of existing buildings not subject to (ii) above; or
 - b. An essential component of an acceptable plan for the whole site.”
60. It is considered therefore that the principle of development which will enable the retention of and reuse of the most important buildings at the site and the continuance of the museum/visitor attraction and provide funding for the maintenance of the remainder of the site, is in accordance with the intentions of the policy.

Design and Impact on the Historic Environment

61. The starting point for this application is the importance of the WARGM site from a heritage view point. The site is of importance not just locally but also nationally and internationally and the need to ensure the long term protection and maintenance of this unique site is paramount.
62. Historic England have provided detailed comments with regard to proposed works to the listed buildings, which will be covered in the report relating to the Listed Building applications, but there has had extensive pre-application discussions with the applicants and the Foundation Trust. Heritage England has confirmed that it has long had concerns that the Foundation Trust has found it difficult to secure the long term conservation of the designated heritage assets, due to the resources required to sustain the current visitor attraction.
63. The advice from Historic England is that the proposed development would result in a considerable degree of change to a highly important complex of diverse designated heritage assets. The proposals would have a range of impacts on individual designated heritage assets, ranging from positive enhancement to varying degrees of harm to the significance of buildings, as well as the erosion of settings of heritage assets. They judge these to be less than substantial, both individually and collectively. At the same time they consider that, when judged against the heritage benefits set out in NPPF para.131, combined with published guidance 'Conservation Principles' (2008), the PGL proposals offer the opportunity for 'constructive conservation' via a new optimum viable use.
64. They consider that the proposed development would assist in achieving the heritage benefits set out in NPPF 131 (sustaining and enhancing heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation), whilst accepting that the proposals would also result in a degree of harm to the significance of the designated heritage assets which would not be substantial. On this basis they conclude that it is for the local planning authority (LPA) to weigh the heritage benefits and harm against the other public benefits in the proposed development. If the LPA recommend that planning permission be given, they recommend this be conditional upon securing the implementation of

an agreed written scheme of archaeological investigation and recording and the approval of materials.

65. Essex County Council Archaeology section similarly suggest a requirement for full building recording and a programme of archaeological work to include trial trenching, monitoring and excavation in the areas proposed for new buildings.
66. Broadly it is considered that the proposed development, whilst clearly resulting in some change to the character of the site, including the loss of some non-listed buildings and the erection of new buildings and structures, has been well thought out and designed such that the most important features of the site and its historic and architectural interest will be maintained whilst enabling the provision of financial support to the Trust, which will in turn enable the maintenance of the Ancient Monument and listed buildings and help secure the continued presence of the museum in the longer term.

Ecology and Biodiversity

67. The site is located within an area which is surrounded by European and UK designated nature conservation sites and therefore in order to assess the potential impact of the development a number of studies were carried out by the applicants and a detailed Environmental Statement (ES) has been submitted. The ES draws together the findings from the ecological and biodiversity studies which considered the statutory designated sites, the range of habitats on site and the protected species, both during the construction phase and the operation phase of the new centre. It is recognised that the proposed development will result in changes to the habitats and that there will be small scale losses where new trackways and activity structures are installed. The applicant considers that the habitat quality of the site is declining and that the creation of habitats within the area and their long term management would provide mitigation.
68. A stand-alone Ecological Mitigation Strategy has been submitted as part of the application, which sets out the detail of mitigation proposals that will be implemented to ensure the favourable conservation status of key ecological receptors will be retained and that no loss of biodiversity occurs as a result of the development. Outline avoidance, mitigation and compensation proposals are presented which are intended to ensure no breach of legislation in relation to badgers, bats, breeding birds, great crested newts and reptiles occur. Precautionary measures are also included for other species, such as water vole, that were not identified on site but could occur on the site in future. Reference is made to the production and implementation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan for the site that will ensure the retained and created habitats are appropriately managed to provide a long term biodiversity resource.
69. Natural England was consulted on the proposals and provided detailed comments as follows:

Internationally and nationally designated sites:

The application site is within or in close proximity to a European designated site (also commonly referred to as Natura 2000 sites), and therefore has the potential to affect its interest features. European sites are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended (the 'Habitats Regulations'). The application site is in close proximity to the Lee Valley Special Protection Area (SPA) which is a European site. The site is also listed as the Lee Valley Ramsar site¹ and also notified at a national level as the Turnford

and Cheshunt Pits Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The application site is also partly within the Waltham Abbey SSSI and immediately adjacent to the Cornmill Stream and Old River Lea SSSI.

No objection

Natural England notes that the HRA screening report has not been produced by your authority, but by the applicant. We provide the advice enclosed on the assumption that your authority intends to adopt this HRA to fulfil your duty as competent authority.

The assessment concludes that the proposal can be screened out from further stages of assessment because significant effects are unlikely to occur, either alone or in combination. On the basis of the information provided, Natural England concurs with this view.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended)

No objection – with conditions

This application site is in close proximity to and partly within the Waltham Abbey Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The application site is also immediately adjacent to the Cornmill Stream and Old River Lea SSSI and in close proximity to the Turnford and Cheshunt Pits SSSI. However, given the nature and scale of this proposal, Natural England is satisfied that, provided the project adheres to the following suggested conditions, there is not likely to be an adverse effect on these sites as a result of the proposal being carried out in strict accordance with the details of the application as submitted. We therefore advise your authority that these SSSIs do not represent a constraint in determining this application. Should the details of this application change, Natural England draws your attention to Section 28(1) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), requiring your authority to re-consult Natural England.

The Waltham Abbey SSSI is notified for its heronry: however, despite some nesting activity, no herons have successfully bred within the SSSI in the last few years, as they are currently favouring an alternative heronry on an island at Glen Faba. Herons are a mobile species and it is entirely possible that they may return to the Waltham Abbey SSSI at some future date. Therefore, Natural England's objective for the Waltham Abbey SSSI is to ensure that it remains in a suitable condition to support any such re-commencement of heron breeding within the SSSI.

To ensure the project will not adversely affect the SSSI, Natural England advises that suitably worded planning conditions which seek to achieve the following outcomes are attached, should the Council be minded to grant permission.

Other Advice:

We would expect the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess and consider the other possible impacts resulting from this proposal on the following when determining this application: local sites (biodiversity and geodiversity); local landscape character; and local or national biodiversity priority habitats and species.

Natural England does not hold locally specific information relating to the above. These remain material considerations in the determination of this planning application and we recommend that you seek further information from appropriate bodies.

Protected Species:

You should apply our Standing Advice to this application as it is a material consideration in the determination of applications.

Biodiversity enhancements:

This application may provide opportunities to incorporate features into the design which are beneficial to wildlife, such as the incorporation of roosting opportunities for bats or the installation of bird nest boxes. The authority should consider securing measures to enhance the biodiversity of the site from the applicant, if it is minded to grant permission for this application. This is in accordance with Paragraph 118 of the NPPF.

70. In accordance with the advice from Natural England, the Council has consulted with The Essex Bat Group and our own Countrycare team with regard to protected species and mitigation.
71. The Essex Bat Group do not object to the application in principle, but hold strong reservations with regard to the proposed mitigation for loss of bat roosts. (N.B. this issue is being addressed by the applicants' environmental and ecological consultants, Middlemarch Environmental Ltd, and enhanced mitigation proposals for bat roosts are being prepared).
72. The advice from Countrycare is that there is a need for a detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan which should follow the recommendations outlined in the submitted Ecological Mitigation Strategy submitted with the application. This is part of the Unilateral Undertaking.
73. The LVRPA has also considered the information submitted and has raised a number of issues with regard to the need for further survey work and mitigation work, however they have not raised any fundamental objection to the proposal subject to conditions.
74. Overall it is considered that, subject to the imposition of suitable conditions and the submission and implementation of a comprehensive Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, and Access Management Plan which will ensure visitor movements within the site are controlled and which are part of the submitted Unilateral Undertaking, the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on protected species and indeed there is scope for habitat enhancement as a result of the scheme, in accordance with the NPPF and the adopted policies of the Local Plan and Local Plan Alterations.

Access and Parking

75. The existing junction off Highbridge Street was originally designed as the main access into WARGM and built to cater for a visitor attraction forecast to have over 60,000 visitors a year. In reality the attraction has never reached this number. It currently receives about 22,000 visitors as well as 9,000 school children (180 organised school trips).
76. The proposed development will provide accommodation for up to 977 guests (872 school children and 105 school staff) and 77 resident staff. In addition there may be up to 150 non-resident staff employed. Based on PGL centres of similar size the applicants estimate there are likely to be approximately 40,000 guests over the course of a year.

77. The applicants have submitted a transport statement that envisages that with the proposed development the number of non-school visitors to the WARGM is anticipated to reduce to 15,000 as large scale events will no longer form part of its program.
78. The PGL courses are organised as school trips and will serve predominantly East Anglia, Hertfordshire, Greater London and the South East. The majority of guests will arrive by coach during term time, and groups will travel at different times to ensure that coaches do not all arrive at the same time. School coaches will arrive between 1400 and 1600 on the start day, whilst on departure day activity is usually between 1200 and 1400. Therefore the majority of coach activity will be outside typical weekday network peak periods.
79. Outside of school term time, other alternatives for travel to the site are available. These include escorted transfer from Waltham Cross rail station or alternatively by drop off by parents and guardians.
80. It is considered that the RGM visitor centre and the PGL development are complementary uses in terms of their peak vehicle and visitor activity. Principally the PGL centre is a term time venue when its busiest activity will occur. During term time visitor and vehicle activity associated with the RGM centre will be low. During the School holidays the PGL development will operate at a much lower level as a family holiday venue, whereas the RGM visitor centre will be operating at its busiest level.
81. Coach access to the site will be as existing from Beaulieu Drive and 4 coach drop-off areas are provided adjacent to the residential blocks to accommodate 13 coaches at any one time. The management of coach activity will ensure that coaches will enter the site immediately from Hoppit Road and will wait well within the confines of the site. Therefore coaches will not be allowed to wait on Hoppit Road or Beaulieu Drive in front of the main entrance gates and adjacent to resident's properties. Coaches waiting within the site upon arrival will be required to switch off their engines to minimise noise to local residents.
82. The existing car/coach car park accessed from Beaulieu Drive will also be extended as part of an extant parking permission for a 90 space over flow car park. In total the car park will provide 233 parking spaces.
83. The site is located close to bus and rail services which operate from the A121. Waltham Cross rail station has regular services to key transport interchanges; Stratford and London Liverpool Street.
84. The need for travel will be minimised as around half of staff will be resident on site and the non-resident staff will be primarily from the local area, therefore the use of cycles to minimise car travel will be a realistic mode of travel for staff. It is proposed to provide 100 cycle spaces and staff and guests will have access to PGL's own bikes to use. The site is located close to good pedestrian footways, crossings and cycle routes.
85. As a result of concerns raised by residents with regard to in particular the management of coaches accessing the site a Traffic management plan has been produced, which includes the following provisions:
 - Vehicles entering the site from Beaulieu Drive/Hoppit Road will have priority over all vehicles;

- Drivers will be informed by signage and marshalls to proceed or give way at the site entrance during the busiest periods;
 - When coach arrivals are expected the main entrance gates will be left open and a marshall at the eastern end of Hoppit Road will direct all traffic movements;
 - During the busiest periods a marshall will be located at the eastern and western ends of Hoppit Road with radio communication to control coach movements;
 - Any coaches that arrive when the entrance gates are closed will be instructed by signage to proceed to the coach park and contact security; and
 - All marshalls will be fully trained in the details of this TMP and will be trained to control and manage on site coach movements during the busiest periods.
86. The Essex County Council Strategic Development Engineer considers that the access and parking arrangements proposed are acceptable and that the development will not result in harm to highway safety or a material change to current levels of traffic congestion, subject to appropriate conditions. The AMP will also ensure that access and movement of visitors within the site is controlled and safe.

Flood Risk

87. In accordance with the NPPF the proposed development, which will include residential accommodation, is considered to be a “more vulnerable” development in flooding terms. The site is shown as mainly lying within defended flood zone 3 and partly within undefended flood zone 3. In accordance with the NPPF more vulnerable development is only acceptable in Flood zone 3 if both a sequential test and exceptions test have been passed.
88. The sequential test seeks to steer new development to areas at least risk of flooding. In order to pass the sequential test the Local Planning Authority needs to be satisfied that there is nowhere at a lesser risk of flooding where this development could take place. The applicants have been seeking a suitable site for a development of this type in this region for several years. Due to the scale and form of the development and the need for good highway access, accessibility from the proposed catchment area, presence of open space, and access to a lake for water based activity, PGL identified the following potential sites: (a) Briggans House, Stansted Abbots, Hertfordshire, (b) Bylaugh Hall, Dereham, Norfolk, (c) Barrington Hall, Bishops Stortford, (d) Hitchin Priory, Hertfordshire, (e) Pishobury House, Sawbridgeworth, (f) Flamstead House, Flamstead, Hertfordshire, (g) Northaw House, Nr Potter’s Bar Hertfordshire, (h) Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (various properties), but all were ultimately rejected as unsuitable or undeliverable. The LPA is not aware of any other previously developed sites within the District which are both suitable and available/deliverable for this form of development. The proposal would not be appropriate on a green field site and this seriously limits the potential development sites. The applicants have explained which sites they have investigated and their reasons for not proceeding with them and as a result the LPA is satisfied that the sequential test has been passed.
89. The exception test requires that there must be wider sustainability benefits to the local community that outweigh the risk of flooding and that the proposed development will be safe and not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The

proposed development offers an opportunity to reuse the historic Gunpowder Mills site, including numerous listed buildings, without requiring extensive alteration and redevelopment and preserves the historic site in keeping with the existing character. No other suitable alternative uses have come forward and it is likely that without some form of redevelopment the site will continue to degrade due to lack of use and maintenance. In addition the site will provide a facility not currently available in the region and will provide additional jobs in the local area, whilst ensuring that the existing museum and visitor attraction can be maintained and available to the public into the future. It is therefore considered that the development will provide wider sustainability benefits to the local community and the first part of the exceptions test is passed.

90. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment indicates that the development can be achieved without increasing the risk of flooding and that it can be made safe from flooding. The Environment Agency, Essex County Council Flood and Water management team and our own land drainage team all consider that a suitable flood mitigation scheme can be achieved for the site, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions regarding the provision and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems.

Contamination

91. One of the major concerns affecting the redevelopment of this site is contamination. Due to its historic usage, including being used by the Ministry of Defence, there is legitimate concern that redevelopment and the use of the site by Children could be dangerous. The site was very heavily contaminated, but was extensively investigated and remediated in the 1990's. The remediation works included bulk soil removal and replacement with clean cover in certain areas of the site, including the burning ground, Queens Mead and the former gasworks in the south east.
92. At an early stage of preparation for the current application liaison took place with the LPA's Contaminated Land Officer and a Contaminated Land Desk Study has been carried out at the site in order to identify any land contamination that could be significant and require further assessment in relation to the future use of the Site. The key findings of the study are as follows:
- Parts of the Site were subject to bulk remediation and replacement with clean cover material. These and other areas were assessed in 2000 as suitable for public access ('free-to-roam') as part of the RGM visitor attraction.
 - Three areas of the proposed development were neither subject to widespread remediation nor previously assessed as 'free-to-roam'. Sampling in 1992 identified isolated contamination by metals, PAHs, asbestos and explosives residues in these areas; however, the limitations of the 1992 laboratory analysis create uncertainties in the interpretation of the data.
 - These potential contamination sources, together with ground gas, may contribute to 'contaminant linkages' whereby harm could be caused to humans and property. Based on a preliminary assessment, however, these potential linkages have been assessed as either low or moderate to low risk.
 - Based on the scope of the remediation works and post-remediation groundwater monitoring, contaminant linkages involving Controlled Waters receptors are not considered to be likely.
93. According to the Contaminated Land Officer the preliminary risk assessment reports have identified that additional investigation and assessment will be

required. Previous results assessed against 1990s generic public open space risk screening standards will require reassessing against current child residential risk screening standards, so additional sampling is likely to be required in order to ensure sampling density is appropriate for the more sensitive use, and additional sampling & analysis may be required for any additional contaminants that may be identified. A management scheme will also need to be adopted in order to maintain previous and additional remedial works

94. Additional information and investigation is required to fully identify all potential risks, and the best means of remediation, however this can be required by condition Particular concern relates to ensuring that any remediation works that may be required are carried out in such a way as to avoid harm to established trees and landscaping.
95. The contaminated land officer does not however have a remit over potential contamination within buildings or possible risks from explosives within soils. We have received advice that the existing buildings to be converted may contain toxic chemicals that could be harmful to health. The applicants have confirmed that decontamination of the buildings would take place. Conditions are suggested that would require the submission of verification reports from a suitably qualified expert to confirm that the buildings have been successfully decontaminated and that risks to health have been removed, prior to first occupation.
96. Reports were submitted with the application with regard to explosive risk in the buildings scheduled for demolition and for those to be refurbished, which sets out safety management precautions that need to be adhered to. There is the possibility also that during works explosive material may be found in soils and a condition is proposed to ensure that this eventuality is properly handled.

Trees and Landscaping

97. A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has been provided and concludes that the proposal will have a minimal impact on the surrounding area and that the new planting proposed will, as far as practical, mitigate that impact. The Council's Tree and Landscape Officer agrees with this and raises no objections to the proposal in terms of visual landscape impact.
98. The site is within a Conservation Area and as such all trees are afforded legal protection. An extensive tree survey has been undertaken and, in order to undertake the development, a considerable amount of tree surgery (including fellings) is proposed. However this needs to be viewed, to an extent, as good management practice – particularly highlighted by the aim of removing the sycamore from the site to maintain and enhance the growth of the alders (which are synonymous with the historic use of the site in the making of gunpowder). The main concern of the Tree and Landscape officer is to ensure, as referenced above, that any decontamination works that may be required within the root spread of trees that are to be retained is carried out in an appropriate manner. A specially worded condition is required to ensure this.
99. Overall it is considered that appropriate tree protection and landscaping of the site can be achieved, which will maintain and enhance the character of the area, and the Landscape and Ecology management plan which is part of the Unilateral Undertaking will secure this.

Impact on Residential Amenity

100. None of the proposed new buildings are adjacent to any residential properties, therefore the main concern with regard to impact on residential amenity relates to the potential impact of traffic, in particular the increase in the number of coach movements, and regarding any resulting noise and disturbance from the associated outdoor uses being introduced.
- 101 Residents of properties off Beaulieu Drive, and in particular Gregory Mews which backs on to Hoppit Road at the access to the site, have raised particular concern about the all year round usage of the site and the increase in coach movements that they consider will cause not only noise, disturbance and overlooking in close proximity to their rear garden but also result in an increase in diesel fumes to the detriment of air quality and health.
- 102 As has been explained under the Traffic section above, the submitted documents envisage no more than around 40 coach movements a day and, following the above concerns raised, a traffic management plan has been submitted which seeks to ensure that coaches are not held in Hoppit Road so that noise and fume impacts and overlooking should be minimised. Whilst the concern regarding all year round use is noted it is not considered that this will result in excessive harm to amenity. Hoppit Road (along with Beaulieu Drive) is an existing access that is already used by visitor traffic, including coaches, and it is not considered that the increase in traffic envisaged will result in any significant harm to residential amenity.
103. Whilst concern has been raised with regards to impacts such as noise nuisance, light pollution, etc. as a result of the proposed use, which would introduce a large number of children to the site year round, the current site has a very similar use at present and includes several outdoor activities (such as large scale events) and currently caters for school trips. Although at present the current use of the site is far less frequent than the proposed new use there are no planning restrictions with regards to the WARGM use. Therefore the existing site could be utilised far more intensely than it is at present without the need for any further planning approval. The resulting noise and disturbance that would result from such a change would be no different from the proposed development. In addition, the 'noisier activities' proposed (i.e. the activity structures and lake) will be located a considerable distance from any surrounding residents and therefore would not cause any loss of amenity.
104. Concern is also raised regarding noise, disruption and pollution during the construction of the development. An hours of construction condition and a method statement can be attached, to kept disruption to a minimum, but it is inevitable that there will be some noise and disturbance during the demolition and construction phase, this is not a significant planning issue and would not be grounds for refusal of the application.

Impact on the Lee Valley Park

105. The WARGM site lies within the Lee Valley Regional Park and is surrounded to the north, west and east by the River Lee Country Park. Immediately to the east lies the Cornmill Meadows, to the north there is a mosaic of lakes, open spaces and recreational routes known as Fishers Green and Turnford and Cheshunt Pits SSSI, part of the Lee Valley Special Protection Area. To the West are the Lee Valley White Water Centre and the route of the Lee valley Pathway alongside

the Horsemill Stream. The site is therefore within the heart of an important part of the Park with a mix of recreational facilities and nature conservation. The LVRP Plan 2000 is relevant.

106. In principle the proposed outdoor recreation and educational activity centre for children is considered an appropriate use within the regional park since it will open up a new area of the Park for recreational use, would reuse developed land within the Green Belt, and is complementary to the adjacent White Water Centre and the wider recreation and leisure activities within the area.

107. The LVRPA have provided detailed comments that are set out in full in the consultation section above. Clearly they maintain concerns regarding the overall management of the wider site.

Impact on the WARGM

108. The planning application has been couched in terms of the proposed development resulting in significant benefits to the WARGM visitor attraction, by essentially removing a significant drain on its current resources. The attraction is currently unable to generate much more than 60% of its immediate running costs and since 2002 the operating company has required an average grant subsidy of £400,000 per annum. The intention is that the current proposals will support the long term future of the visitor attraction and the conservation of the site as a whole.

109. A document titled 'Heritage Visitor Attraction - A Vision for the Future', has been submitted with the application which highlights that there is now no untapped financial potential in the short or medium term to allow the Trust to be confident in its ability to run the whole site without continuing severe deterioration in its built and natural heritage content. The document looks into whether it is possible to meet the Trust's aims by confining the education and access remit to the main visitor attraction on the south of the site.

110. The report envisages that the remaining visitor attraction will contain:

1. The introduction (the interactive exhibition and film)
2. The Armoury (the Lottery funded Farewell to Arms collection), which could be further enhanced by more volunteer talks etc.
3. Catering, retail and ticketing, to be consolidated (Building A202) with a traditional tea room facility although full range food service would be limited.
4. The mad Lab, currently housed in L168, would move to the underutilised lecture theatre (A203) and new outdoor attractions and displays would be developed for the Island Site and the Burning Ground.
5. The modest children's play area would be maintained; and
6. The Mixing house (building A201) used by schools in term time would be used to host activities and temporary exhibitions and talks.

111. Visitor access to the north into the SSSI and SAM will be on foot, or via the land train and miniature railway, which would link to the sites new narrow gauge railway. Heritage hubs could be created within the SAM.

112. The Burning Ground would become a secondary hub and smaller scale versions of previous outdoor events could be considered in this area.

113. The document concludes that the Trust considers that it is possible not only for the visitor attraction to continue in a modified format but also for the extensive

northern half of the site to be better used, conserved and interpreted for the benefit of visitors.

114. Several objectors have raised concern that the proposals actually may make the continued use of the visitor attraction difficult. A detailed response has been received from the WARGM Group (The group is made up of representatives of the Operating Charitable Company and members of the WARGM Friends Association). They consider that the Vision for the Future document is flawed and that the remaining space and buildings available for the visitor attraction will be insufficient to enable the current attraction to operate, citing for example the loss of classroom space (reduced from 5 to 2) and that the report fails to mention several activities that currently take place, which will be lost. These include some volunteer programmes, the exhibition of rockets, the storage of maintenance equipment, and on-site parking for maintenance and tour vehicles. The concern is that the proposed PGL development is too large and takes up too much of the site, leaving too little scope for the remaining area to operate an attractive facility, including the loss of the ability to hold large events such that the future of the visitor attraction will be undermined.
115. Whilst these concerns are noted it must be remembered that this application is a joint application by PGL and the WARGM Charitable trust. It is not a matter of PGL trying to force an unwanted development on the Trust; it is considered by the Trust as an appropriate way of it fulfilling its ongoing commitments. Without redevelopment the likelihood is that the visitor attraction would have to close. In addition whilst there is concern at the loss of the events area, the site is adjacent to the Lee Valley Park Showground which is better equipped for large events and it is envisaged that the half dozen or so outdoor events currently operated at the site could be successfully relocated to the showground.
116. The current visitor attraction is clearly an important element of the site as a whole and the development of the site by PGL is seen as an opportunity to help secure its future. Given its current loss making, and the lack of alternative funding, it would appear that a radical change is required. Without redevelopment the future of the listed buildings themselves, and the SAM and therefore the value of the site as a whole, and the visitor attraction itself, would likely be put at risk. To safeguard against this, a Legal Agreement has been submitted ensuring that the funds received from the proposed PGL development be used by the Trust in maintaining the whole site.
117. Several people and groups have mooted that a smaller redevelopment, maintaining more buildings and land for the visitor attraction, would be more appropriate and such a proposal would likely be welcomed. However no such proposal has been put forward and there is no clear prospect of such a scheme being proposed. We must determine the application that has been submitted.

Impact on the Local Area

118. Concern has been raised that the development will reduce visitor numbers to the existing facility, and therefore as the PGL residents would be children and confined to the site, there would be little knock on benefits to Waltham Abbey Town Centre or the area in general from the development. However it must be remembered that the development envisages significant employment generation, with 77 residential staff and about 150 additional non-residential staff, likely from the local area. This kind of job creation is to be welcomed and will inevitably have knock on benefits to the locality and to town centre business's. In addition

up to 40,000 children a year (and their families and schools) will be made aware of Waltham Abbey, and the Gunpowder Mills, which must have longer term benefits in terms of potential repeat visits and tourism.

Impact on the Green Belt

118. The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt, within which inappropriate development is by definition harmful and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The NPPF states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate, but sets out exceptions to this. The exceptions include; Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation... as long as it preserves the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it, and limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land) whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. In addition the reuse of buildings is not inappropriate within the Green Belt.

119. The Gunpowder Mills site is clearly “previously developed land” and as such the replacement of buildings and some infilling within the site is not inappropriate development. In this instance however significant additional built volume is proposed which will have a greater impact on openness than the existing. In particular the proposed new dining hall building would add over 2000m² of floorspace and, although this would be constructed on the site of a former building and would be well located and designed such that it will not be visually prominent, it is not appropriate development in Green Belt terms. However the redevelopment offers significant benefits with regard to the reuse and maintenance of this important, if not unique, historic site and the continuance of museum and visitor centre and these benefits are considered, “Very Special Circumstances” which are sufficient to outweigh the relatively limited harm to openness, and other harm, that will result from the increased built development of the site. It is therefore considered that the proposals are acceptable in Green Belt terms.

Sewage.

120. Concern has been raised that the development may overload the current sewage/ foul drainage system. Thames water has provided comments with regard to this and has suggested conditions which will ensure that adequate provision is made.

Conclusion

121. In conclusion, this is a well thought out and designed scheme which will bring benefits to Waltham Abbey in terms of employment and tourism and will secure the long term maintenance of an important historic site. This can be achieved without significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt, or harm to the character and amenity of the area. Whilst there are concerns over the contamination of the site and drainage, sewerage and traffic issues, these are all matters that can be satisfactorily controlled by condition. It is therefore considered that the proposal accords with the three dimensions of sustainable development set out in the NPPF (Economic, Social and Environmental) and this proposal satisfies the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed development is in accordance with the adopted policies of the Local

Plan and Alterations and is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the submitted Unilateral Undertaking and planning conditions.