

Summary

- The site is in the Green Belt. However, development of Green Belt land can be justified in Very Special Circumstances
- The site is currently a working airport so there is very little landscaping or wildlife to minimise potential bird strikes with aircraft
- The Gigafactory proposals provide a unique opportunity to improve the landscaped setting of the site and attract wildlife
- As part of the planning application a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be prepared to consider the effect on views from the surrounding area, and any mitigation required

A unique opportunity to improve the environment

Several ecology surveys have been undertaken at the site during 2020 and 2021, including habitat surveys. These have found that vast majority of the site is of limited ecological and environmental value. The site, as an operational airport, mainly consists of limited boundary vegetation, extensive areas of hardstanding, and intensively managed grassland.

Currently, for reasons of health and safety, wildlife is actively discouraged on the site. This means that the development of a Gigafactory creates a unique opportunity to improve the ecological and environmental value of the site.

New habitats and recreational areas

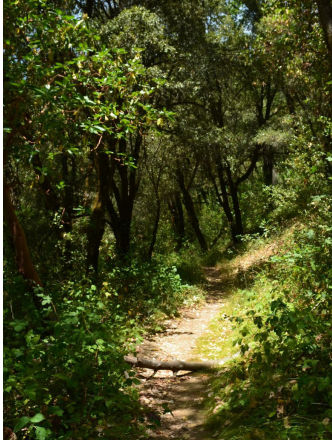
A landscape buffer will be introduced around the site to include a range of new habitats and recreational areas. New varieties of species-rich grassland will be introduced across the site, along with native shrub planting, and wetlands.

To the north of the site, there is a small area of woodland known as Rowley Lane Potential Local Wildlife Site. This will be retained and enhanced through a dedicated management regime which will improve the area for plants and wildlife.

There are also opportunities to introduce new recreational routes, event spaces, educational resources, water courses, and drainage.

Through the development of the site, there is an opportunity to improve the ecological value of the site significantly, as well as conform with all relevant national and local policy.

Landscape precedents



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is development in the Green Belt justified?

National Planning Policy allows development in the Green Belt where 'Very Special Circumstances' exist. This is a balancing exercise where the degree of harm to the Green Belt is outweighed against the benefits of development.

Given the extent of development already permitted around the site, including neighbouring Whitley South and Gateway South, means that the value of the Airport site to the Green Belt is already inevitably diminished.

The planning application will include a full assessment of the site's contribution to the Green Belt, and the extent to which development will impact it. We expect that a case for Very Special Circumstances can then be made around the need for the development, the importance of the development, the lack of other suitable sites, and the benefits of a Gigafactory.

How can you develop a Green Belt site but also protect the landscape?

The Green Belt does not protect the quality of the landscape but is a planning designation used to prevent urban sprawl. It is not necessarily 'green' and a great deal of development already exists in the Green Belt (such as Coventry Airport). Very Special Circumstances can also arise for the provision of other uses, such as a Gigafactory.

What will happen to existing trees and grassland?

There are very few trees on the site, given its use as an airport. However, a Tree Survey will be undertaken and where possible they will be retained as part of the proposed development. The existing grassland will be removed but the additional areas of landscaping will be created.

What new landscaping will be introduced?

The closure of the airport provides an opportunity to provide a more diverse landscape, which could attract birds and other wildlife. This will comprise a range of uses to include tree and shrub planting, nature trails and educational resources, event spaces, recreational opportunities, and drainage and pond features.

The planting of trees and shrubs could create dense vegetation to provide a new roosting and nesting habitat and an abundant winter food supply in the form of fruits and berries. Water features, including new ponds and drainage channels will also create a wide range of habitats for wildlife, including gulls and waterfowl.

Improved footpath and cycleway connections along Bubbenhall Road and across the former airfield towards Rowley Road and the A45 will also be created. Overall, this will improve the landscape and environment of the site and encourage more wildlife into the area.

How can you minimise the visual impact of the development?

The Gigafactory will be made up of a series of large buildings but is part of a wider landscape where several other large buildings can also be seen. From some areas those surrounding buildings may block views towards the proposed development. Where boundaries are currently more open, landscaping and changes in ground levels will be used to filter views, particularly as new tree planting matures. Where the building remains visible different colour options can be fully considered.

How will noise from construction be mitigated?

Noise and vibration during the construction phase will be limited so that the impact on surrounding residential dwellings is reduced. Construction activities will be strictly limited to daytime during the week, and Saturday mornings only. Any future contractor will be required to prepare a noise management plan to help reduce noise.

How will noise from extra cars and HGVs be mitigated?

The proposed Gigafactory is located close to several major roads which already have large volumes of traffic. The Gigafactory itself is predicted to attract a low number of vehicles when compared with the vehicle movements on existing roads. This low increase in car and HGV movements is not likely to be noticeable. In any case, a full assessment of the noise from cars and HGVs associated with the development will be included in a noise and vibration assessment.

How will noise from the factory itself be mitigated?

We will undertake a full assessment of the noise from the Gigafactory which will include vehicle movements and the processes which will take place inside and outside the Gigafactory. The assessment will include measured noise levels in residential areas. Noise mitigation measures to reduce the impact will be implemented where required.

How will light pollution be mitigated?

A lighting plan will be produced to manage this impact, which will evolve with the design of the development.

How energy efficient will the Gigafactory be?

A Gigafactory by its very nature is a process intensive manufacturing facility and the manufacture of batteries involves clean rooms to produce the highest quality batteries, free from defects and impurities that affect the lifespan of the product.

This detailed process requires a complex arrangement of plant and equipment that contributes towards a significant energy requirement. The energy demands of the Gigafactory, together with its associated carbon emissions will be mitigated through a variety of sustainability measures starting with low energy passive design utilising the most technically advanced construction materials and processes. Low energy systems will be installed throughout the development to promote an exemplar energy performance and sustainable development.

Energy offsetting will be key to assessing the balance of energy consumption through the implementation of large-scale roof mounted photovoltaic arrays and the provision of on-site energy storage that will be utilised to offset peak energy demand across the site to ensure the energy requirements of the development are minimised as far as practically possible and that carbon emissions are as close to Net Zero as possible.