01 Context

Innovation Village
Public Consultation
March 2024

Introduction

Thank you for taking time to visit our Public Consultation.

The Royal Agricultural University (RAU) are looking to bring forward proposals for the development of their land to east of the University to create an Innovation Village that will be focused on consolidating the RAU's role as a nationally (and internationally) important centre for agriculture and land use.

The RAU is the UK's leading specialist university for agriculture and land use. This has been recognised in national benchmarking exercises like the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 that judged over 50% of their research to be world-leading and internationally excellent, and the RAU has aspirations to be the No.1 small specialist university for research in England.

The 29-acre development site adjacent to the RAU's Cirencester campus provides a unique opportunity to capitalise upon the RAU's national and international prominence, to create the world's first innovation cluster with a mission to transform land use. From agroforestry to nature-based solutions, to renewables, to resilient community development, there is opportunity to attract policymakers, entrepreneurs, researchers and practitioners to come to the Cotswolds. Here, they will be part of an emerging innovation ecosystem that will help to unlock the power of the land globally, to address climate, nature, food, and health crises.

The purpose of the Public Consultation is to explain the background to the proposals, share with you our plans for the site and to give you the opportunity to provide us with feedback that will help shape the proposals as they evolve. In this regard, we would be grateful if you take the time to complete a feedback form.

Planning Background

This site is currently allocated in the adopted Cotswold Local Plan under existing policy EC4. Policy EC4 relates to special policy areas, RAU being one, and allows for the expansion of the existing University campus including associated development for: educational, training, business and research development, student accommodation and other operational floorspace. Policy EC4 stipulates that any development that is proposed as part of the whole site masterplan must:

a) ensure that the character of the parkland setting is not compromised on this important gateway to Cirencester;

b) include the submission of a satisfactory scheme that addresses transport and access issues and maximises opportunities for future development to be designed and phased to ensure maximum practicable integration between the different uses within and near the site, including Deer Park School, Cirencester College and the Strategic Site (Steadings);

c) demonstrate that the development supports the vitality and viability of Cirencester Town Centre;

d) take account of the gas pipeline buffer zone; and

e) ensure that there is no net loss of playing pitch provision and other outdoor sporting facilities.

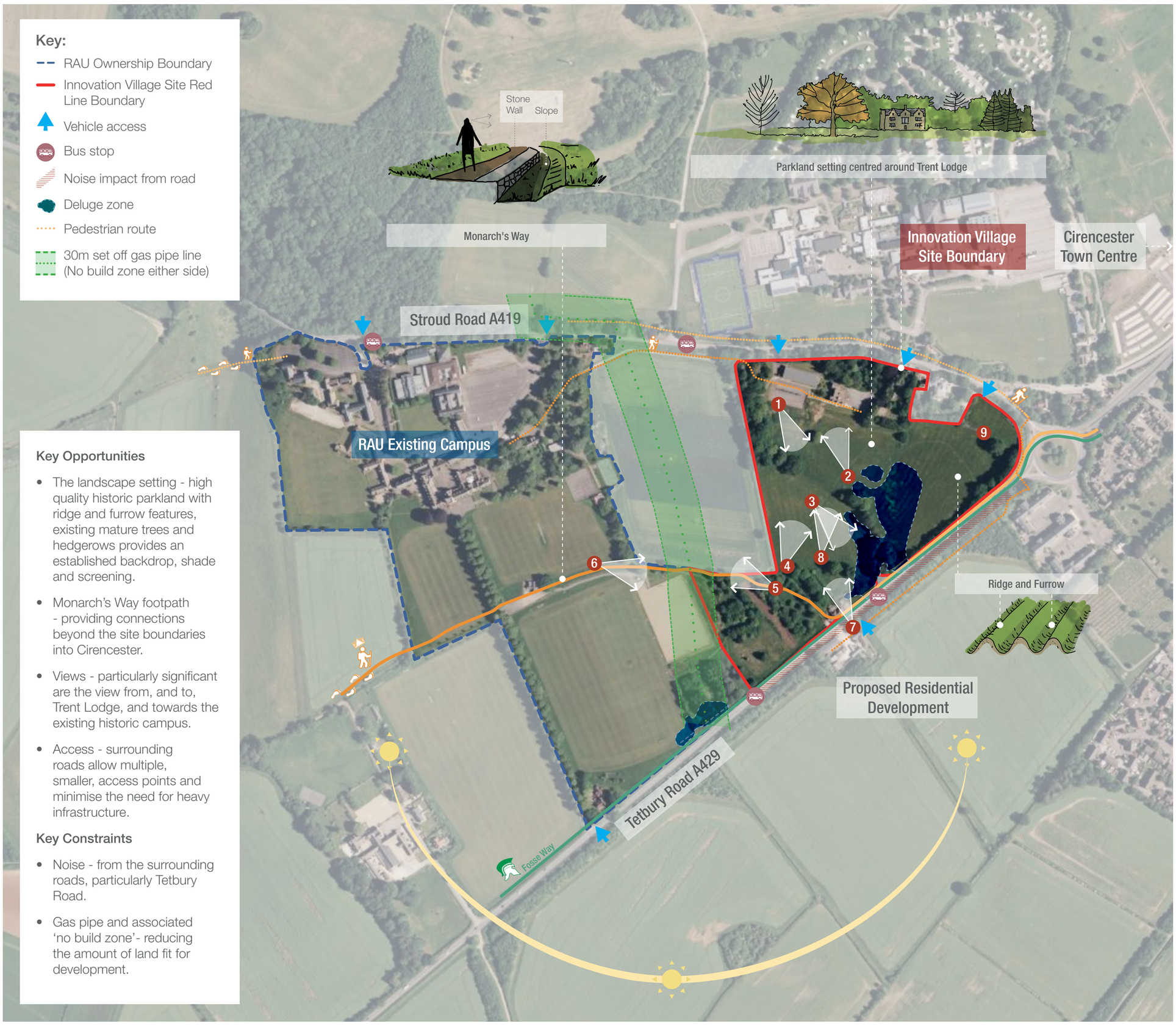
Cotswold District Council is partially updating its adopted Local Plan to make it "Green to the Core". The adopted Local Plan covers a period from 2011 to 2031. At the same time, the Council is also considering development needs up to 2041 and options for how these may be delivered. Within the emerging local plan the site continues to be allocated under policy EC4.

The site lies within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is a nationally protected landscape. Exceptional circumstances must be demonstrated for major developments within such areas. This is on the proviso that there is:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.



Key Opportunities

- The landscape setting - high quality historic parkland with ridge and furrow features, existing mature trees and hedgerows provides an established backdrop, shade and screening.
- Monarch's Way footpath - providing connections beyond the site boundaries into Cirencester.
- Views - particularly significant are the view from, and to, Trent Lodge, and towards the existing historic campus.
- Access - surrounding roads allow multiple, smaller, access points and minimise the need for heavy infrastructure.

Key Constraints

- Noise - from the surrounding roads, particularly Tetbury Road.
- Gas pipe and associated 'no build zone'- reducing the amount of land fit for development.

Aerial View of RAU campus and Innovation Village Site [Google Maps]

1 View to the south-east (having walked from the main campus to the Alliston Centre)

2 View to the Alliston Centre (left) and Trent Lodge (right)

3 View of flooding in the centre of the site, January 2023

4 View looking north east to the parkland setting in front of Trent Lodge

5 View looking north-west towards the main campus buildings

6 View from the south west corner of the Steadings field along the Monarch's Way

7 Steadings Cottages to the south of the site

8 View looking north towards the Alliston Centre and Trent Lodge

9 Drone view looking west across the ridge & furrow towards the the main campus buildings

These boards were compiled by Architype and summarise the work undertaken by the Innovation Village Design Team for the Royal Agricultural University.

02 Vision

Guiding Principles

In developing the vision for the scheme a series of Guiding Principles have been identified. Eight of these are illustrated to the right, and are of particular importance. They include:

The scheme must be landscape-led, celebrating the landscape the scheme sits within, and the landscape it creates.

Design Quality; the scheme must be a showcase for the institution.

The Royal Agricultural University wants to use this opportunity to encourage the community in to an 'open-arms' institution. This will be a welcoming site, with facilities for the local community to enjoy alongside academics, students and innovators.

Sustainability Brief

The Sustainability Brief is the RAU's commitment to realising exemplar buildings of the highest levels of industry best practice – each one imagined as an agent for wider transformative change beyond the site boundary. Buildings shall be certified to Passivhaus Plus levels of building performance, targeting the WELL Building Standard for health, BREEAM Outstanding and their operational energy shall be generated from renewable sources – with excess being exported to meet the needs of the existing campus. The surrounding landscape shall be accredited to the Building With Nature Standard – aiming to double Biodiversity Net Gain requirements, to provide beautiful blue and green infrastructures, and increase opportunities for local engagement and use.

Sustainable Materials Strategy

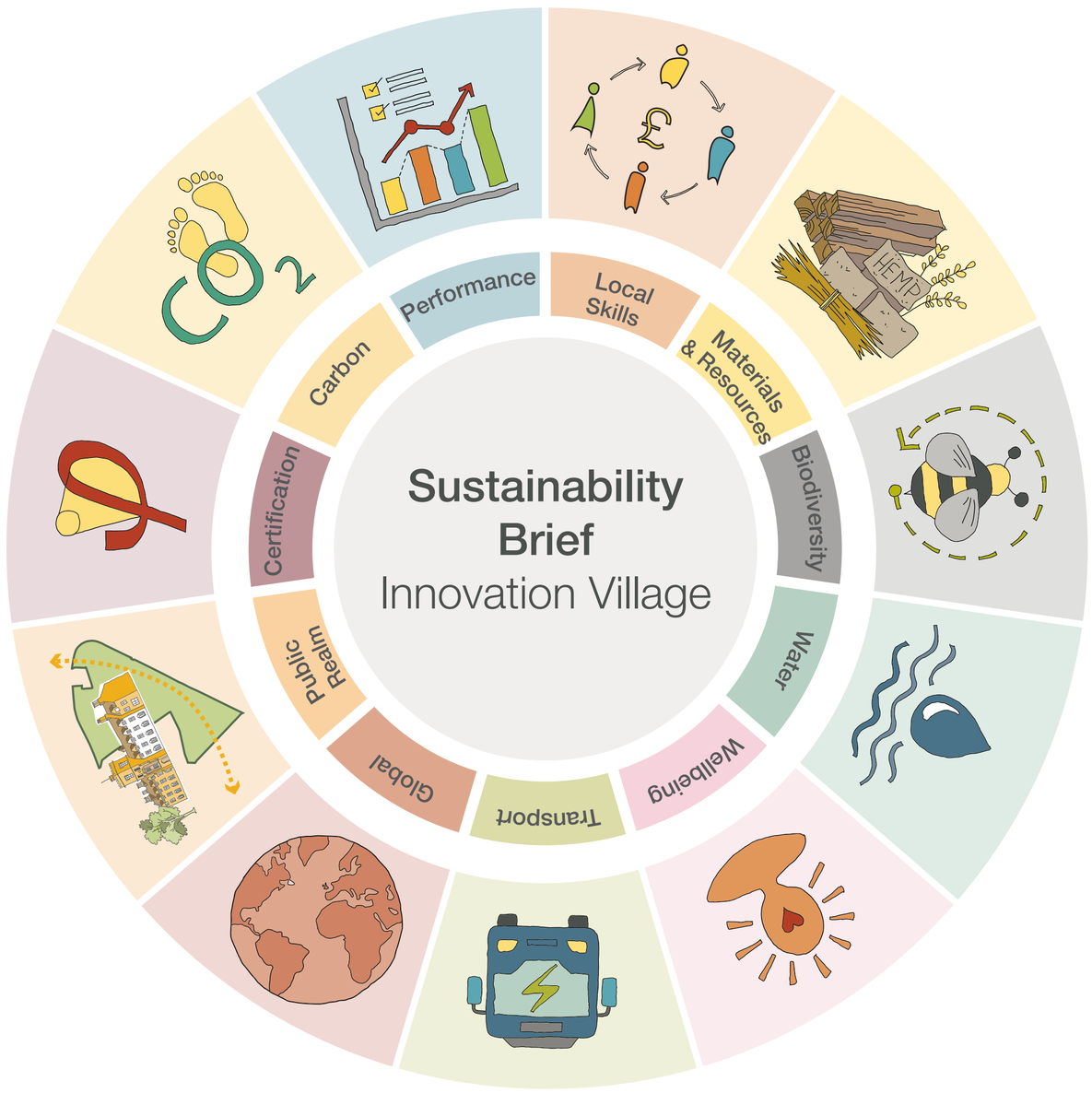
The Materials Strategy for the development is part of the vision to be a world-class exemplar of a regenerative Circular Economy in practice: cultivating green skills, innovations in material and timber technologies, supporting local supply chains in the South-West region, and establishing reciprocal relationships between the agricultural and construction sectors. The Innovation Campus will be built using crop-based, earthen and natural materials grown or sourced from as locally as possible, complimented by the imaginative use of reclaimed building materials in accordance with an ambitiously low embodied carbon target.

The Sustainability Brief is an ambitious intention to lead the way in terms of built environment, to demonstrate what is possible and to physically embody the RAU's mission to catalyse innovation and have a regenerative influence on how we work with the land globally.

Sustainable Transport

The project will have a holistic green travel plan, stimulate coterminous innovative business travel strategies and seek to ameliorate additional car travel burdens associated with business use. To achieve a sustainable scheme the strategy is to:

- Limit the dominance of the single occupancy cars.
- Ensure key routes are free from vehicle movements to promote walking and cycling.
- Provide high quality, secure and accessible cycle parking.
- Provide parking spaces with active charging facilities and consider spaces which can be easily retrofitted in the future to cater for additional demand.
- Consider interventions or actions beyond the boundary of the site itself i.e. bus (electric vehicle) or car club provision, or investigations into local transport networks and how these could be woven into the strategy.
- Manage the energy balance of the campus by integrating EV charging and energy storage into the electricity network.



Work in progress sketch showing the aspirations for the Innovation Village as a landscape led scheme incorporating academic, skills, R&I and work space alongside ancillary facilities.

Ecology

The ecologist has undertaken surveys of the site and has made recommendations for how we can best mitigate against negative impacts during construction, and in fact make the most positive impact we can. Measures include:

- Enhancing the parkland setting.
- Woodland thinning and enhancement management to improve condition.
- Managing invasive plant species.
- Enhancing floral diversity and the condition of retained grassland.
- Potential orchard creation.
- Biodiversity usage of SUDS.
- Bat and bird (swift) boxes in buildings.
- Achieving at least a 10% biodiversity net gain

Flooding and Drainage

The development site is in Flood Zone 1 with a low annual probability of fluvial flooding, however a Flood Risk Assessment will be required due to the size of the site exceeding 1 hectare Flood Risk from all other potential sources is considered to be low.

Site infiltration tests have been carried out and these indicate that infiltration is variable at shallow depth but that sustainable stormwater management for the site utilising a mix of permeable paving and suitably designed and located shallow borehole soakaways is viable. Overland flow routes have been established together with the provision of an ecological pond and short-term stormwater storage basin in the centre of the site to marshal surface water flows.

Climate change will be addressed through an additional 40% allowance in the rainfall figures used for stormwater source control design.

Foul drainage will be provided in a phased new system as agreed with Thames Water Developer Services. And ongoing maintenance requirements and responsibilities will be identified.

Heritage

Archaeological investigations in the site indicate that the area comprised fields in the prehistoric period, with some small Roman quarries also found. The site lay outside of the defended Roman town of Corinium (modern Cirencester), and beyond the cemetery which lay outside the gates of the Fosse Way (the current Tetbury Road). In the medieval period the land formed a part of the great 'open-fields' of the manor, and this use is attested by the remains of 'ridge and furrow' earthworks in part of the site, caused by medieval ploughing.

The Royal Agricultural University was established in 1845, with land granted by Earl Bathurst centred around the university and chapel which were completed the following year (incorporating the former farmhouse). The cottages known as The Steadings on the Tetbury Road were built towards the end of the 19th century. At this time much of the present site formed the gardens of Trent Lodge, which was a house formerly known as Further Barton. These lands were acquired for the university in the later 1940s, and the house was given the present name.

Design plans for the site have been closely informed by this history of the site. Illustrative elements of the former medieval ploughing earthworks are incorporated into the central green space. This central space incorporates views to the historic university and chapel, and also incorporates space to and from the main frontage of Trent Lodge, with heights of new buildings restricted to no more than three storeys.

These boards were compiled by Architype and summarise the work undertaken by the Innovation Village Design Team for the Royal Agricultural University.

RIDGE · BD LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS · OPS STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING · COREUS · momentum · Infrastructure Design Studio CONSULTING ENGINEERS · GRIFFITHS / EVANS · ARCHITYPE

03 Strategy

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Landscape Framework

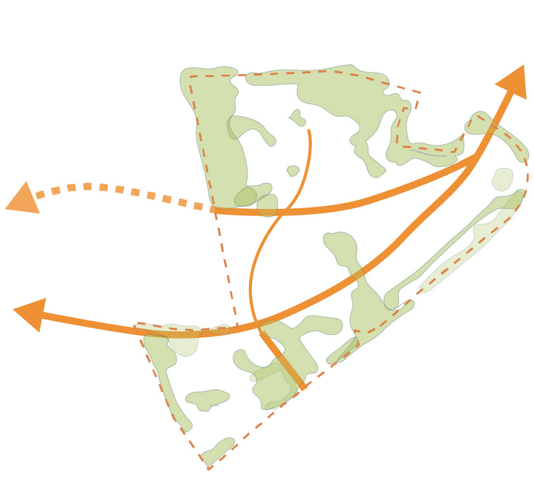
The Design Team have combined their knowledge of the site with the overarching project vision to develop a landscape led design framework, outlined below.

Mature trees provide the backdrop to a stunning parkland, and protecting, maintaining and enhancing this green landscape is critical to our site approach. The framework looks at the historic ridge and furrow landforms, views, routes and hydrology, all of which come together to identify a series of parcels of land - each with distinct characteristics - with the potential for development.

Defining the parcels of land by following this framework ensures that landscape is at the heart of the development. Key qualities of the site will be respected and enhanced, and new communal green spaces created at the centre of the site.

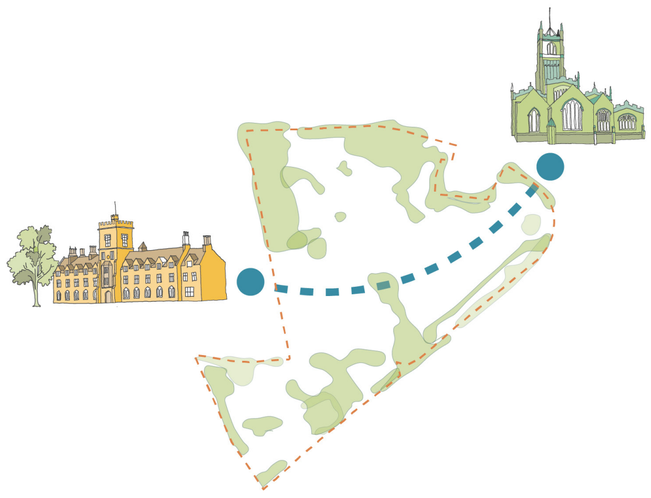
KEY

- Pedestrian 'Arterial Routes' through site
- Vehicle access
- Vehicle parking
- 30m set off gas pipe line (No build zone - either side).
- Buildings to be demolished



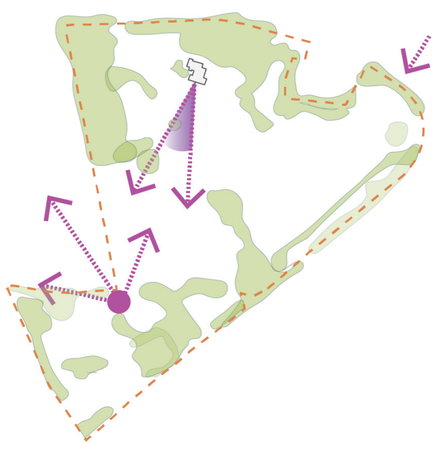
Routes

› Key pedestrian and cycle routes connect the different zones and link the site to: the existing RAU campus, Cirencester, neighbouring developments and transport links.



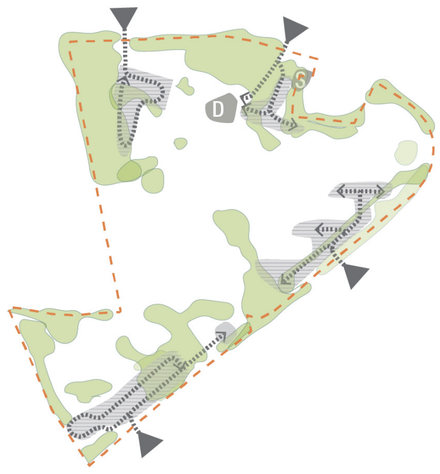
Connectivity

› The development strengthens the connection between the Royal Agricultural University and Cirencester



Views

› Focal points and key views into the site / across the site and to the existing campus buildings are enhanced.

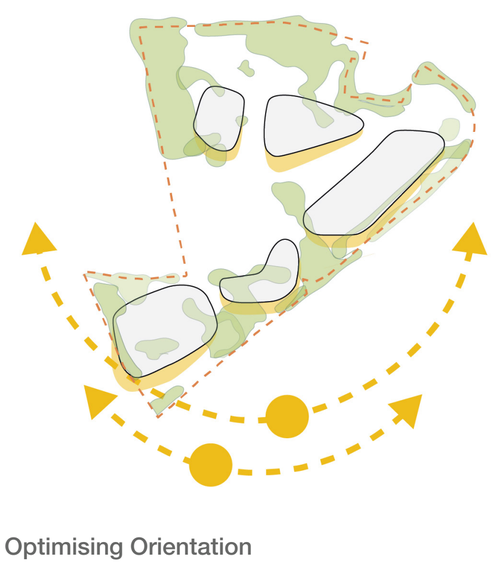


Vehicle access and servicing to the periphery

› A number of vehicle entry points are located around the perimeter, minimising the requirement for vehicle routes across the site and ensuring pedestrian and cycle access take precedent.

Landscape and Screening

› New landscape screening provides a buffer from Tetbury Road, and hides vehicle parking and all-weather pitch.

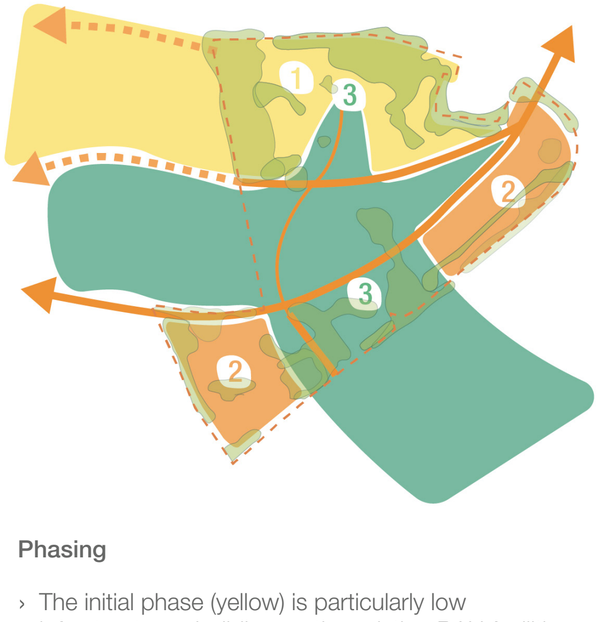


Optimising Orientation

› Zones benefit from a south orientation, getting morning and evening sunlight creating delightful outdoor spaces.

Zoning

Zoning allows areas for potential expansion, without compromising the landscape setting.



Phasing

› The initial phase (yellow) is particularly low infrastructure - building on the existing RAU facilities.

› Future phases provide a series of R&I buildings (orange), retrofit/convert Trent Lodge into a restaurant and provide a new central café & retail space (green).

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04 Proposals

Potential view looking North towards Trent Lodge

Potential view looking East along the path connecting the existing RAU campus to Cirencester town, through the Innovation Village

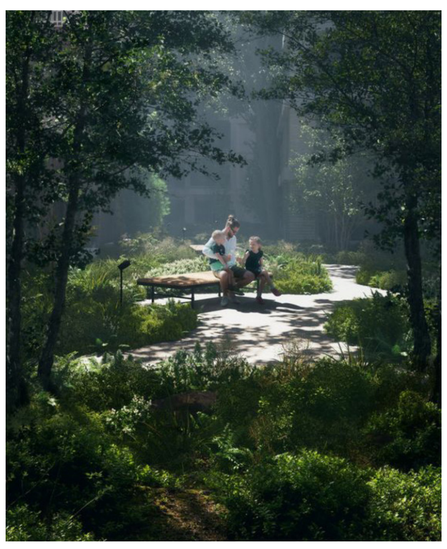
What happens next?

Following this event, RAU and its team of consultants intend to:

- Collate and review feedback received from this event;
- Continue to develop the proposals, with consideration of feedback;
- Working towards the submission of an outline planning application in late Spring/ early Summer 2024

All the boards you've seen today and the comment forms are also available to view online at https://ridge.co.uk/insights/innovation-village-royal-agricultural-university and will remain available to view until 22nd March 2024. If you have taken the time to fill out a comment form, these can posted in the comment box available, emailed to: gemmachowdhury@ridge.co.uk or posted to Ridge and Partners LLP, 3rd Floor, Regent House, 65 Rodney Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL50 1HX.

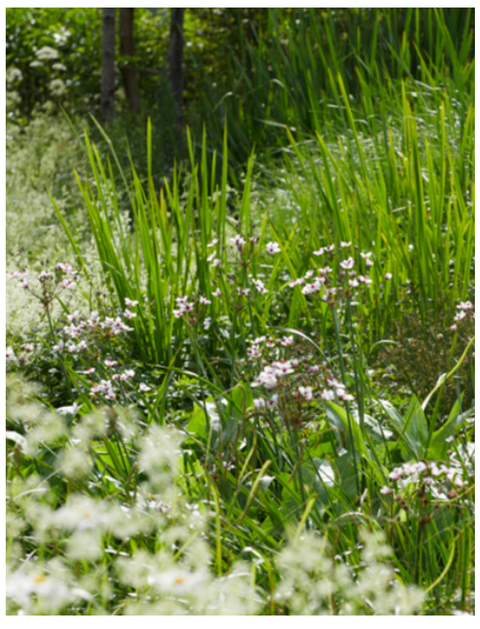
Data Protection: RAU and Ridge have a commitment to protecting personal information and treating this in accordance with the Data Protection Act. All completed questionnaires that we receive will be processed and submitted within a Statement of Community Involvement as part of a planning application to the respective council. All personal details will remain confidential and will not be passed on, sold or used for any other purpose. By supplying personal details, you are agreeing that we may hold this information.



Woodland teaching space and habitat [Proloog]

Illustrative Site Plan showing indicative building footprints, and landscape proposals

Wandering secondary paths through the parkland landscape [Public Content PR]



Swales allowing water infiltration [BD Landscape]

Example of a potential feature landscape 'beacon' at the entrance [Charles Jencks, Life mounds, JK Gillon]

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