

20 December 2021

Planning Department
Manchester City Council
PO Box 532
Town Hall Manchester
M60 2LA

Dear David,

Application for Full Planning Permission for two back-up generators at Manchester Metropolitan University Birley Fields Campus

Please find enclosed an application for Full Planning Permission for a back-up generator at the Brooks Building and a further back-up generator at the Energy Centre at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Birley Fields Campus. The Applicant is Manchester Metropolitan University ('the Applicant').

The Site is in two parts and currently comprises an external storage area to the east of the Brooks Building, and an area of hardstanding within a secured servicing yard to the west of the Energy Centre and east of the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP).

This application seeks full planning permission for a Proposed Development of the same form and function as the back-up generators approved under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021, albeit in slightly revised locations.

Following the granting of planning permission in May 2021 under Planning Permission Ref: 129771/FO/2021, and subsequent further investigation, the original positioning of the back-up generators was proven to be unfeasible due to requiring access to be retained to existing manholes. As such, it was identified that the location of the approved back-up generators, which are yet to be installed, needed to move only slightly from their approved position.

It was agreed with Manchester City Council Planning Officers on 12th Nov 2021 that, as the revised location of one of the proposed generators is proposed to be outside of the redline boundary, a new full planning application for both generators would be submitted for consideration.

The Proposed Development is described as follows:

"Installation of two back-up generators and associated works"

This Cover Letter forms the supporting statement submitted in support of this application and should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documentation:

- Site Location Plan, prepared by Sheppard Robson;

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- Planning Application Drawings, prepared by Sheppard Robson, including existing and proposed site plans and scaled and annotated, existing and proposed elevations of the proposed generator in context of the surrounding buildings at a scale of 1:50;
- Design and Access Statement, prepared by Sheppard Robson;
- Updated Acoustic Planning Report dated 25 November 2021, prepared by Hoare Lea;
- Updated Outline Construction Management Plan, prepared by the Applicant; and
- Updated Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated 15 December 2021, prepared by Tyler Grange.

The list of supporting documentation was agreed during pre-application discussions with a planning officer at Manchester City Council (MCC).

Site Location and Description

The Site is located within the MMU Birley Fields Campus, within the Oxford Road Corridor in Central Manchester. The Birley Fields Campus is located on the eastern side of Hulme and comprises a number of the University buildings including the Brooks Building, the Energy Centre, the Birley Fields MSCP and a number of student accommodation buildings. Princess Road bounds the Birley Fields campus to the east.

The Site comprises approximately 0.04 ha. and is in two parts comprising an area to the east of the Brooks Building and an area between the MSCP and the Energy Centre, as shown in Figure 1 below and detailed further underneath.

Figure 1: Site Location Plan



Brooks Building

The northern element of the Site is located to the east of the Brooks Building; an academic building housing the MMU Faculty of Education, and the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care.

This part of the Site is bounded by an area of soft landscaping to the north, south and east. A paved path runs to the west in between the Site and the Brooks Building.

A traffic free cycle route runs past the Site to the east and beyond this is Princess Road, which comprises a heavily trafficked dual carriageway and provides a major vehicular route in and out of the city.

The nearest residential properties are located over 100m away and comprise: Dunham House Student Accommodation, circa 100m to the north; Birley Fields Student Accommodation, circa 110m to the west; and the residential properties located on Upper Medlock Street, circa 140m to the east and on the other side of Princess Road.

This part of the Site currently comprises an area of hardstanding used as an external storage area to the rear of the Brooks Building, which is currently visually screened to the north, south and east by mesh fencing and climbing plants and surrounding trees and shrubbery. It also includes an area of soft landscaping, which includes shrubbery and three young low-quality Category C trees.

Energy Centre

The other element of the Site comprises an area of hardstanding within the secure service yard in-between the Birley Fields MSCP and the Energy Centre. The Energy Centre houses a system which uses combined heat and power (CHP), water storage and boiler systems to provide heating and hot water to the campus.

Vehicular access to this part of the Site is via the internal campus road to the north of the Energy Centre and access is restricted by gated security fences. Overhead there are a number of existing cable connections bridging between the Energy Centre and the MSCP. The Site is sheltered by the adjacent buildings, but the nearest residential properties are located circa 50m to the west of the MSCP, comprising the Birley Fields Student Accommodation.

The Proposed Development

As approved under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021, the Proposed Development comprises the installation of two 1000kVa back-up generators to serve the Brooks Building and Energy Centre. In the event of a power outage to either of these buildings the back-up generator for the respective building would operate to ensure the energy supply to the building can be maintained and to prevent long periods of power outage.

Such power outages are a rare occurrence, and therefore the proposed generators will not be in regular use and will only be operational in the event of an emergency. Nonetheless, the proposed back-up generators are an integral feature to ensure the resilience of operations at the MMU Birley Fields Campus.

Design and Security

As approved under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021, both back-up generators are proposed to be the same, uniform design and will be contained within steel, modified shipping-container unit which will measure 8758mm x 2896mm x 2438mm. The proposed generator units will be finished with a light-grey, weather resistant epoxy paint.

Each back-up generator will be sat upon a concrete slab measuring 6658mm x 2738mm, which is proposed to be 10% larger than the footprint of the proposed back-up generator unit. The top of the structural concrete slab will sit

flush with the existing surface level on both areas of the Site. The surrounding hard surface will be made good following the installation and replaced on a like for like basis.

Sound attenuators are positioned at either end of the unit container and directly above the generator unit, which are specifically designed to dampen any airborne noise while the generator is operational.

The positioning of the proposed generators has been chosen carefully to enable access to all sides of the generator housings to service the internal plant. There are access doors to the front and the rear of the units. The proposed back-up generators have been specifically designed to be tamper proof and will both be placed in locations inaccessible to the public for added security.

Brooks Building

The back-up generator proposed at the Brooks Building will be located to the north of the existing bin store on an area of hard and soft landscaping, partly comprising an underutilised external storage area. When compared against the generators approved location under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021, the generator at the Brooks Building is proposed 4m further north and the fence line and green wall is proposed to be extended to cover this.

The proposed back-up generator will require the removal of shrubbery and the relocation of three low-quality Category C trees; one young pine tree and two young birch trees. The trees were planted in 2014 during the construction of the Brooks Building and are proposed to be relocated to the soft landscaping area to the east of the Brooks Building. The proposed tree removal and replacement strategy is as per the approved position under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021.

The back-up generator at the Brooks Building will be connected to the ASCO changeover switch via an underground trench which will run from the proposed back-up generator routed beneath the existing external door at the Brooks Building.

The back-up generator will be surrounded by fencing and climbing plants to improve visual amenity. This approach is currently used to reduce the visual impact of the bin-store area.

The climbing plants will be 1.5m – 2.5m when initially planted and these will grow and be maintained at the 3m high level with the top of the fence. The plants are proposed to provide visual screening to the proposed generator from the north, south and east.

A new kerb is proposed to be installed along the perimeter of the new hard landscaped area to match the existing.

Energy Centre

The proposed back-up generator at the Energy Centre will be located within the secure service yard between the multi-storey car park and Energy Centre, accessible only by authorized MMU personnel. The proposed revised location of the Energy Centre generator is approximately 16m to the south of the previously approved position and requires the removal of an existing generator and storage container.

The revised location would remain as part of the service yard hidden between the Energy Centre and the MSCP and would be further concealed being located at a greater distance from the gate and road. The proposed generator will be fitting to the nature of uses in this area.

Overhead cabling is proposed from the MSCP to the Energy Centre to connect the proposed back-up generator to the Energy Centre building. This will run parallel to the existing overhead cabling connecting the Energy Centre to the MSCP.

Maintenance

The proposed back-up generators will only be used in emergency situations where there is a power outage to the Birley Fields Campus, which will require the Generator to be manually started.

Access to the generators will only be required on a periodic basis, to refuel the internal generator and for general maintenance / testing. Both sites are accessible by internal campus roads which can be used by fuel tankers when refuelling is required.

Weekly visual testing of the back-up generators will be undertaken alongside monthly testing, during which the generator will operate for 20 minutes only. In addition, annual servicing and 'load bank' testing is understood to be scheduled which will require the generator to run for approximately 1 hour, once a year.

Planning Policy and Strategic Context

The Adopted Local Development Plan for the Site comprises the following documents:

- Manchester Core Strategy (2012).
- Saved Policies of the Manchester Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2005).

The Core Strategy sets the overall strategic direction for planning for Manchester over the plan period from 2012 to 2027 and is in line with national policies.

The UDP was adopted in July 1995. Coinciding with the adoption of the Core Strategy in 2012 significant proportions of the UDP have been replaced, however, a number of policies were saved on 11 July 2012 and remain extant.

The Local Development Plan is supported by a number of material considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Policy Guidance and the Corridor Manchester Strategic Vision to 2025.

The Corridor Manchester Strategic Vision to 2025 is for the area to become:

“Manchester’s cosmopolitan hub and world-class innovation district, where talented people from the city and across the world learn, create, work, socialise, live and do business; contributing to the economic and social dynamism of one of Europe’s leading cities”

The vision is underpinned by the Oxford Road Corridor Strategic Spatial Framework (SSF), which sets out a clear ambition to guide the redevelopment, transformation and future development within the SSF boundary.

The SSF acknowledges the ongoing infrastructure resilience and upgrade projects being undertaken by the Corridor Partners, including MMU.

The MMU Estate Strategy 2017 – 2027 specifically highlights the importance of the resilience of the campus and business continuity. It highlights that the critical activities of the University include teaching, research and knowledge exchange, consultancy, training and CPD, halls of residence, sports centres, catering and conferencing. The resilience of the key estate systems is critical to maintaining the key activities of MMU.

Key estates systems involved in maintaining these critical activities include heating systems, cooling systems, domestic water services and electrical systems. Failure of any one of these key systems can result in denial of access to a University building and have a major impact on the ability of MMU to undertake its critical activities. The Estate Strategy therefore highlights that it is of vital importance that thought be given to increasing the resilience of these key estates systems and developing a robust and resilient estate.

The proposed back-up generators are therefore a critical component of the Estate Strategy to ensure the resilience and operation on the Brooks Building (a key faculty building) and the Energy Centre, which is a critical component of the provision of heating and hot water to the campus.

The MMU estate and functions are key elements of the Oxford Road Corridor and ensuring the operation and resilience of the estate and its functions is a key component in ensuring the Corridor can operate as a world-class innovation district.

The key site-specific considerations for the proposed generators are considered in turn below against the policies of the Local Development Plan.

Site Specific Considerations

Visual Impact

NPPF Chapter 12 places importance on achieving well-designed places. Paragraph 124 highlights the importance of good design stating that it is a key aspect of sustainable development, as it creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Core Strategy Policy EN 7 (Energy Infrastructure opportunities) outlines that “any energy centre, including generating plant, standby/boiler plant and substations, shall be located and designed to a high quality so as to integrate with and contribute to the townscape”.

Core Strategy Policy DM 1 (Development Management) states that all developments should have regard to appropriate siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials and detail and the impact on the surrounding areas in terms of design, scale and appearance.

The proposed back-up generators have been specifically designed to be housed within a purposefully designed modified steel shipping-container unit as a method of screening the proposed back-up generator visually and acoustically. The units are designed to a high-standard and will be finished in a light-grey, weather resistant epoxy paint to match the colourisation of the Brooks Building and the Energy Centre.

The proposed back-up generator at the Energy Centre will be located in between the Energy Centre and the MSCP and will not be easily visible. The gates to the service yard will also act to screen the proposed generator from view from the internal road to the north.

The proposed back-up generator at the Brooks Building is proposed to be located adjacent to the bin storage area to the east of the building and positioned away from the regular pedestrian thoroughfares. Mesh fencing is proposed around the bin store and generator alongside the provision of new climbing plants, which will act to visually screen the proposed generator to the north, south and east and act to blend the generator into the surrounding soft landscaping. The bin store is currently successfully screened from view using this method.

Acoustics

Core Strategy Policy DM 1 highlights that all development should have regard to the effects on amenity including noise and vibration.

Saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policy DC26 also states that the council will consider the effect of new development proposals which are likely to be generators of noise. Developments likely to result in unacceptably high levels of noises will not be permitted: in residential areas; near schools, hospitals, nursing homes and similar institutions; or near open land used frequently for recreational purposes.

It goes on to state the following:

“Where the Council believes... a new proposal might generate potentially unacceptable levels of noise, it will in either case require the applicant to provide an assessment of the likely impact and of the measures he proposes to deal satisfactorily with it. Such measures might include the following:

- a. engineering solutions, including reduction of noise at source, improving sound insulation of sensitive buildings or screening by purpose-built barriers;*
- b. layout solutions, including consideration of the distance between the source of the noise and the buildings or land affected by it; and screening by natural barriers or other buildings or noncritical rooms within a building; and*
- c. administrative steps, including limiting the operating times of the noise source, restricting activities allowed on the site or specifying an acceptable noise limit. Any or all of these factors will be considered appropriate for inclusion in conditions on any planning permission.”*

The Council will control noise levels by requiring, where necessary, high levels of noise insulation in new development as well as noise barriers where this is appropriate. Exceptions to the general policy will be considered on their merits.

The proposed back-up generators are both proposed to be for emergency use only where there is a power outage to either the Brooks Building or the Energy Centre, which will require the Generator to be manually started. Such power outages are a rare occurrence, and therefore the proposed generators will not be in regular use and will only be operational in the event of an emergency other than for scheduled maintenance.

Weekly visual testing of the generators will be undertaken alongside monthly testing, during which the generators will operate for 20 minutes only. In addition, annual servicing and ‘load bank’ testing is understood to be scheduled which will require the generators to run for approximately 1 hour once a year. The proposed generators will therefore not be in regular use.

An Acoustic Report has been prepared and submitted as part of this planning application. It found the background noise levels to be 51dB during the day and 44dB during the night. Therefore, in line with MCC requirements for emergency standby generators, a noise limit of 10dB above the upper levels will be applied (61dB during day and 54 dB at night). The proposed generator is predicted to meet these limits at the nearest dwellings (MMU Birley Halls and Dunham House student accommodation).

As a result of the limited operation of the proposed generators and the proposed noise limits, it is considered that there will be no negative acoustic impact as a result of the Proposed Development.

Trees

Core Strategy Policy EN 9 outlines that the Council will seek to protect existing trees and promote new planting, particularly where this can enhance green links in the urban area.

Likewise, The Oxford Road Corridor SSF highlights that existing green infrastructure should be safeguarded and enhanced where possible.

As a consequence of the proposed installation of the back-up generator at the Brooks Building, three trees are required to be removed. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment, was undertaken by Tyler Grange and found that these three trees comprise low-quality and young Category C trees.

Recognising the importance of the provision of green infrastructure, the Applicant proposes to replant these existing trees close to the Site, just north of their existing location to the east of the Brooks Building. The proposed tree removal and replacement strategy is as per the approved position under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021.

Following relocation, the trees will receive regular monitoring and irrigation to ensure successful establishment within their new location.

As such, the Proposed Development will not result in the reduction of any trees within the area and is considered to be in accordance with planning policy and local guidance.

Construction Management

An outline Construction Management Plan (CMP) has been prepared by the Applicant, which outlines how the construction of the Proposed Development would be managed so as to minimise any potential adverse impact to the local community in accordance with Core Strategy Policy DM1 Development Management.

The CMP details that work is scheduled to commence in May and conclude in June, during the summer holiday period.

The construction working hours are proposed to be in accordance with MCC Guidance as follows:

- 07:00am to 18:00pm Mon-Fri;
- 08:30am to 14:00pm on Saturday; and
- No work on Sundays/Bank Holidays.

Any works outside of these hours being subject to prior approval from MCC in order to protect residential amenity.

It is anticipated that a planning condition would be attached to any Decision Notice requiring submission of a detailed plan following appointment of a contractor and in advance of commencement of development.

Summary and Conclusions

This Cover Letter accompanies a revised application for Full Planning Permission for a back-up generator at the Brooks Building and a further back-up generator at the Energy Centre at MMU Birley Fields Campus. The Applicant is Manchester Metropolitan University.

The Site is in two parts and currently comprises external storage to the east of the Brooks Building, and an area of hardstanding within a secured servicing yard to the west of the Energy Centre and east of the MSCP.

This application seeks planning permission for a Proposed Development of the same form and function as the back-up generators approved under Planning Permission Ref. 129771/FO/2021, albeit in slightly revised locations.

Following the granting of planning permission in May 2021 under Planning Permission Ref: 129771/FO/2021, and subsequent further investigation, the original positioning of the back-up generators was proven to be unfeasible due to requiring access to be retained to existing manholes. As such, it was identified that the location of the approved back-up generators, which are yet to be installed, needed to move only slightly from their approved position.

The proposed back-up generators are both proposed to be for emergency use only where there is a power outage to either the Brooks Building or the Energy Centre. Such power outages are a rare occurrence, and therefore the proposed generators will not be in regular use and will only be operational in the event of an emergency other than for scheduled maintenance.

MMU is a key component of the Oxford Road Corridor and ensuring the operation and resilience of the estate is a key factor in ensuring the Corridor can operate as a world-class innovation district. Power failure to buildings within the university's estate can have a major impact on the ability of the University to undertake its critical activities.

The proposed back-up generators are therefore a critical component of the MMU Estate Strategy to ensure the resilience and operation of the Brooks Building (a key faculty building) and the Energy Centre, which is critical component of the provision of heating and hot water to the campus.

The location and design of the back-up generators are deemed to be suitable and appropriate within the context of national and local planning policy and guidance and thus warrant the approval of Manchester City Council.

Application Submission

The application has been submitted on the Planning Portal (PP-09626950), alongside the requisite application fees of £462.00 (plus an administrative fee) as paid to Manchester City Council.

We trust you will find this application in order and we look forward to receiving written confirmation of its registration.

Please contact Jennifer Chatfield (0161 455 8084 / jchatfield@deloitte.co.uk) at the earliest opportunity should you have any queries or require any further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J Cooper', is positioned above the printed name and title.

John Cooper
Deloitte LLP