



The countryside charity
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Dear Planning Policy Team

Draft Jodrell Bank Observatory Supplementary Planning Document, December 2021

CPRE

We are CPRE, the countryside charity. We work with communities, businesses and government to ensure that our countryside and green spaces can thrive.

We're working for a countryside that's rich in nature, accessible to everyone and playing a crucial role in responding to the climate emergency. As the local CPRE group for Cheshire, we're part of a national movement advocating the kind of countryside we all aspire to: one with sustainable, healthy communities and available to more people than ever, including those who haven't benefited before.

We stand for a countryside that enriches all our lives, nourishing our wellbeing, and that we in turn nourish, protect and celebrate. We've worked for almost a century to support and promote the countryside, and we'll be doing this for generations to come. That's why we call ourselves 'the countryside charity'.

Jodrell Bank Observatory

CPRE has considered the three parts and appendices of the Jodrell Bank Observatory (JBO) draft SPD. JBO was founded in 1945 to pioneer the completely new science of using radio waves for the exploration of the Universe instead of visible light. The 66m Transit Telescope Jodrell Bank Observatory is in a rural area of East Cheshire and it made the first ever identification of a radio object outside our own galaxy - the great nebula in Andromeda. It was superseded by the Lovell Telescope (1957), the first act of which was to track the carrier rocket of Sputnik 1 by radar, witnessing the dawn of the Space Age.

JBO is recognised by UNESCO for its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and was awarded World Heritage Site (WHS) status in July 2019. The people of Cheshire are proud of JBO role in transformational scientific endeavours and pioneering projects to better understand the universe.

CPRE is hugely supportive of planning policy protection to ensure land use decisions are proactive to ensure that any development that takes place across the site and its consultation zone (JBOCZ) does not detract from its significance and this includes its rural setting. New development must not create electrical interference that harms the efficiency of the telescopes, the heritage significance, or the landscape.

CPRE notes the legal framework as set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, which provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest and other relevant legislation.

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out requirements related to the protection of heritage in Section 16: *Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*, which is linked to the significance of a designated heritage asset. Great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be, irrespective of the harm.

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) also provides additional guidance on the management of WHS. WHSs are 'sensitive areas' for the purposes of Environmental Impact Assessment and have a lower trigger when considering the need for a Design and Access Statement.

The Local Plan Strategy details several relevant policies (Policy SE 14 'Jodrell Bank') relating to the operation of the telescopes, the historic environment, and the landscape to make sure development protects and/or conserves the historical qualities of the area. There are also saved policies from the Crewe and Nantwich, Congleton and Macclesfield local plan including Policy GC14 and Policy PS10. The Cheshire East Site Allocation DPD will once adopted will form the development plan and this has policies HER1 Heritage Assets, HER4 Listed Buildings, and HER9 WHS that serve in combination to supports development that conserves or enhances the OUV of the WHS.

The SDP will complement and support the implementation of future development policies. Therefore, the scope of this SPD is to provide further guidance on polices held in the LPS and emerging SADPD, providing guidance to applicants on what type of information they will need to submit and how the policies of the development plan will be applied when determining planning applications across the JBO site and JBOCZ.

CPRE is supportive of neighbourhood plans, and we note there are two made neighbourhood plans in Goostrey and Marton. Emerging neighbourhood plans will have to be in line with the legislative framework and national and local planning policies, and the SPD will be a material consideration.

Part 2 considers the development within the JBO site. The Conservation Management Plan (CMP) sets out a vision for the site, including principles for development and the SPD embeds its content, through endorsing them as a planning tool – they will be a material consideration when determining any planning applications affecting the site (para 5.6). In CPRE's view there should be **reference to the rural setting** of the telescope in the CMP and development should not harm the rural setting. **The protection and enhancement of JBO 'rural setting' should be specified in the CMP within the SPD.** If the CMP fails to do protect or conserve the rural setting of the WHS, then it will fail.

Part 3 of the SPD sets out how the matters outlined in the two planning policies will be considered when assessing Planning applications within the JBO Consultation Zone (JBOCZ). CPRE observes that the landscape across JBOCZ consists of managed farms, some woodlands and shallow river valleys. It is a mainly flat, at times rolling and undulating, plain interspersed with small settlements and individual farmsteads and dwellings. Whilst the landscape holds an intrinsic visual quality, it is valued for its open and mainly flat typology that allows the telescopes at JBO to transmit and receive signals across pathways that are largely uninterrupted, and beyond into space.

In CPRE's opinion, paragraph 6.49 the SPD correctly identifies that "Threats to the value of the landscape may rise primarily from developments that reduce the openness of the plain through introducing built form and physical clutter that interfere with pathway transmissions. Development that is prominent in the landscape, or that is unusually tall, is most likely to present a threat to the value of the landscape". We also agree with the statement of 6.50, that generally, if a site is more elevated, a development will become more prominent in the landscape and may therefore require further assessment regarding the impact of the development on landscape matters. If this is the case, it is expected that applicants should seek pre-application planning advise from the council to establish whether a Landscape Value Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required as part of the application." In this circumstance the trigger for a LVIA is much lower due to the various issues identified.

CPRE agrees with the application requirements and considerations. It is the correct approach to require as a minimum that applications within the JBOCZ provide:

- i. drawings showing the location of existing landscape features, including a tree survey if there are significant numbers of trees, and their loss or retention;
- ii. drawing showing landscape proposals;
- iii. visuals and photos to demonstrate the visual impact of a development, and a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment if the scale of the scheme merits this;
- iv. levels information or cross sections to indicate any significant changes in levels;
- v. measures for the protection of trees and vegetation to be retained; and
- vi. Details associated with temporary access roads, compounds, storage areas for construction.

It is understood that development management is controlled through several planning policies and noted that some areas immediately adjoining the JBO site are owned by the University of Manchester, allowing it more direct control over proposed developments on this land. However, in the case of the latter, should the ownership change it is CPRE's view that the land currently used for agriculture within the JBOCZ should be protected for this purpose and prohibited from being brought forward for 'urbanising' development. CPRE wishes to see the SPD discourage built intrusions in the JBOCZ.

CPRE agrees with the Secretary of State decision shown in paragraph 13.86 "reasonable protection of JBO is a matter of global significance and furthermore that JBO is a facility of international importance such that its protection from the identified harm of local housing developments transcends current housing land supply circumstances in Cheshire East." This point should be the focus of the SPD.

CPRE agrees that Heritage Impact Assessments should consider the impact of any proposed project or development on the Outstanding Universal Value of Jodrell Bank, both individually and collectively and how it impacts on the CMP and local and national planning policy. We understand that this is inextricably linked in with the requirements for a Landscape Assessment as well as a Design and Access Statement. CPRE welcomes the detailed approach to these two areas of work, which sets out clearly what is expected within the HIA and all the other assessments/statements.

We hope the SPD will be progressed and adopted without delay to best protect the rural setting of Jodrell Bank Observatory and the Consultation Zone.

Yours sincerely

Peter Raynes
Chairman