

Okay, so, Lewis McWilliam, Planning Officer in the Central and West Area Team.

So this is item 6.2, Planning Application, Planning Permission Principle at 1 Redhughes Avenue is for Green Data Centre, Public Park and the associated works in relation to this. So just to give committee idea of the site context, so site outlined in red here, it's a which has since been demolished. In the centre of the site there's designated open space and then on the west side is a large car park. The site is located within Edinburgh Park and you have offices predominantly on three sides of the site.

On the east side you've got offices and also large storage industrial buildings and then there's residential, existing residential to the far north and east of the site as well.

As noted in the report, to the south west of the site, if you can see the large area of green space, just to the site's south west,

There's mention in the report, this is the southern redevelopment of Edinburgh Park and there's an extant planning permission for mixed use development, which includes residential, hotel and commercial uses. And also just to note the committee, there's an extant office permission on the site as well.

So just a few aspects to clarify.

So today we're looking at the acceptability of the principle of the development in terms of the data centre and the public park as it's a planning permission and principle and not the actual detailed design.

Now as part of this, the applicant also seeks approval for two plans and these are concerning the building height, siting and access. So just in terms of the Green Data Centre aspect, this is categorised as a national development and part of digital fibre network in NPF4. As some of the committee may be familiar, there is however no definition given for green data centres within NPF4.

What I've included here is just the Scottish Government Minister for Planning and what they said in relation to factors that the planning authority may wish to consider for green data centres.

So, just in terms of the two plans that the applicant seeks approval for today, so this is the first one which is the siting of the data centre and the public park. So the data centre on the east side of the site and the public park on the west side.

Accesses into the site, so access onto Redhughes Avenue to the north, South Gyle Crescent to the east where there's existing access points and also active travel route to the far south of the site.

Now, I'll go on to show how the perceived scale might appear in visuals, but this is the second plan that the applicant seeks approval for.

And this is basically maximum building heights at various parts of the development across the site. It's noted in the report the maximum height is just over 32 metres, and that's the red section that you can see here. And also I'll show you the comparison with this and the extant office permission on the site. And again just the cross section of those maximum building heights.

So I suppose firstly just to highlight the committee this is an indicative layout this one so it doesn't, this wouldn't form part of the plans to be determined, but just to give an idea of how the data centre, layout, et cetera, might be in reality and what we'd potentially look at at the detail stage.

So two data centres shown here. Maximum floor space thought is 65,000 metres squared. And there's ancillary buildings to the north of the site...generator, backup generators in the middle and to the south of the site. And then car and cycle parking within the site as well. And then obviously also the public park to the west side fronting Lockside Court. So just in terms of how that scale would be perceived, so existing view from Lockside Court

We just highlight the context of the site at the moment in terms of we obviously have a clear brownfield site at the moment with no buildings on it. The visualisation of the current proposal and the hatched areas are the maximum extent of the building height so the applicant seeks. And then also the previous office permission that came to committee. Just in relation to this, the maximum building height is in line with this previous office permission that was on site. And then just a second view from Station Park.

Also just to note to committee that the area of grass you can see in the foreground, there's an extant permission for the arena development which came to committee. So again, proposed maximum heights and the office permission as well. So just here are the key issues which I'm focusing on today.

Really highlighting I suppose the key issues and obviously all matters are outlined and considered within the report. So just on to the principle of development. Yeah, so the site is designated, the site falls within Edinburgh Park and part of the policy principles is aiming to change the character of Edinburgh Park from a business dominated environment to one which has a thriving mix of uses and evening activity.

I think specifically, you know, with regard to the data centre part of the development, you know, it's recognised in the report that the proposal doesn't comply with these parts of the place principle. And that's owing to the fact that, you know, the data centres are large storage buildings, limited fruitful and requirements for security fencing. Therefore in terms of that those desires to make Edinburgh Park a more thriving place with evening activity the data centre part of the development does not comply with these principles. That said, obviously the balance of consideration that the the data centres have been

designated as national developments and in NPF4 they're detailed as a fundamentally important utility and whilst, you know, whilst as part of that there would be low employment on site, there is the potential for wider economic benefit. I think specifically the storage on a large scale of high -tech data brings the potential for technological advancements, be that more efficient services, communities and businesses, which in turn can help future -proof and safeguard the economy.

I think it's well acknowledged that with data centres there is, you know, the potential requirement for a large energy use and also potentially large water use. I suppose firstly to highlight in regard to this that there are separate regulatory consents that we've detailed within the report. That said, we also have a planning policy about national developments and how would energy seek to be recovered from developments.

What I've included here is just a simple slide from the applicant's submission and it's basically highlighting the potential through the large energy consumption, the potential then to reuse the waste heat that's generated from the data centres and in turn potentially power homes and offices. I would note that the site falls within the site hill and the site hill and guile heatwork heat network zone. However I would also highlight that this is prospective, it's indicative at this stage and any actual energy connexions would also require these separate regulatory consents. But what we've included a condition on is for the applicant to show to us how energy will be used for reuse of this waste heat, notwithstanding the fact that there would also be these separate regulatory consents to actually realise these energy connexions. And just also on a matter in terms of the environmental impacts, again there's obviously also those requirements under Scottish Water and our building standards in relation to efficiency, we have included as a reserve matter details of all sustainability measures to be provided so that we can look at that matter in detail and how any impacts on climate change can be reduced through the planning application. And just to go to the approved, the maximum building heights and sightings, sighting of buildings that the applicant seeks approval for.

I think in terms of these, you know, in the context of the extent office permission on site, these are deemed reasonable the heights and you know the overall mass would be reduced by the stepping of the heights across the site. And as highlighted you know the detailed design would be considered as part of the later application. That said it's acknowledged within the report that

There's a range of offices and storage buildings within the surrounding area. Just in terms of amenity, residential properties I've just highlighted with the Red Star here, both the existing and then the nearest proposed in terms of that mixed use redevelopment of the south side, which I highlighted before. I think at closest proximity the new residential would be 50 metres from the site and 80 metres to the data centres. Now a noise impact assessment has been submitted and no significant impacts are anticipated. That said, as part of the detailed design we would also get a further noise impact

assessment to assess the actual specifics once the development detailed design has been finalised. And just in terms of the aspect of air quality, I suppose physically as a storage building there would be less vehicular trips to the site in comparison to the extant office permission on the site and that's been detailed in the transport statements and then in terms of other potential impacts on the air quality you know the efficiencies of the sustainability measures would also be considered through the later application and as touched upon as well you know building standards would look at the energy efficiency of the buildings. So as part of the site the open space would be relocated and as you know there would be a new a new open space on the site so the in the visualising the 3d Google view that the designated open space and in the middle would not be there, and then there would be a new, larger area of open space to the east side of the site. I think there's potential benefits from this new area of open space.

It's more accessible being located near the roadside and near to the redevelopment of the southern phase of the wider site. It would be larger as well and given this increased proximity, it contributes to wider themes of local living.

Now, there is a large extent of tree loss as part of this in terms of with the removal of trees in the centre of the site. I would highlight to committee and it's detailed in the report that the tree loss is considerably less than the extant office permission that came to committee before. The trees are not protected and I think overall the infringement of the tree policy is deemed reasonable when it forms part of these works to deliver a better quality of open space in the long run.

And again, indicative the details would be at the detailed design stage, but with the new larger area of open space there would be replanting and I think over 100 trees are proposed as part of this.

Just finally on a kind of broader point, obviously with the large scale of the data centres is a significant site area that's required for these. In terms of this site for a data centre, it's well connected, it's near to existing infrastructure and on a broader level, you know, it reuses a brownfield site, which in broad terms complies with that wider spatial strategy, and in turn helps reduce the need for greenfield development. And the stars are just to highlight the proximity to the tram and also the train service as well.

So just to sum up, overall the proposal complies with LDP and NPF4. Whilst the infringements of the place policy are recognised, that's balanced by supporting the delivery of digital infrastructure. There is potential community benefit from the delivery of a new, larger, more accessible open space. And the tree loss is acceptable in this circumstance, subject to replacement planting. Full details of the sustainability measures and a waste heat plan would be considered through the later application stage and by condition.

Reuses a brownfield site in a sustainable location and conditions or reserve matters have been imposed with relation to all other considerations. Thank you.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:27:38**

Thank you very much indeed, Mr. McWilliam. Before I open up questions to the Committee, I think it would be a good idea just to get a point of clarity from officers.

So I would like to ask officers, on a procedural note, can you advise the Committee as to why there is no EIA?

**Paul Devaney - 0:28:04**

Thank you, convenor.

I think the first thing to say to committee is that when we look at EIA developments, that's something in terms of screening. it's something that's delegated to the Chief Planning Officer. When we looked at this case, we've had to consider it against the 2017 EIA regulations. When in those regulations, there are two schedules,

Schedule 1 and Schedule 2.

Schedule 1 is an automatic scenario where it will require an EIA, so typical things that would fall into that are things like quarries and the likes.

There's nothing in Schedule 1 from the Scottish commentary on data centres.

So we then have to look at it under Schedule 2 and we have to apply Schedule 2 fairly broadly in terms of Table 10, which is for urban developments, which can include the whole host of different proposals as such.

So we have a look to that. We've screened the development under Schedule 2. We came to the view that it didn't require any EIA.

We have subsequently rescreened the development proposal, and you'll see that in the history in the papers, why those two screening opinions. We rescreened it on the basis that we had representations made to us that there was a potential that the opinion, the original opinion, could be challenged. What I would say is that we have given the matter very careful consideration in terms of assessing it against the IAEA regs. We have published our most recent screening opinion, I think it's 18th of December, last year it's available on the public portal. And given the background where there is still the potential that there could be litigation, I don't think it would be appropriate for me to comment further on the precise nature of that screening opinion, but I hope that does clarify matters for members.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:30:19**

Okay, so opening up questions from the committee, I have Councillor Mowat.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 0:30:23**

Yes, I think sort of adjacent to the EIA, but one of the matters of concern that's been raised in the objections and in correspondence that I think we've all been receiving recently, is about the consumption of energy of this development. So we saw the guidance that was the incredibly unhelpful guidance that the Scottish government have issued about data centres, which talks about use of renewable energy. But is there anything wider in MPF4, in our local development plan, about how we would consider the consumption of energy of a particular development? And I think this is one of the biggest concerns, and I'm sure people in the gallery are listening so they can consider that. We want to hear that addressed today. I'm struggling to think of anything, but if you could address that, because I think that's one of the biggest concerns that's been raised with us.

**Paul Devaney - 0:31:28**

I think the first thing to say is that quite clearly, MPF4 identifies these green data centres as national developments, and Scottish ministers have got a policy supporting them as such. In terms of energy consumption, and there's now a follow-up point I would say first, which is I think the point of your reason, which is that I think when we've pressed for a definition of what a green data centre is, I think the advice that we've been given by the Scottish Government is that it's for the authority to consider each individual case, and those criteria such as power from renewable energy sources, whether it makes use of efficient technologies, whether it seems to minimise water consumption and support reuse of excess heat. Now, some of those matters are quite clearly raised in the report and are subject to conditions. I think coming back to it and looking at MPF4, MPF4 really only talks more generally under the energy section about the Scottish government's desire to decarbonise the energy network, in particular the electricity network.

But the electricity network is part of a national grid. So for example in Scotland, the energy will be provided by wind power, hydroelectric and obviously nuclear with Torness. But what I'm not aware of is what the Scottish Government's position is if energy comes from other sources which are not green as such given it's part of a national grid. So how do we in planning control and say we like that electricity because it's green electricity, Whereas there could be scenarios where it's not if extra capacity is required. But I think that's also something that the applicant would be addressing through their agreement with Scottish Power in terms of their PPA agreement was set out to try and ensure that the energy use is green.

There's also other measures in terms of photovoltaics and the methods of cooling, etc. and I think as Lewis has alluded to, how any excess heat is used and how that potential can be tapped into the network when that comes on.

But I think that's really all NPF 4 is saying about it.

And obviously, recent experiences, there's been a lot of decarbonisation with Cockenzie power station closing and also the one followed up the fourth.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:34:28**

Okay, I have Councillor McNichol followed by Councillor Lange followed by Councillor Mattos Coelho.

**Cllr Martha Mattos-Coelho**

Thank you, convener. So just for my clarity, this Brownfield site was designated to have a mix of uses including residential, retail, business, good quality, public spaces. Can you just run over, I can't see any of that at all in this proposal. So can you tell me how it's going to meet any of those criteria.

**Lewis McWilliam**

Yeah, I'll just share my screen to show the place designation, place 19. Yeah, so just if you can see there, obviously the site outlined in red, in terms of the place designation, you know, it falls with EP1 within the Edinburgh Park area where the aim is for mixed use area, business, residential, ancillary uses and commercial hub and specific to the site itself, mixed use redevelopment. I think in terms of the considerations in the report, I suppose, tried to make fairly clear that the data centre makes a limited contribution to those wider place principles, owing to the fact that it's a large storage building where there's a requirement for secure fencing and it would bring limited footfall to the site.

I think that is also balanced to some extent by some potential benefit that the new open space may bring, or the new public park where that obviously would provide the potential for an accessible large area of green space near people's homes, offices, etc., which supports those kind of wider, those wider themes of local living. So I suppose some balance with that, but yeah, I mean it's certainly recognised that the biggest part of the development in terms of the data centres, there is an infringement of the place policy and those wider aims.

**Councillor McNeese-Meechan**

Just for my absolute clarity, it limits the benefit.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:37:22**

Councillor McNeese-Meechan, for senior officers just want to come in.

Just hold on one sec.

**Paul Devaney - 0:37:24**

Convener, sorry, apologies. It was just really to add that you also have to look at this

through the prism of the existing extent, permission on the site for office, which hasn't been implemented but is capable of being implemented.

I think when we similarly presented that case back to committee, we had also flagged that it was a potential infringement in not providing the mix of uses. It was primarily office and obviously that was accepted at that point as well. So I think that's an important consideration.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:38:01**

Councillor McNeese Mechan, do you have a follow -up?

**Councillor McNeese Mechan**

I have other questions but I want other people to get a chance so I'll be quiet right now.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:38:10**

Okay, Councillor Lang.

**Councillor Lang**

Yep, thank you very much,. So I think I will, because I had a few questions myself, but since we're on this point specifically that Councillor McNeese -Meekins asked, I want to just kind of pursue this.

Because I'm still not, I'm not entirely clear then on the specific basis that we're seeing, policy place 19, this application may not be compliant with that, but there are other reasons. In the opening presentation, Lewis, I think you talked about the fact that this was our national development.

And so my question is, if this wasn't a national development, to what extent would planning officers be comfortable with the degree to which this application does not comply with Place 19?

I mean, I think it's probably tricky to answer that in the sense of the theoretical of, you know, if it wasn't designated as a national development.

**Lewis McWilliam - 0:39:30**

I think as it is designated as a national development, we have to put consideration to the emphasis that the NPF4 places on these green data centres in terms of what it seeks to achieve in terms of digital fibre network and, you know, and the potential benefits that would come from that, that I highlighted within the report.

I suppose in terms of the balance of the considerations, it's like, it's considering the development plan as a whole and suppose try to flag within that, that there are clear infringements of policy, be that place 19, but that overall the kind of national development status and the importance that's placed on the green data centres

overrides, you know, the benefits would kind of outweigh the dis -benefits and then, you know, overall that it would still comply with the development plan.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:40:46**

Cllr Lang, do you have a follow -up for that? I will come back to second questions because I've got quite a lot of people wanting to ask.

Do you have a follow up to that particular question?

Not on that, but I'll come back for the second round.

Fantastic. I'll make a note of that.

Councillor Mattos Coelho followed by Councillor Parker, Mumford and then Pogson.

**Cllr Mattos-Coelho**

Thank you, Convener.

I appreciate that in the report it explains why it was determined that an environmental impact assessment wasn't needed, I appreciate it says it is a multistage consent. My question is to clarify if there could be a change on this assumption and environmental impact could actually be needed. Is this the case? Thank you.

**Paul Devaney - 0:41:38**

Convener there is that potential as part of a multistage consent and at the end of the day there is a need to look at that and that's set out in the regulation so that's something that we would need to look at at that particular stage without prejudging the outcome of it.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:41:55**

Thank you.

Could I just actually for clarity could you just explain what you mean by that particular stage?

**Paul Devaney - 0:42:03**

Well, the fact that it's a plan in permission and principle, and it would then be subject to what are called matter-specifying conditions. Thank you.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:42:12**

Moving on, Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 0:42:15**

Thank you.

I also have lots of questions, but the first one I want to ask is about water. So the application talks about there will be a need for a pre -development inquiry to go through with Scottish Water if this was agreed today. I would be keen to understand exactly what that process looks like, like what could be the outcome of that inquiry. I suppose I'm interested in that because the data centre will clearly have a high water usage, and the energy and utility statement that's been submitted is significantly light on detail, so I don't feel like it has been explored in any level as part of this application. Thanks.

**Lewis McWilliam - 0:42:59**

Yeah, I think it's potentially something that the applicant could like give a bit more specific detail on, but I think generally my understanding is that any connexion or requirement with Scottish Water would follow any grant of planning permission and the pre -development inquiries, the very initial stage of that. I think, suppose I don't want to stray into something that, the specifics of which I would be out with something that can control or consider, but that's possibly something that the applicant can provide a little bit more clarity on. I think in terms of the actual measures with the application, we've obviously had like a sustainability statement provided with this application.

That said, because it's a planning permission in principle, the full detail of the development and whatever measures to reduce water usage, we simply don't have and they're not being determined with this proposal. So I think when I mentioned in the report, you know, a reserved matter is the further sustainability statement with details of all operational measures to reduce those environmental impacts, that would be something that we'd look to be provided with as part of that, be that a closed loop water system etc.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:44:52**

And then just the awareness of the separate regulatory consent that would also be required as well. We do have a gentleman who's coming from Scottish Water so you'll be able to hopefully ask him those questions. Do you have a follow -up? Thank you,

**Cllr Ben Parker - 0:45:03**

Thank you. I suppose just to be super clear then because we're talking about reducing water consumption, do we have a number that we're reducing it from? Like has there been an assessment done of water availability at the site? Appreciate we want to reduce it, I appreciate that that might come out further down the line but do we know how much water this development will us and if there is availability at the sit and all of the areas around it to facilitate that?

**Lewis McWilliam - 0:45:26**

I mean, no, I don't have that information. I assume in broad terms that the water usage would be linked to potentially like the developments scale, et cetera. So, you know,

given this is a permission in principle, we don't have specifics of the development scale or detailed design, but possibly that's something that the Scottish

Water Consultee can give a bit more detail on or clarity.

**Paul Devaney - 0:46:12**

I don't think it's unusual to have plan applications in front of you where we've consulted with Scottish Water. Many of them will just provide the standard advice, which is they've got no objections and there's capacity at Glencourse Reservoir, etc. There will be other cases they come back and they just say that in relation to development, what they've come back here is they don't have objections but obviously there's a process that has to be gone through but I don't know if that's something that you might want to examine for them in terms of that consenting process and how that works with Scottish Water. I have come across it as well, probably more in relation to smaller scale developments where we've also got a slight tie -in with the building regulations because there were some developments where we hadn't consulted Scottish Water and concerns had come out that there wasn't capacity, but that had been caught through the build and warrant process for smaller scale developments before they could get the necessary certificates, but it's something you might wish to raise with the representative from Scottish Water this morning.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:47:18**

Councillor Mumford.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 0:47:20**

Thank you very much. I had a question around the use of generators, backup generators, and I appreciate some of this will come with the AMC, but of course when we're looking at principal we have to know how much they'll be used. So the noise impact assessment mentions the generators will be used in blocks, but in case of an emergency, they would be used altogether, but that would mean that the noise assessment wouldn't apply because it would be an emergency situation.

What I'm not understanding is the likelihood of that. So similar to the question around water, do we have a sense of if we can currently provide the amount of energy required by this data centre from renewables and the extent to which those generators will be being used on a regular basis?

**Paul Devaney - 0:48:14**

Convenor, what I would say is that the noise impact assessment documents have been submitted with this application where the proposals have been assessed against various noise impacts

including construction and operation but also the emergency generator. So I think from what we've seen thus far, they've demonstrated that from a noise perspective that the generators can be on the site without causing issues of impacts on amenity. And I think in particular they're able to meet what's called the noise reduction 25 condition, which is a kind of standard condition that's usually put on planning permissions. But I think if you look at the report, because those details are not subject to the application in front of us this morning, they're going to have to be agreed down the line, you will see that there's a very specific condition that we would then require the actual details when they come in to show how they are set up as well as how the whole data centre is set up from a noise perspective. I suspect the applicant may be more able to respond to the question about data centres and what happens when the energy goes down but there's a need in the same way that a hospital would have a need to have a backup generator system if the electricity supply fails.

But I'd say that might be something you want to raise with the applicant in terms of how often that would occur.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:49:54**

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 0:49:54**

Thank you, Convener. Can you confirm that NR25, would that still apply in an emergency situation which is being described in the noise embed assessment as a power outage? Obviously, that can be when there's not enough power being provided.

**Paul Devaney - 0:50:16**

So would NR25 apply at that point? As far as the normal one, but it might not occur if it's an emergency and there's no choice, obviously, at night, but that's something that we would have to examine further through the subsequent AMAC. Because if we do have something which is a – to give you an example, it's not a noise example, but it's a potential noise example, is that we had a case a number of years ago where the deliveries to a supermarket and they were restricted in order to restrict the noise, But due to circumstances out with the control of that supermarket, where lorries were then coming up and were going to go over tackle hours, what they had to do was to breach the condition and we had to be in agreement with them that it was acceptable to do that on that basis. We weren't going to use any discretionary enforcement powers because the alternative was that the people in that community wouldn't have food in the supermarket.

Now, that was a fairly rare event, but I think it's just an illustration of the rest of the degree of flexibility, you know, of the circumstances that are kind of out with the control of the applicant in terms of loss of power.

But as I say, it's something you might want to ask the applicant further about in terms of their knowledge of operation of data centres as such.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:51:35**

**Cllr Tim Pogson - 0:51:38**

Thank you. I want to go back to the discussion we were having about the appropriateness of this proposal in this setting in Edinburgh Park and the compromises being made there in terms of the place proposals for Edinburgh Park. And I just wanted to turn that point on its head and ask if, I don't mean by naming somewhere, but in principle whether we could point to districts of Edinburgh, areas within our city, where we could say that that would be an ideal location in terms of our planning policy, our zoning, et cetera, for a proposal such as this. I'm wondering if, you know, this, in terms of our policy development and our approaches to zoning and so forth, whether maybe these developments are a bit ahead of where we're at in terms of our approach on this, but or, you know, whether you say, oh, this area here will be ideal for developmentalism. Let's put it there.

**Lewis McWilliam - 0:52:42**

I think Paul might want to expand on this, but I suppose like the data centres, we consider to be a storage use in terms of the planning use class order. And I mean, we do have allocated industrial sites, for example, Sighthill, where such uses may be commonplace. I think that that said, another consideration is the fact specifically green data centres, we don't have reference to in our LDP. We do in the NPF4, but we don't have specific reference to green data centres in our LDP. And in terms of the compatibility specifically on this site and in the Edinburgh Park area, it's obviously that, firstly, that consideration of just physically the size of the site area that's required for a green data centre and probably, you know, without kind of a detailed analysis, there would be limits to the areas where such a large green data centre could be placed. And then also just in terms of the compatibility of that storage use, whilst we've recognised there's an infringement of the Place 19 policy, there are storage uses within Edinburgh Park and I think just in terms of the aerial view that I can go back to. And yeah, just in terms of this aerial view, you know, the east side of the site has existing, you know, large industrial storage buildings. And, you know, whilst it's recognised that there's that infringement in the place 19, we also have to have consideration of, you know, the character of the area as it is now today. And in that regard, a storage use is not at odds with the character, given the prevalence of this existing use nearby. If that helps.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:55:20**

Councillor Key.

**Cllr David Key - 0:55:23**

Thanks, Governor. Getting down to the weeds now, more of the trees actually. You say in your report findings there will be 111 trees being removed. Part of your argument seems to be that that's okay because the last application there was going to be 200 trees removed. I don't really understand the logic behind that thinking. When it should be looked at against a pulse it's on its own and not comparing it to the previous application.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:55:56**

**Paul Devaney - 0:56:01**

Tied into that if I may, Convenor, we seem to have...time. Thank you, Convenor. I mean I think it's a good point and you know ultimately you have to judge each plan and application on its merits but what you also have to look at is that the trees at the moment have no actual protection so they could be removed tomorrow without any consents required and I think that it is important to draw attention to the fact that the principle of the removal of trees has already been accepted and you've got an extended planning permission that allows that as well which this committee considered and from memory I think it was also on a division because there were concerns about the trees so I think in summary our view would be that it, it would be difficult to now argue that the trees should be retained, notwithstanding the various policies in the development plan, on the basis of that extant planning permission, which the committee had also considered, whether they agreed to that. And I think, as Mr Lewis has alluded to,

it's actually less than what had been approved then. But I do appreciate that you have to look at each application on its merits, but I hope that explains the position. Okay, before I move on to second questions, Councillor Mitchell,

**Cllr Hal Osler - 0:57:19**

I was going to ask, as you were the only person who hadn't asked questions ever when you wish to ask one, you've now put your hand up. Sure, everybody was on tenterhooks,

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 0:57:28**

Convenor. Thank you, Convenor, and thank you for the report and presentation. I was wanting to ask about the, again, the site's location, and there's a reference in the report in terms of, again, the site that's been chosen that is location in Scotland and would help reduce the development's carbon footprint through the use of renewable energy. But we've in the same part of the report, it references the fact that it's going to have a negligible impact on reducing the impact on emissions. And we're sort of unsure about exactly being able to specify the power sources. So I wonder if that section of the report could just be expanded on a little bit.

**Lewis McWilliam - 0:58:24**

Yeah, I think just on the aspect of the negligible impact, there's reference to the Scottish Government make reference to green data centres, that there's been a greenhouse gas assessment carried out and that notwithstanding the specifics of each proposal, that generally there would be a negligible impact.

So I think there's a comment just to what NPF4 have mentioned in relation to that. I think in terms of the site location made reference to the fact that a benefit would be that it's in a well-connected brownfield location, so it has the benefit of being near existing infrastructure in terms of those water connexions, etc. I think maybe specifically on that it would be best for the aspect. And again, in terms of the use of renewable energy, had discussions with with Scottish Power on that, and there's obviously their consultee response as well. I think the the tricky element is that the actual energy agreement is commercially sensitive. So that that would be between like the and and and Neso as well. But I know that and I think as Paul touched upon before there is the potential for a power purchase agreement where a certain amount of green energy can be can be used as part of that. But I think that said in terms of things that can be looked at within the planning application as I say we have we have included a further detailed sustainability statement and that aspect of the waste heat plan to see how any potentially how any waste heat could be could be reused in the future notwithstanding the fact that it would need those separate consents as well.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:00:52**

Okay I'm now moving on to second questions I've got council McNeese Meechan, councillor Lang, councillor Mumford, councillor Parker, councillor Key. I'm just going to ask a quick question myself first which is moving on to the actual application itself I note that we've got a reduced car parking of 121, but only 39 employees. I'm just trying to get an understanding of how that's reduced. Tied to that, obviously, is from the reduced car parking, we've got a reduced amount of cycle parking as well, which also seems out of sync to what actually is being proposed there. I would just like to have an understanding about how it was decided about what the car parking and the cycle parking was going to be on this site.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:01:36**

Yeah, so I suppose just to put it in context, at the moment on the site there's 790 car parking spaces and as far as I'm aware there's limited cycle provision as well. So in terms of going from the 790 to the 121, I do take the point in terms of limited employment in sight and the proportionality of that, but it's a significant reduction from the existing situation and in that regard, it would help.

It fits with the wider transport policies of trying to reduce car usage. I don't, so and from what I've got down here just to reference it to the extent planning permission for the office development, I believe there was over 500 car parking spaces that were approved as part of that. And the 290 cycle spaces, I suppose there's been comment there that, you know, it's deemed proportionate given the relatively low levels of actual employment on the site. That said, those matters would be considered at the detailed stage and there's no plans that are approved today that lock in the car or cycle parking.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:03:11**

So the second big question, just to be clear then, the 121 came from the applicant. It wasn't something, because obviously when we talk about housing, we talk about office usage, we tend to look at the size of the development and the reasonableness and what's being used. So these numbers came from the applicant rather than it coming from the planning department and saying....

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:03:30**

this is the formula we've come up with. Yeah that's right the numbers came from the applicant and I think are detailed in their transport statement. I have within the report figured for the size of a storage floor space it would be the maximum would be 113 car parking spaces. But that's something that could be looked at through the details stage.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:03:56**

Thank you.

Councillor McNeese Meechan followed by Councillor Lang.

**Cllr McNeese Meechan**

Thank you, Convener, I was gonna ask this, can we go back to the slide that you had?

I think it was titled Climate Change. It was quite colour, sort of iron brew colours, orange and blue with little illustrations on it. Could you bring it back up. Yeah that's it. So just for clarity this slide isn't part of the proposal and principle. This is the purpose of this is to explain what district heating is or why is this being included today. Or is this a detailed part of the proposal.

I thought it wasn't.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:04:44**

Yeah, so yeah to clarify, I mean it this this wouldn't form part of any plans to be determined today. It's taken from the applicant's supporting information which has a section on waste heat.

And it's really to highlight kind of that applicant stated that the potential for the large waste heat to be reused to power homes and offices in the future and as part of that and through our planning policy requirements we've included a condition for a detailed waste heat plan to show how your energy could be used recovered energy could be used to heat homes in the future. I have tried to make reference in the report to the fact that the heating network zones are prospective, they're indicative at this stage and any actual physical energy connexion to realise the reuse, you know, would require separate regulatory consents out with this planning, out with consideration of planning.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:06:07**

Right, so none of this is being proposed. It's just to help people that don't know what district heating is, see a picture of what district heating is.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:06:20**

I suppose, I mean, it forms, it's not a plan to be determined today, but, you know, similar to the indicative layout of the site or the indicative landscaping, it's the potential that the development could use in the future. Yes, sorry, I'm being clear, but it's not what they're proposing, they're just

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:06:47**

simply letting us know that somebody could do this, not that they wish to do this, is that right?

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:06:58**

It's them highlighting the potential that could be generated from this site, from the data centres on this site, that they could potentially reuse the energy in the future specific to this site. In terms of the waste heat and power plant that's conditioned, we'd be looking for details specifically for this site.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:07:31**

OK, I've got Councillor Lang, Mumford, Parker and Key and Mitchell.

I'm conscious of time. So if there's anybody else who wishes to ask a question, then please do let me know after that. And also, can we try to keep our questions short if possible and direct? Would be much appreciated.

So Councillor Lang.

**Cllr Lang**

Yeah, thank you.

I'm just going to give you advice there. I'll try. This is quite complicated stuff though. And so I just want to make sure I've got this absolutely clear in my mind, because it does strike me that in our City Plan 2030 we do have policies, ENV I think 7 and 8, relevant to me, against which we can assess the appropriateness of an application like this with respect to water and energy use. but just so I'm absolutely clear, is it the advice from officers that it would be at the point of the AMC application that we would need to satisfy ourselves over the appropriateness of this development against policies like that as opposed to this stage when we're simply dealing with a planning application for permission and principle?

Is that a fair summary?

**Paul Devaney - 1:08:45**

Convenor, the appropriate stage for you to consider it is now, because this is a plan of permission and principle. But I would like to just clarify comments I'd made earlier about multistage consents and the advice and the circular on that, where we've got to look at things when it's a principle decision when we're looking at questions about impacts on the environment. But the courts have equally made it clear that if those effects are not identified or identifiable at the time of the principal decision assessment must be made at the subsequent stage.

But I think in relation to screening opinions and EIA, I think that in relation to this application, what we're saying is that we've consulted with Scottish Water and Scottish Power SPN and their organisation and they don't have an objection. They're not saying that they don't think it's deliverable but obviously the detail of that will have to be worked through and obviously in terms of what's in the agreement will determine how the data centre delivers, I don't get it, the delivery of green energy to power it as such. I don't know if that's an issue.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:10:05**

Do you have a follow -up, Councillor Lang?

Not on that, no.

Councillor Mumford

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:10:11**

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:10:14**

Thank you, I think I do and it was my question, the question I was going to ask is also a follow -up to Councillor Lange's that's helpful.

My understanding from briefings we've had and from what's contained in the report and what you showed us on the slides there, is that this becomes a national consideration because it is a green data centre.

NPF4 is clear about green data centres and although it doesn't give us a definition, the government has given us some categories that we can compare this against. So when we're looking at this planning permission in principle, would it be fair to say that the key consideration for us, or one of the key considerations, is whether or not this This is a green data centre rather than a data centre and currently it is the gift of this committee to decide that based on that guidance from the Scottish Government.

**Paul Devaney - 1:11:03**

That would be correct.

It's ultimately the gift of this committee as to whether they consider it to be a green data centre and how they wish to consider it against the policies in both your LDP and the MPF4. I think we've kind of set out the position. There isn't a definition of a green data centre. The normal starting point when you're a planner, usually when you're a appeal or inquiry, is to go and look up the glossary of terms in the development plan and members will be aware of that through some of the debates we've had about housing and housing definition and NPF.

Unfortunately, there isn't and all we really have is most recent advice which is really saying to local planning authorities you need to consider each case on its individual merits and here are some of the factors that you, or criteria that you would need to take into account, but ultimately that flies with yourselves as decision makers.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:12:05**

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 1:12:07**

Thank you. I've got a question about coordinated development and grid constraints slash water availability. So my question really is has there been an assessment made of if this development is consented, if that will prejudice the ability to bring forward other developments on the site given constraints on the grid or on water usage. Thanks.

**Paul Devaney - 1:12:34**

I think in simple terms, looking at your kind of coordinated development policy, we don't think that this proposal would have a particular impact given that there is an extant plan of permission adjacent to, I think it's 20 slash 2068 for the parabola mix use development. But I think the information in front of us today is we don't have any information from the key statutory undertakers to say that if you granted this, that it

would therefore lead to a position of prejudice in the delivery of those other elements of development. I don't know if there's anything you wanted to add to that, Lewis.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 1:13:21**

Just as a tiny follow-up, I suppose, is it reasonable to assume that this development will have a greater impact though than the extent one, in the sense we know that this development will have a greater energy usage or greater water usage than what has previously been consented.

**Paul Devaney - 1:13:36**

I think that would be reasonable without looking at it and I don't have the figures for the office development versus this to compare.

But what I would say, from an infrastructure point of view, I'm going back very early in my career where, you know, due to there being, for example, a lack of wastewater treatment, you know, I've worked on authorities where there would be an embargo on further development, the development can occur. And that had been then reflected through local plans at the time where certain development was directed to certain settlements because there wasn't an infrastructure capacity issue.

But as I said, I don't have that information, as I say, we can only really go with, you know Lewis has consulted with the key statutory undertakers and they've come back and advised, they don't have an objection. I would have thought that if there was they would have come back and said whoa you can't do this because the lights are going to go out or there's not enough water and I know that's been an issue in other countries particularly looking at Sollan Island and Dublin and the South Dublin Corporation and questions have been raised in the Irish Doyle about that, but I'm not aware that's the case here, but maybe the representative from Scottish Water might be able to test this further on that and the consenting and the thought behind their position.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:15:04**

We seem to be throwing up a number of questions for Scottish Water later.

Okay, I've got Councillor Key, Councillor Mitchell and now I note, we'll move on, yeah okay, so Councillor Key, Councillor, sorry, Councillor Key, Councillor Mitchell.

**Cllr David Key - 1:15:14**

Going back to the car and cycle spaces, clearly these numbers have sort of come from the Edinburgh design guidance, which provides ludicrous numbers really, 496 cycle spaces according to Edinburgh design guidance. And it's been brought down to 290 by the applicant.

Now I'm a great fan of the cycle spaces, much to the next man, but as their transport statement says no one's going to be coming there on the bike, certainly not anyone who's not working locally.

So that's the 30 -and -round jobs that are there. So my mask works out. That's about 200 and something extra cycle spaces that are completely unnecessary, along with the completely unnecessary 121 car parking spaces. Can we condition at this stage that all that asphalt is turned into something green, perhaps more sports provision to make the place an actual amenity at this stage, or are we constrained by our powers?

**Paul Devaney - 1:16:20**

Thank you.

I think the simplest thing to say is that the parking and the cycle parking reserve, so it's not agreed, and that will have to be looked at, followed down the line.

I wouldn't suggest going down the line of restricting numbers today and the reason I say that is because I'm aware of other permissions that we've got where it's more really on vehicle parking but I'm aware of extant permissions in the city where the level of vehicle parking is far in excess of what we would now accept and I think we would probably like to go back and revisit it but we can't. So I don't think we should do that and we don't

know what iteration of the design guidance will be in place at the point an AMSC comes in. I mean I think that the general direction of travel looking at Scottish Government and ourselves is that levels of car parking are decreasing. I think there are issues which we've tried to address with them design guidance about cycle parking and about its usage because I think there have been concerns that there may be too much but I think that's something I think we'd want to look at through the detail stage and I wouldn't really want to suggest putting a restriction on today. I think coming back to the other point about whether areas could be greened up again, that's something that's going to have to come through more on the detail.

It's usually indicative of some things that have been shown and I wouldn't suggest restricting that today. It would be a case of us examining that further when the detailed applications come in, but I hope that's this.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:17:58**

So just to follow up on my original question, Councillor Key' question, under Condition 3e when it states roads, footway, cycleways, servicing and layout of car parking, cycle parking provision, other parking, meeting, Edinburgh Street design guidance, this is the condition that you are suggesting the fact that it be looked up under.

Thank you.

Right, I have Councillor Mitchell.

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 1:18:24**

Convener, thank you. And I had a question about the cycle and vehicle parking, which you asked and Councillor Key touched on my next question. And so the next one I was slightly less was about the access of this, but I wonder if there's detail about the access of who it was for, because similar to Councillor Key, there was that volume and whether it's exclusively for the data centre, whether it was because of the green space and other amenities in proximity if that was a more general addition, I suppose.

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 1:18:58**

We're sorry, that comes at the next stage exactly with the further detail.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:19:05**

Yeah, I'll just share my screen. So I think just as I mentioned,

Just as I mentioned at the start of the presentation, there's two plans to be determined today, and this is one of the plans. As part of this, they have zones for site access, and that's one to the north side of the site. and it's actually just covered here.

And a zone to the east side of the site as well. There are existing vehicular accesses into the site at the moment in these locations.

So to answer, you'd be determining the zones for the site access, the specific details of each access would come with a detailed stage.

OK, is anybody who hasn't asked a second question wishing to ask a second question?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:20:16**

No.

Moving on to third questions.

I know Councillor Lang had a third question.

I know Councillor Mumford has a third question.

So does Councillor Parker, and so does Councillor Key.

And myself, complete.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:20:30**

I'm so, so sorry, Councillor Minkin.

You are absolutely correct.

Sorry.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:20:34**

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:20:38**

Does that meet computer? That's the first one. Yes it is Councillor. Yes okay thank you very much.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:20:39**

So um final question from me um and I ask this as a sorry if you just not have a lot of experience sitting on this committee. Um to what degree does the national planning framework and the designation of something as a national development. To what degree is that a effective veto over local police policies that we have, for example, place 19?

**Paul Devaney - 1:21:15**

I think in simple terms it's not a veto. I think the issue we've here is we've got a development plan that comprises both MPF 4 and your LDP.

And as with every planning proposal that comes before you, there's always going to be tensions and you're never going to get a situation where a development complies with every single policy.

And the development plan, there's always going to be infringements or certain elements. There'll be certain elements which might even be contradictory to an extent in terms of what the policies are trying to achieve. It's ultimately up to you as a committee to then balance those and then come to a kind of whole view, taking the whole of the development plan into consideration.

And what we've tried to do here is look at it through the prism of that, yes, there is this potential tension with place 19, but the extent permission for office doesn't fully address that place 19 element, but there are other policies in the plan, whether it's NPF 4 and the National Development Status, and getting digital infrastructure that's in the development plan that we think supports and puts that balance, as well as the open space provision being located to the edge where it's closer to the residential elements in the parabola site in Edinburgh Park, that on balance our view is that that infringement is acceptable, but it's not a case of, it suddenly vetoes it, and therefore, means that you disregard the other parts of the development plan, I hope that's helpful. I just wanted to ask a point actually,

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:23:04**

if Councillor Lang doesn't mind, to add on to that,

which is asking about waiting then. If it doesn't veto it, due to the fact that obviously this is, what weighting then is given?

**Paul Devaney - 1:23:16**

I think in response to that what I would say is from my opinion it would be a substantial material consideration but what weighting you give to development plan policies is up to you as decision maker. The only danger is if you apply weight to something that's not material, then obviously you could end up in hot water and the decision could be challenged but it's also up to you to what weight you apply to different policies and that's why we don't have a rigid planning system that says this is only a site for a data centre and nothing else can go on that site. You know, the planning's always had that degree of flexibility in the UK system and that has followed through into the, you since it's been the responsibility under Scottish Parliament.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:24:12**

Council Mumford.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:24:15**

Thank you. Apologies, this is going right back to the presentation and it was looking at the scale, form and sizing and I don't know if we could just get that slide up again which showed the previous, the extant permission and the new permission. Thank you, because I looked at it quickly.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:24:57**

Yeah, so existing view from Lockside Court current proposal, as I say, the hatched, the hatched lines are the maximum building heights that the applicant's seeking approval for today. And then the office, the office permission there.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:25:09**

And then I think there was one where there were two images.

The next. The next slide, perfect. So, so yeah, two related questions. One was that the chimneys on that slide that showed that with the hatched line, I don't know if they're chimneys, things that poke up in the air, going above the maximum height, if that's a concern. and also then on the slide with the two images, it looks like what we're moving from is somewhere that had a gap in the middle where that gap is now being filled in. And so yeah, the next slide. So yeah, so this one's what's currently granted.

Is that right?

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:26:04**

Yeah, that's right.

Yeah, so we've got looking straight ahead, we've got quite a big gap there with Sky Come 3 and then the proposed data centre? Yeah, I believe in terms of the kind of specifics of each part of the building, it would be useful for the applicant to clarify.

I believe that the tall structures are like form part of the generator compounds, which are both in the... Yeah, as you can see to this front of the site and also in the middle of the site as well, if I go to the indicative proposed layout.

Yeah, so just in the middle and then to the front. I think in terms of, yeah, the change to have, where there's space at the moment, which would be developed.

I mean, that is the case because at the moment you've got the, and with this extant office permission, and its retention of the open space in the middle of the site,

I suppose the change with the data centres, you would then have open space to the west side of the site, and you'd have the open space that would be, you know, more immediately publicly accessible in terms of its proximity to, I think, Lockside Court. So yeah, so that is a change that would happen with that.

Specific to this visual, we've seen extant permission for arena development in the grass area just to the right -hand side of the footpath.

So, the reality of this specific visual may be different if that permission was to be initiated.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:27:41**

Thank you, My question was really about the other concerns about the loss of that, I suppose, of the open space, because it's not really covered in the report.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:27:50**

Yeah.

Say that again, sorry.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:27:54**

Was that a consideration for officers, that the loss of that sort of more open outlook from that viewpoint?

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:28:00**

Yeah.

Yes, it was a consideration. I mean, balanced by the fact of these are the maximum heights that we're approving today.

We're not approving any minimum heights, so that the whole scale form and siting would also be considered at the detailed stage.

OK, Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:28:22**

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:28:23**

**Cllr Ben Parker - 1:28:25**

Thank you very much. My question is about waste heat. So as much as made in the application about the ability to transfer that waste heat into the district heating network and the LHEs, of course, the LHEs we don't have a delivery plan for, we don't have any funding for.

So it's looking like that's not going to be in place for a significant number of years and not necessarily in this area immediately.

So I suppose my question is, has there been any exploration of the sort of interim plans for dealing with the XSE and particularly thinking about the impact that that will have on the environment and amenity of the area?

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:29:00**

I suppose that would be the details that we would look for with the detailed waste heat power plan. I know they do make mention to waste heat within the submission, just to kind of quote what's said in the submission is repurposed and mechanical piping exported to district heat network operator and that there's provision for district heating network energy plant within the site master plan.

So they do, if I just go briefly to the indicative site layout.

Yeah, so, I mean, again, to flag this is the indicative, but they've got provision for district heating to this north side of the site.

I think, I take that point in terms of the heat networks being prospective and indicative. I think the specifics of that would be best place for the applicant to provide further detail on and would be the sort of detail we'd look for with that further waste heat and power plan.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:30:37**

Councillor Key.

**Lewis McWilliam - 1:30:39**

**Cllr David Key - 1:30:41**

Thanks, Convenor. One of the conditions laid down is that the public park will be fully implemented on site, blah blah blah, prior to the first occupation of the approved data centres.

Now given the shenanigans we heard about two weeks ago down in Crammond with another developer, is there any way you can provide a cast iron assurance that that part will be in place prior to the occupation of the data centres?

Thank you.

**Paul Devaney - 1:31:09**

Thank you, Convener.

I think really what we're seeing with that condition is that we obviously want the park delivered.

We want the park delivered at a point. We don't think it's really reasonable to get the park delivered before any developments are cut. So it's really tying it into occupation of the building so that we're being reasonable. But I think the fundamental difference with the case that was on the 21st of January was that in that case we ended up, we had a condition, I think originally they had 50 % of the housing should be occupied before the parks delivered.

Then that was watered down to 88 % of the housing that we delivered before the park has provided. And then we had it watered down to 100%.

And you'll appreciate that was predecessor committees that made those decisions. And that left us in a very different situation, which was that the rest of the development's been delivered and potentially occupied, but there's no park.

I think, you know, I wouldn't want to prejudge enforcement, but I suppose the difference here is we're dealing with a data centre and not, you know, a situation where we've got a housing development where individuals are then occupying those houses. Maybe it'll be different organisations using the data centre, but I suspect this would be a better condition to enforce and not to leave it to percentages like we did last time.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:32:58**

Councillor McNeese -Mechan.

**Cllr McNeese-Mechan**

Thank you.

My question here was on the amenity impact on the adjoining consented development.

So we've got the arena going in there, which is something that's really been celebrated by our music and entertainment industry and our residents. And then adjacent to that, a hotel. So my question is, I'm assuming these will all be on the same grid.

If there is a power surge on that grid, for public safety reasons, will the arena and hotel, which will have people in them, be prioritised over this potential new development? So have you looked specifically at that power grid impact of having that kind of combination of things all in the same space?

**Paul Devaney - 1:34:02**

Can we, I'm not really certain it's a plan in matter to be honest with you.

And I don't think it's something that we could really have any control over. you know, if there was a power surge, I mean, we have had situations where, you know, parts of the city have went down, you know, in terms of power. But it's not something we've really got control over as planning authority in terms of how power is restored, obviously, individual developments like hotels and the arena when it's built will no doubt also have some form of emergency power supply and also have to have other procedures as to how they protect people under other duties that they've got on their premises. But I don't think it's really something that we could address through planning.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:34:56**

Okay, conscious of time. Is there any further questions from committee?

No. So what I'm proposing is before we move on, obviously, to the consultees, the time I was 11.34. I'm proposing we take an 11 minute break if that's okay with the committee, have

a chance, just have a think and then come back at quarter two. Okay? Thank you.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:35:27**

If I could invite Glen Cave forward.

Welcome, good morning.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:35:41**

Just to indicate that you have five minutes to address committee, followed by questions.

I'll let you know when you've got a minute to go.

Thanks very much.

**Consultees**

Sorry, Glyn Cave, just concerned Edinburgh resident, I guess.

First point I want to make is about the consultation. I mean, I stumbled across this application just because I was looking at something else. I don't know. I have a question around whether the consultation process, for a lot of these things is sufficient and adequate and accessible to people, because it's not easy to search the planning portal, navigate it and put in a comment, now you have to register.

So there's a lot of barriers, I think, in the way, in the consultation process itself. And I was going to ask the council to reflect on that. The other thing I should say is I'm not a Luddite.

I'm not against progress and new technology, but I do have concerns about this data centres in particular and before the council goes headlong into approving these things, going with our eyes open.

A number of reasons for that, some of which have been covered already. The siting was something I was going to bring up And how does that sit with what the proposals are for that area?

There's infringements you talked about, so I won't dwell on that. But I think it's a valid point to think about. Main reasons were to do with power. I suppose the elephant in the room. These are large energy consumers, these data centres. In fact, I was reading just on the data centre review website an article just recently, January 2025, last year, power and planning constraints threaten UK data centre growth. There's growing concern, there was a survey done of over 3,000 data centre professionals. And there's growing concern that the UK could fail to keep up with demand for new data centres amid the AI boom because of the lack of power and the desperately needed planning reform.

Industry leaders warn restricted grid capacity and sustainability challenges could undermine the country's technological aims.

So it comes back to this point about the national strategy for power generation, I guess. It says that fears that failing to address grid constraints and approval delays could compromise the UK's digital aspirations. So that was interesting just to read that on. The other thing to say is the data centres in themselves can produce grid instability in that it's not just a constant power load.

You get spikes because it depends on what people are accessing, what the consumers are accessing, and it can cause instabilities when they grid.

The grid operates to a very tight, narrow margin of Hertz. And if that goes right with this narrow margin, it obviously can lead to outages and problems which has happened in other countries. So that's something to take on board, I think.

So how, you know, and it's pretty vague about what the power consumption will be and it's something I think should be thought about. It's interesting that I think Ireland was brought up earlier.

Yeah, they had five data centres in 2015 and that accounted for about 5 % of the metered electricity.

Just to see you've got a minute to go. Oh, sorry.

There was also water consumption, and we've already touched on that, I think, the amount of water that would be needed.

So, is there sufficient water? What are the implications for power and water

on the local infrastructure? The green data centre itself, how environmentally friendly are these things? There's the footprint, large components, large number of components, rare metals, and all of the components that go into data centres, and the constant upgrade of these, as well as the power and heat.

So, the waste heat that would be used for homes, well, what does that look like? What's the detail on that? How is that going to be delivered? The devil is always in the detail.

The jobs, there doesn't seem a lot of jobs

generated by this facility. And I also note just then the airport requires a bird hazard assessment and plan before anything can be approved.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:41:19**

I'm sorry, Mr Cave, you've actually gone and returned.

I'll give you a chance to conclude.

If you'd like to conclude, that's absolutely fine.

**Consultee**

Well, I just think that I've mentioned the main points. I think the main ones are the utilities in terms of power and water and what effects that will have on the local infrastructure and the ability to cope.

Thank you.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:41:43**

If you wouldn't mind switching your microphone off,

I'm just going to open up to the committee. Would any member of committee like to ask a question of Mr. Cave?

Councillor Key.

**Cllr David Key - 1:42:00**

Thanks.

You mentioned Ireland there.

Do you have any examples of where things have gone wrong in Ireland?

Thanks.

**Consultee**

Well, I do note that they've now put a, well, they're not building any more data centres around the Dublin area because of concerns about, you know, the power usage and how that's going to affect generally consumers. But there's plenty of evidence from America, for example, states in America where...

Thank you.

**Cllr Osler**

If you could just answer the question, that would be great. Thank you very much indeed.

**Consultee**

You asked about Ireland.

Oh, sorry.

Okay.

That's okay?

That's okay.

**Cllr Osler**

I did have one question for you though as well, which was, understandably, you're here today about this particular data centre. Is it just this particular data centre or is it data centres in general that you're opposed to?

**Consultee**

Well, this one, because of where its siting is, but yes, data centres in general, and what constitutes a green data centre, because as far as I understand it, they're just taking electricity off the grid through switchgear and transformers. It always baffles me how that can be, you know, termed green energy, it's just energy from the grid.

So it is coming directly off the grid, by my understanding.

So, yeah, it's data centres in general, I think. I think we have to go in there with our eyes wide open on this topic. It is new and emerging.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:43:31**

Thank you. I've got a question coming from, I think,

Councillor Mowat, you had your hand up, and Councillor Mitchell.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 1:43:40**

Thank you. Thank you for attending today, Mr Cave.

Can I just clarify, you're just representing yourself as an individual and were invited because you had made an objection to get ...

**Consultee**

I made a comment online, yeah. I made an objection online.

**Cllr Mowat**

I have a second question as well.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:43:55**

Let's ask Councillor Mitchell to ask a question and then if nobody else wants to, I'll come back to you.

Councillor Mitchell.

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 1:44:02**

Thank you, I suppose that was actually my question.

Mr Cave, thank you very much for being here. You're here in a personal capacity or the resident's association nearby or anything like that?

**Conusltee**

Well, I put in a personal objection on the portal.

**Cllr Max Mitchell**

It's interesting how there weren't many and that comes back to the whole, you know, publicising it in consultation stage.

Thank you, Mr Cave.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:44:25**

Does anybody else want to ask a question from committee before I go back to Councillor Mowat?

Yes.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 1:44:37**

Just you quoted from a document about,

I didn't take a note of the name of the association. Could you just repeat that and who the organisation is and where that document came from?

Thank you.

**Consultee**

Yeah, I've got the web address here.

It's thedatacenterreview .com, which looks at all things to do with data centres.

I can leave it with you if you want.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:45:07**

Okay, is there any further questions from committee?

No? Thank you very much indeed for your time today.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:45:18**

Thank you. The convener takes you on to the next speaker this morning,

Dave Bissett from Scottish Water, if I can invite you forward.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:45:36**

Good morning. Just to say you have five minutes to address committee. I'm happy to let you know when you've got a minute to go and then there will be an opportunity for questions.

**Consultee**

Thank you, good morning. Glad I came.

Obviously I represent Scottish Water and fed into the process, liaised with Lewis on some of the responses. I think it's important that I reiterate the point that I made during the plan, permission and principle response that I gave. Scottish Water recognises the important role that data centres will play in Scotland's digital future.

We aim to provide assistance in the facilitation of such developments, while giving consideration to the potential environmental impacts that they may contribute to.

In order to service the cooling of data centres, we examine environmentally sustainable methods of water provision. We will look at options to facilitate water cooling demand by providing treated final effluent as a primary measure. Options will be examined depending on the location of the development and other feasibility considerations.

We recommend early engagement with Scottish Water and a submission of our pre - development inquiry to allow this process to begin. Now, I've obviously mentioned they are close to how wastewater treatment works, but obviously this one is not.

So we will look to engage with the developer on this site and we'd advise, or highly advise, to submit a pre -development quiet. And I know that's come up a couple of times this morning and what that actually entails.

But we'd also advise that even an open invitation to the developer to contact us in an informal way to discuss their site as well.

We have colleagues within Scottish Water who have had experience with hydrogen, which is obviously another way of water usage can be quite high as well. So we've got experience in that regard and we would advise that the developer really approaches us in an open manner so we understand what the demand is here.

Now I've had a meeting with a consultant on another site in Scotland. and it was a 50 megawatt plant. And there was concerns there about high water usage, and they were using a closed loop system.

Now in this particular site, we absolutely have no idea what they're using. And technology has moved on since those days in America. It's no longer an open water system. There are liquid cooling. There is air cooling. There is closed systems of water usage as well.

That particular 50 megawatt plant turned out that on average they'd be using an equivalent of 26 homes, which is not a lot on a closed loop system. Now that's just one example. In terms of this site, I have no idea what size this is actually going to be, or what their water demand or cooling technology will be deployed. And the other point that's come up this morning is the impact on the local network and the fear of, you know, low water pressure.

What I will say is through the pre -development inquiry process, we will look at the water demand figures. We will look at the wastewater foul figures and assess the surface water discharge locations.

And we will make an assessment of that, and then we will, from that assessment, may require the developer to undertake a modelling activity on our network to ensure that there's no detriment to the high standards of service that we give to our customers in that area. And that's all I have to say, before my five minutes.

Happy to take questions.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:49:47**

Thank you very much indeed, Mr Bissett, for coming to see us today.

As you probably imagine, as you've been hearing this morning,

I'm sure there's going to be a certain number of questions.

I'm just going to go in first, which is to say,

So, in principle, Scottish Water has no objection to this application?

**Consultee**

Correct. No objection to this application.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:50:04**

Okay. I see Councillor Parker, followed by Councillor Mumford.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 1:50:08**

Thank you very much. That is very helpful.

I suppose just to understand the potential outcomes of that pre -development inquiry, so say, suppose that you get greater information about what this data centre will actually look like and you realise that actually it will put significant pressure on the network, what happens then?

**Consultee**

Thanks.

Good question. I think if the water demand is rather significant, we've got employees who have the technical expertise within Scottish Water to assess that impact and have further discussions with the developer on other potential technologies that they could deploy on that site, rather than just using an open water system.

And in terms of the network, they will model the impact based on those demand figures, and we would expect them to deploy the mitigation required to mitigate against that detriment.

Thank you.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:51:13**

You may have a brief follow -up.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 1:51:15**

And I suppose when you say you would expect them to comply, can you just set out, is that a statutory requirement? What is it that governs that expectation?

Through the pre -development inquiry process and the connexions process, we have technical analysts and my colleagues will assess that and will not get approval to connect until we are satisfied through the standards and specifications set out from the water and the wastewater network side of things that unless that's, we've approved that, won't get connexion to the network. Won't approve that.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:51:47**

Thank you.

Thanks very much for the information.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:51:51**

So I appreciate there's, as you say, there's various different technologies, evaporative cooling, adiabatic cooling for that. But all we're seeing in the, that would all come post this permission principle. But looking at the energy and sustainability statement that we have from the applicant, all it talks about in terms of water consumption is about low flow sanitary wear and using precipitation for flushing toilets, which is obviously what you would see in a domestic setting, trying to reduce our water consumption, but doesn't mention the cooling.

And we know that air cooling is not feasible at the minute. So, it sounds to me what you said, they haven't approached you yet for this early engagement, but what would you be advising and what would your concerns be, had they done that, around the cooling specifically, not about the employee hand wash station.

**Consultee**

Thanks.

Yeah, thank you. I think it's important that we simply need to understand what their water demand is, and that will be determined by what type of technology they deploy to cool the servers.

And also, on the flip side of that, is the trade effluent and the foul flows, because I've noted in the estimated foul flows, they're not insignificant either.

So there's an impact on the wastewater network as well, specially in the foul network. And I know there's a reduction in the surface water, which is good, but certainly there's, so there's, you know, but definitely there's a double impact there, both in the foul and the water side.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:53:29**

Very brief follow up.

Thank you.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 1:53:33**

Just looking at this particular site, which in terms of the foul flows and sewage systems and things, do you have a sense of, I just don't know, are we looking at Victorian sewers, are we looking at modern sewage system in the Edinburgh Park area?

**Consultee**

Thank you.

I'm unable to answer that because I don't exactly know what type of pipes are in that, but I don't think they're Victorian in the Edinburgh Park area. I might be wrong in that, but I don't think they are because it's to the very west of the city.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:54:02**

I have Councillor Key and I have followed by Councillor McNeese-Mechan

**Cllr David Key - 1:54:07**

I don't know if you can answer this, but just for my education really.

There's been talk about closed water loop. From my perspective then, is it once you've filled the water loop up with your water, where will the demand come from in the future? Will there be any demand at all on the water system once it's filled up?

**Consultee**

Thank you.

Yes, over time that water will deplete and will be required to fill up again. and the discharge will feed into, obviously, into our, as a trade effluent, into our network.

So at certain points throughout the year, that will need to be recharged, that sort of tank and that holding system. And that's my understanding of how that system works.

So that actual demand over a year, from the previous discussion I had with another site, for a 50 megawatt plant, that turned out roughly about 26 ,000 units. I'm not saying that's gonna be the same here, but it was for that site, just to give some examples of figures.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:55:02**

Councillor McNeese-Mechan

**Cllr McNeese-Mechan**

Thank you, thank you..

Yeah, my question was really, when you're looking at the potential water usage for this site, are you also looking at the whole quantum of again, the adjoining arena, which will obviously have the impact on the foul system, the adjoining hotel and residents that have been approved. Will you be looking at just this particular structure or the demand in that area?

**Consultee**

Thank you. Really good question, really good point. We do strategic modelling both on the water and the wastewater side in Edinburgh. We've undertaken a water strategic model of the network and we understand. So that looks at the cumulative impact of all

the residential developments that we are aware of in the housing land audit and City Plan 2030.

We are about to undertake a wastewater strategic model based on the latest information that I have from Edinburgh City Council on the HLA and City Plan 2030. So you're right, we do look at this side in the whole and all the cumulative developments in and around that area.

So it's not taken by itself.

It's rather than in the whole.

OK.

Is there any further questions from committee?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 1:56:47**

No?

Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Bissett.

Yes, that's it.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:57:06**

Thank you convener. It takes us on to the applicant. If I could invite forward Paul Scott, Mark Gibson and Stephen Melody.

**Daniel Baigrie - 1:57:40**

Good morning, I'll just let you introduce yourselves in a moment. You've got 15 minutes to present and an opportunity for questions. Do you want me to let you know when you've got two minutes to go? Is that fair?

Excellent.

Thank you.

**Applicant /Agent**

Good morning conveners and councillors.

My name is Paul Scott. I'm a planning consultant representing the applicant and landowner, Shelburne. I'm accompanied today by Stephen Malidi and Mark Gibson of Stantec, a specialist engineering consultancy experienced in data centre development around the UK and globally.

We very much welcome the recommendation of your officers to approve planning commission and principle for the proposed mixed -use development

and thank Lewis for his comprehensive presentation. We appreciate that data centre developments are not before this committee on a regular basis, and whilst essential national developments as defined by the National Planning Framework, they are complex and not necessarily easily understood.

For these reasons, our presentation this morning will focus on some key questions regarding the need for this data centre development in this Edinburgh Park location, which may assist the committee in reaching its decision.

There is much more to the development than the data centre, of course. We will provide further clarity on the very significant waste heat opportunity presented by the proposed development which will plug the gap in the Site Hill and Guile heat network zone as identified by your Sustainable Development colleagues. We will highlight the economic benefits arising from such a significant development and we will outline the opportunity presented of course by the new public park and sports facilities included in the application and which will be delivered at no expense to the public purse before the Centre is operational. So to take you through the data centre frequently asked questions I will hand over to Stephen Malady of Stantec.

Hi thanks for your time today. So we've got a few slides just outlining in more basic terms what these data centres are and what they do. Appreciate from some of the questions that have already been asked today that some of the people in the room and online might be more well versed than others in terms of what's inside these buildings or what their purpose is. So we'll pass through these slides quite quickly. So the first one is what is a data centre and it's fundamentally it is a building filled with computers that store and process information and it keeps critical applications and data running 24 -7. It includes network equipment, storage systems and power and cooling systems which are essential for the reliability of the facility and accommodating the requirements of the service that they house. And when many people talk about the cloud and what's in the cloud, what they're referring to is these buildings and what's housed in these buildings. Why do we need these? So a lot of the historically a lot of the data centres would have been smaller scale and they might not have been as prominent in the public eye and in discussions and that's why we're having these discussions today. Digital life has increased the demand for digital life has increased and therefore the scale demand and requirements for these facilities have increased to accommodate that growth and that appetite. So these facilities are essential for powering apps, you know, email, AI applications. So we're using these in our everyday life from when we get up in the morning, turn on Google Maps to navigate to work, we tap our credit cards to pay for coffees and breakfast, right the way to Uber Eats, calling an Uber and none of this would be possible without these facilities and they create the space to host these and I think everyone's been in a situation where they consider how powerless they'd be without their mobile phone in this current time.

These facilities also enable growth and competitiveness and so they provide platforms for businesses, banking institutions, professional services and AI services as well. A good example of that on a larger scale might be a banking institution that's relying on low latency and storage in their data centres so proximity to these facilities is paramount. Historically you would have found a lot of banking institutions in Edinburgh having on-site data centre storage and that's still prevalent however their requirements are growing the capacity that they need is growing and they're struggling within the buildings that they've had the premises that they have to accommodate this growth. Another example could be local businesses, an engineering consultancy you know that's trying to store information on the server and to host you know models and information that they're using to service their clients. And the lastly is an element that's been touched on quite a lot today which is national critical infrastructure and these facilities are required for national critical infrastructure in terms of cyber security, national sovereignty, AI resilience and robustness in the UK. Who operates these facilities is often a question that people are considering. This obviously varies depending on the scale, the location, but the main categories or buckets that these fall into are hyperscale providers and colocation providers. So hyperscale providers could be AWS, Microsoft, Meta, Google and these types of clients will develop, build and generally operate their own facilities. And then there's colocation providers who you may see in household names like Equinix and Vantage. These companies will develop and operate facilities but they will host other companies within those facilities.

Quite often those key anchor tenants could be a hyperscale client but they are paying those businesses to host their services within their buildings. Obviously, Stephen's touched on what is a data centre. And a question which has come up from a number of the members is what is a green data centre, which is a really interesting and pertinent question. It's something we've been looking at over a number of years, certainly over, during in this process and very quickly refer to the Scottish Government's definition, such as it is, I know there's some limitations on that, so offsite power, minimising water consumption, which is another really important aspect, exporting waste heat and also the use of smart technology, we've seen that, technology within the building, switching off lights, energy management, efficient use of energy on site.

So the members have identified probably one of the most important issues related to data centres, data centre use, data centre planning, location of data centres is power. So the site we have at the proposed site at the west of Edinburgh. We've already secured power for that site, which is a really good thing for the site. We've confirmed that there's gonna be capacity there with the reinforcement, and that, although we understand that it's used a lot of power, that is a given.

What we're looking at is how to use that power efficiently and how to take advantage of Scotland's green energy network.

So there was a question asked, Glenn mentioned about how we purled from the network. That's right, that's true. But how you buy that power is, you can buy that differently in your home or as a commercial business you can buy renewable energy.

So we see that the way to address that would be through a commercial agreement with the eventual end user and the Scottish and the generators, which I think was mentioned a PPE, a power purchase agreement. So that basically guarantees that you're buying green energy primarily from wind in Scotland, onshore wind, offshore winds growing, and you also have a mix of hydro and others in there.

So that investment will allow the generators of offshore, of offsite wind power, that gives them business security and that gives them the confidence to reinvest in more wind power and also in the network overall because I think one of the members mentioned about the constraints on the network as it is and then going forward there is going to have to be a lot of investment in that network. And then locally we understand that we wouldn't be able to generate enough power on site, but PV on site would also be part of the overall scheme. And then, just not covered with going into too much detail, we've done some comparison between the grid south of the border and the grid north of the border and the carbon intensity if you were to build the same data centre, down south is six times more. So that's even without any further measures which we would be encouraging that we would be looking to do, that automatically uses less carbon.

Water, again with a bit of discussion on water, really good points, identifying something that's been discussed a lot. I'm kind of repeating a wee bit what our colleague from the Scottish Water said. What we've proposed in here is a closed loop system. As I've said, once you fill it up, it's full of water. The waste water off of that is really good with maintenance and keeping the inhibitor and the chemical levels within the system right.

So you've got a very small turnover on that. In terms of water overall for the site, we've mentioned the number of people in there. The prime use for the water will be the actual people, which we think we know is a lot less than what the offices would have needed. And it's a lot less than the building that was there would have used. And then in terms of the overall area, Scottish Water, Scottish Water Horizons will model the impact. and I suggest that probably that 8,000 arena and the hotel will have a much bigger impact than our data centre on the area there.

We have engaged with Scottish Water, we have paid for the, we've retrieved all the records. Our view was that the way we are planning this to go forward as a closed loop system, we didn't think it would be, we don't see it being an issue. We mentioned of using water cooled systems, which is an alternative system. We would only do that if there was a local source of recycled water. Scottish Water mentioned that treated sewage effluent. If you had something local to that, then you could look at alternative means. But it is a lot of water. You're talking about millions of litres over the year.

District 18 network. There's obviously been a lot of queries and discussion around the district 18 network. So I'll try and move through the points on this slide and then I'll separately try and address some of the points that were picked up in the questions today. So there's obviously a significant opportunity that's been discussed today in terms of contribution to the district heat network, given the location of the site and the ability to recover waste heat from the site.

**Daniel Baigrie - 2:10:40**

Just to see, you've got just over two minutes.

**Applicant / Agent**

Two minutes, okay, quick.

So the previous report was produced that would estimate we'd serve approximately 3,000 homes to sort of assist with tackling fuel poverty in the area.

It's obviously a reliable source of heat export from the site and there's noticeable developments which were mentioned previously around the arena and West Edinburgh which could benefit from this.

Just touching on some of the points made earlier in terms of the district heat network and timing and the taking off of that heat from the site. Just to be clear we have made an allowance or a provision spatially at this point for export from the site so the requirement for equipment to export heat from the site and the contribution of that. There would be further dialogue, communication and a lot of work required with the district heat network operator at a later date to align all those elements and ensure that they work. But as in terms of our site all we can do at this stage is make provision for that heat export and high rate of heat to be available should that district heat network come online.

Very quickly just touching on my experience with some other sites in the UK, I've been directly involved in district heat network on industrial estates with high concentration of data centres, but there's been an afterthought to look at district heat networks after choosing to locate many of these facilities in a congested area, far from the heat users who might be able to capitalise on some of that heat use. and it becomes increasingly difficult logistically to get the heat from those sites to the users who are quite a distance away.

I think this site represents and reflects some of the district team network successes they've had more recently in London and in mainland Europe and Scandinavia and that generally results in planning of data centres close to the heat users whether they're commercial, residential leisure centres. It doesn't work when you concentrate a high concentration of data centres in one location on an industrial stay far from the heat users.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:12:43**

Your time is actually finished. Is there, would you like to conclude? Do you mind if I just conclude very very quickly

**Applicant / Agent**

.....and then jump to the last slide? Particularly why Edinburgh Park? Obviously the development delivers clearly delivers a mix of uses and as required by place 19 is consistent with city plan policy at the date this data centre complements established storeys and distribution uses it's of a scale consistent with its location and the previously approved development at the site and a confirmed by your planning officers it is supported by development plan policy when read as a whole and we would urge committee to agree and approve planning permission principle thank you

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:13:28**

thank you very much gentlemen I'm going to open up to committee for questions. There's a lot of hands going up. Okay, I'm going to start from the left and work my way through. So, Councillor Key, Mumford, Mowat, Mitchell, Parker, Lang and....

**Cllr David Key - 2:13:47**

You mentioned the potential use of waste heat in the area. Apart from that, What's the benefit to Edinburgh of your application today rather than putting your site in West Lothian near an industrial estate somewhere with cheap land?

**Applicant / Agent**

I mean I'll start but maybe more for Stephen in terms of the fundamental opportunity here actually arises from the fact that this is a brownfield site with a significant emerging development at Edinburgh Park which will benefit from a district heat network which has been an objective of this council for many years. This opportunity can be delivered. It's the best possible opportunity to make that happen in West Edinburgh. If you think of all of those developments that are emerging in this part of the city compared to anywhere else in the city, West Edinburgh is the location that needs the heat generated to ensure that fuel poverty is addressed going forward in this in the city. This is the location for it to happen. This is an area of change. You're talking about five to ten years worth of house building already approved. You've got 60 to 100 ,000 square metres of commercial development. You have a new arena and the opportunity is enormous for heat to be discharged in this location.

The alternative to this is to put it on a greenfield site. There would be no benefit either to Edinburgh as you as a committee have always said or indeed to the heat network opportunity that is created here.

Is there a need for additional?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:15:18**

Is there a need for additional?

**Applicant / Agent**

So, it was mentioned the advantage of utilising the Brownfield site in terms of suitability of the site for a data centre, power availability is obviously a significant plus for the site and the availability of power to facilitate the requirements of the site. In terms of how the grid might benefit from that, it's likely the investment for this level of operator in the grid. You know, the data centre investments come to an area they do invest in the demand for the grid and it allows infrastructure upgrades within the grid. And the contributions that they often make to those elements are significant. and historically a lot of the larger urban region and developments you know have emphasised that the impact of the cost on them in terms of their contributions to the grid so I think it does assist that and and the site is suitable for a data centre you know from a hazard perspective and it represents low -risk hazards under the assessments that were undertaken today and connectivity as well.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:16:29**

Thank you. Councillor Mumford.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:16:35**

Thanks very much, thanks for the presentation. So I'm keen to explore the energy consumption element and point four point two of the sustainability statement which has been noted is quite light on detail but it says also in accordance with CP 2030 power for the site will be procured renewables producers which in Scotland and plentiful. So that doesn't make sense or tell me very much so it doesn't give me great faith in the in the Can you talk a little bit more about the use of renewables? You've talked about the avoided secured power. Talk to me about the generators and particularly the instances where you imagine them being used in banks, being used one at a time as is in the noise impact assessment or when they're being used all together. Thank you.

**Applicant / Agent**

So I can discuss the generators and then I might throw over to Mark for the response in the sustainability report.

In terms of generator usage one of the reasons why the site has been selected is because it sits on a reliable grid. There would be two separate connexions to the site from separate substations. That would be an end user requirement and something that we would have to facilitate. So that obviously provides two robust connexions, a reliable grid and quite a low percentage of downtime I think on the Edinburgh grid, 1 % or

something. so the likelihood of losing those primary power connexions on the site are low. Should those primary power connexions be lost then yes there would be a switch over to backup generators on the site which I think was touched on earlier. In terms of normal operation and testing over an annual period excluding the event of losing that primary power connexion it's a total of approximately about 50 hours of runtime on the backup generators on the site and that's across all the generators and that's for testing purposes so they would generally be ran individually and the periods of time during the day on which those generators can be ran could be established but they would be run individually and separately for testing purposes.

So on the procuring renewable energy, we would have some energy produced on site PV, that would make a small dent in the actual requirement for power.

It would be used in a way, so no use for batteries in front of that.

Scotland has got a glut at the moment of renewable energy and at the moment we're actually paying quite a lot of money to renewable energy producers not to produce energy. That's down to various factors which I think will be addressed over the coming years. How best to store that, looking at pumped hydro, looking at large scale battery storage to kind of smooth out that peaks and troughs on the demand as compared to the distribution.

So I think in 2022 Scotland has been made through renewables 113, 115 percent of annual demand.

So the demand, the capacity is there and the thing that I kind of, I know what Tom has got, all buildings have got peaks and troughs in demand. The data centre will have a large base load and having a large base load that allows, I'm not going to see how they start talking about who SSE or Scottish Power will manage their network, but having a reliable base load there and a reliable marketplace for that renewable energy is a good thing we think and it encourages investment. It can be certified through the schemes that the REGEO certification process where it's registers of green energy certificate for every kilowatt or every megawatt you buy you get a certificate so they can go into your ERG portfolio and that would be a commercial thing between the end user and the generator, which is becoming more and more common.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:20:52**

Thank you.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:21:01**

Thank you.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 2:21:02**

So that said...national data centres are part of national infrastructure,

So these are important and they're securing cloud data.

So I am presuming we want them to be secure.

So it does say in our report that it would be a storage facility with a fence, but we haven't got what's the scale of that fence envisaged to be and will there be permeability through the larger part of the site, which is the data centre, rather than just the public park which is on the side?

**Applicant / Agent**

So the application obviously is a PPP application in principle. The details including the size of the fence will come forward at the next stage. The site must be secure. The permeability through the site from east to west will be provided but will be provided on the south side of the site, not through the site it's simply not possible to provide the permeability through the site what has been provided however compared to the previously consented scheme and indeed the existing development is obviously a highly permeable park with a range of routes through the park around the park and so the western side of the site which is the closest to the existing and emerging communities and that will have full permeability thank you for going out

**Cllr Mowat**

Can I have a follow -up, Convener

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:22:35**

Yes, you may.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 2:22:40**

I appreciate that the full details of the fence will come back, but there's a very different between a fence which is yay high and a big security fence of the sort that's dealing with a prison, or I'm thinking of the chemical factory out on Westfield Road. So, can you give us an indication of what sort of secure fence, because from what I've said, I'm envisaging that this fence is going to be something akin to the one that goes around the chemical factory on Westfield Road or a similar site like that. So is that the right sort of ballpark? Because I think it's important for us to know that at this stage, even though the detail will come back. Can I ask what height that is, the fence that you're referring to? Well, I can't do anything over six foot tall, because everything over that is very, very

**Applicant / Agent**

...to me but it's a very big it's a major mr. Scott one so my backgrounds building services engineers I'm not a landscape designer or a fence specialist in terms of what's required on the external fencing on these sites it can vary based on the end client and what's been stored on the site so if there's for example

government departments within the site they might have more stringent requirements than, let's say, a cloud operator. So that could impact the design requirements for those external fencing. But I don't, and I've seen on different sites fencing that you can see through and fencing that you can't see through, so it does vary. But I mean in terms of are you going to be able to stand and look over the fence, I'd say unlikely. I probably wouldn't be able to look over and I'm probably about six foot one, so.

Thank you.

If that helps, sorry.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:24:32**

Councillor Mitchell.

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 2:24:39**

Convener, thank you and thank you as well for the presentation by the applicant. I was wondering to ask you a general question about the power usage for a data centre, and there was a reference to the reliable base that I suppose, but is it pretty consistent, because there was a reference by one of the deputations earlier about potential surges, and I wonder about those sorts of scenarios, and would I be allowed an Oxford Comet to ask about water?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:25:10**

We'll come back.

**Applicant**

So I think Mark touched on earlier the consistency of the low demand for these facilities.

I know there was reference from Mr. Cave earlier around inconsistencies on demand and causing surge within networks.

Generally, the load demand on these facilities is consistent. How they're fitted out is a gradual ramp up of load on the site. So post -completion of the site construction, the fit -outs go on for years on these sites and gradual ramp up to the rated capacity for the site.

So it's not a day one flick a switch and we're at the maximum load. It happens over a period of time. But that ramp up in terms of capacity on the site is well known, defined and worked through by, poured over by technical teams, operations teams before it's brought online and discussed with the utility providers as well. So, and the servers generally operate in a consistent way in terms of consistent base load. There are new AI demands that are coming into play now that do have some spikes in terms of the

demand on the equipment, However, this is generally dealt with in the data centre infrastructure in terms of UPS backup and electrical infrastructure.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:26:25**

Thank you.

Did you have a brief follow up?

**Cllr Max Mitchell - 2:26:30**

Yes, and are there any known examples in either Britain, Ireland or the US perhaps of where there has been a surge that has then caused issues in the localised network as it were then?

**Applicant / Agent**

Not that I'm aware of, but that's not to say that it hasn't occurred.

Just think there could be an issue with electrical infrastructure to the site that could cause something like that, not necessarily the power requirement for the site, but the design of the electrical systems on the site.

Yeah, thank you very much.

Thank you for the presentation.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:27:06**

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 2:27:08**

So my question is also around the energy and sustainability statement that was submitted. And I think there were a large number of grammatical errors and sentences which simply didn't make sense in it, which doesn't fill me with confidence.

But one thing which also doesn't fill me with confidence is that it seems that in the presentation we've been told that PV systems will be used on the site, but that directly contradicts the sustainability statement on page 17, which says that they won't be considered.

So I suppose the question is, is it the statements that you're making to us today verbally that should form part of our deliberation or what's written and submitted in the statement?

**Applicant / Agent**

The part of the building will have to go through the building warrant process.

As part of the building warrant process, you'll be determined you have to pass an SBEM for the building. and that will largely cover that. The building, the SBM will largely cover the office and accommodation part rather than the process part of the building.

And as part of that, you'll be required to put on some PV. It's not alluded to that much in the sustainability report because the impact on the overall power demand is quite small compared to what you're gonna buy from offsite.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:28:33**

I don't know, is there a follow -up question on that one?

**Cllr Ben Parker - 2:28:35**

I suppose it seems that what you're saying is that we should ignore the statement in the sustainability statement which says that it won't be used because it will be, slightly different context.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:28:49**

Councillor Lang

**Cllr Lang**

Yep, thank you very much, Convenor. So I think at the very end of the applicant's presentation, reference was made to Planning Policy Place 19 and I think I heard right that the applicant was suggesting that the park, the new park, meant that the application did not infringe upon Planning Policy Place 19. And that policy sets out 13 principles against which an application should be judged. I just keen to understand from the applicant which of those 13 principles do they think that the park relates to?

**Applicant / Agent**

So the application when considered as a whole against the development plan is acceptable and that is something that your officers have also agreed with and recommended.

Obviously when you treat each and every part of Place 19, there will be some developments that will be consistent with Place 19 and some developments that will not.

I think as highlighted importantly by the officers, the extant planning permission on the site, which is a very important material consideration, is a mono -use development, not a mixed -use development, a mono -use development across the site, fills the entire site, does not deliver a public park, does not deliver that benefit to the existing and emerging community that this development will deliver.

That development was consented as recently as 2024. It was considered in the context of Place 19. The benefits associated with this development have been deemed to be consistent overall with the requirements of the development plan and that's what the recommendation is which we would support. It is a mixed -use development, unlike either the existing development at the site or the consented development at the site.

**Cllr Lang**

Can I come back on that?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:31:01**

Yes, you may.

**Cllr Lang**

OK, thank you. With respect, that wasn't the question I was asking. I didn't ask about previous planning applications and consents. My question was specifically on the statement that was made in the presentation. I think I'm right at the very end of the presentation. I'm conscious you were rushing at the end because you were running out of time. I think I'm right in saying at the end of the presentation you said that the park, the new park, meant that the application was consistent with Planning Policy Place 19. My question is, if I heard right and tell me if I misheard that but if I didn't mishear that I'm keen to understand which of the principles set out in place policy 19 does the new park relate to?

**Applicant / Agent**

You I'm afraid are incorrect in terms of what you heard and I'll read it again in terms of what I said. The development clearly delivers a mix of uses as required by place 19 and is consistent with city plan policy in this regard. That's what I said in connexion with place 19. I then went on to say that as confirmed by your planning officers it is supported by development plan policy when read as a whole and those are the two phrases which I quoted from and so I'm afraid you are incorrect in your interpretation of that.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:32:23**

Councillor Mcneese-Mechan

**Cllr McNeese-Mechan**

Thank you, convener.

Yeah, my question is that you'd probably be aware that the city has an aspiration to be a feminist city, and one of the things that we look at as a planning committee is public safety for women and girls and other vulnerable users as they're moving through public spaces.

So we've heard that this open area next to the building won't have any natural overlooking, that kind of natural surveillance that you would have if there's homes and businesses and so on. So my question is what discussions have you had as to how that would be a welcoming space that women, young people, et cetera, could use and move through safely, I'm thinking particularly at night, but yeah, if you could just say your thinking around that.

**Applicant / Agent**

Yes, of course, so the, obviously the park and the design of the park is not before committee today, it's the principle of the location of the park that we're seeking permission in principle four. The detailed design of that will of course be undertaken very closely with your park and landscape colleagues. I should just add that there are two sports pitches provided as part of the park as well, referred to as mugges as I believe, which are multi-use games areas. So these are likely to have lighting associated with them, they are likely to have activity throughout the day and well into the evening. They will be located close to the edge of the data centre, the western boundary of the data centre, eastern edge of the park. And I think there is an opportunity to ensure that there are mechanisms put in place through the detailed design of the park to ensure that safety is very much top of the priority list.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:34:31**

Thank you. Before I move on to second questions, I've got one small question that's been sort of bothering me slightly which is the 121 parking spaces and where will they be situated because if the data centre is enclosed are they all within the enclosed area or are then some available for the sports facilities

**Applicant / Agent**

they will all be enclosed within the data centre there will be no parking provided for the sports facilities nor should there be in our in our opinion and the data requirement for the car parking. We have sought to minimise car parking. The operational requirements around data centres and car parking are surprisingly large, the car parking requirements, and the amount the number that we have proposed in this PPP application is linked as closely as possible to the maximum standard that the Edinburgh Design Guidance allows. So if we talked earlier I think somebody mentioned earlier it was 113 maximum we're proposing 121 appreciate that slightly larger if that is an issue that committee is concerned about we could and we would be happy with the condition to limit it to the maximum number in the design guidance but the operator requirements unfortunately just require that level of car parking.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:35:48**

Mr Scott as you open that door why does why do data centres require where you know individuals using for sports facilities does I just I just as an interest as you open that door could you just explain why?

**Applicant / Agent**

It was mentioned previously and that the number of full -time employees that might be on the site from an operations perspective but there's also a number of people that visit the site undertaking tasks such as maintenance where they're going to require tools and vans and trucks in close proximity similar to trades people and there's also people that are going to be constantly swapping systems out, swapping equipment out, upgrading, fitting out data halls with new servers, racks, networking equipment.

All of these individuals will require their service vans to come to site, at least initially, given the tools and the equipment that they're using.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:36:46**

Okay, I'm moving on to second questions now.

Councillor Mumford, Councillor Keey, Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:36:54**

Thank you.

I wonder if we can talk a little bit about the cooling required. So you mentioned closed loop and air cooling. My understanding is that with AI and with this scale of data centre, that is incredibly ambitious to try and do that with air cooling. It can only really be achieved if you're looking at the air temperature outside and therefore changing based on, you know, based on external factors. So could you explain a little bit more about the cooling you're planning for this level of AI and how you're going to make them energy efficient as we know you have to for it to be a green energy centre. Thank you.

So at the moment it's air cooling that's proposed, closed -loop system, waterless cooling. Until the end user is on board and we know exactly what the requirements are within the data holes and themselves, it's difficult to say exactly what type of waterless cooling system will be used.

A lot of the facilities now are targeting flexibility within the facilities. if it's an unknown on whether it'll be high density cooling or cloud cooling. And the difference between that is a rack that has a lower heat output or a higher heat output. Depending on the equipment that's being cooled they can be dealt with in different ways. At the moment we're proposing air cooled chilliers with free cooling loops on them so when external ambient conditions permit those systems will provide free cooling. When the temperature is crease they'll run their compressors and use more energy and not water or electrical energy to provide the cooling. High density cooling generally provides more

opportunity not less because it's higher temperatures and you can run dry coolers often which are again a waterless cooling technology to deal

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:38:44**

with that, if that answers some of your questions.

Councillor Key.

**Cllr David Key - 2:38:51**

That's good, I've heard of cycling gardens and cycling plumbers, I'm not head of cycling IT specialists so I'm surprised there are 290 spaces in the asphalt for bikes.

Anyway, you mentioned earlier that when you move, when you start your, or when you open up your complex, there'll be capacity, but over time that capacity would dwindle and eventually it'll be full.

So where'd you build the next one? Because if you went to West Lothian and built your site there, you'd have loads of space.

All the West Lothian is one big brown food site.

Why not go there instead of Edinburgh?

Where will you put your next site?

Thank you.

**Applicant / Agent**

So.

Just, we need the backup for this site when it overlords. Yeah.

He'd have something else to.

**Cllr David Key - 2:39:31**

Councillor Key, we just allow the individuals to,

thank you.

**Applicant / Agent**

So I think the question is, why wouldn't you choose a larger site that facilitates more expansion rather than this site and then in future site which may be required once we get to that level of required capacity?

It's challenging one to answer about future developments I think generally how a lot of these facilities work and a lot of how these operators work is they will have dark fibre between different sites where they'll replicate the information that's on different sites

and that provides them with their resilience. So they have resilience on one site, they have it on another one, they have the resilience in terms of the systems but if that fails they still have resilience through dark fibre to additional sites. So often these users will require individual sites or additional sites. In terms of why wouldn't we only have large mega campuses as opposed to smaller campuses. I don't know geographically the site that well that which you referred to but often one of the challenges of these mega campuses particularly on Greenbelt is they are isolated from elements like heat users and you know developments for transport accessibility into the sites accommodation on the sites can be challenging and there are benefits of smaller local sites that we've discussed today, that you can't get from those larger campuses where land availability is essentially quite a distance from heat users and other developments. There's also operators that won't take, will only take large sites and will only take smaller sites. So you're, if you only have mega campuses in Scotland then you're pigeonholing yourself into those mega clients only.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:41:17**

Thank you.

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker**

Yeah, thank you.

My question is about e -waste recycling, which is section six of the energy and sustainability statement.

And I'll just, it's two short sentences, so I'll just read them out.

It says, which is the process of extracting valuable materials after deconstructing slash e -waste into smaller pieces which can be reused for new electronic appliances? will be implemented at site by any reputable operator due to the high value or the equipment and the materials recouped and reused.

It's not abundantly clear to me from those statements in the documents that you've submitted what the plans are for e -waste recycling in line with circular economy principles, so I wondered if you could just outline that for us today.

**Applicant / Agent**

Thank you.

Yeah, I think the e -waste policy would end up that's looking down to the end user, really in their kind of ESG policies.

It's a big thing for all companies these days, especially when they were the source of a lot of the materials that are coming from. I think the days of this material which has

been taken and making its way to landfill are over thankfully, especially with reputable operators.

There's a lot of small -scale recycling. There's one place in Glasgow, WEE, and that's their business model, recycling all these things. Obviously in a data centre there would be a lot of confidentiality issues with recycling that, but we'd expect that as part of the ESG policy of the end user that they would implement that in line with the end -run. Could I just add to that Mark, sorry, just to say obviously the full detail of that is required by condition.

So condition 3H waste management and recycling facilities are a matter to be approved at the next stage.

**Cllr Osler**

Brief follow up.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 2:43:34**

I suppose just, but has any consideration been made at this stage of how this will work in this particular context?

Yes, but only in very general terms because of the nature of the application.

It is an application for planning, application in principle.

**Applicant / Agent**

There are only so many areas that we can provide detail on as part of a PPP application.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:43:55**

Thank you.

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 2:43:58**

Yes, you've talked, I'm slightly confused just about the scale of this because we've been implied that it's quite big scale. If you go and look at the Scottish government's documentation on green data centres, they talk about, they've done a lot of work on hyperscale sites. Hyperscale was mentioned earlier in relation to explaining what a data centre is, but then in response to Councillor Key, he was saying that we wouldn't have mega sites, and that's why we wouldn't, poor West Logan, go out to a big site there.

So these sort of brownfield sites on the edge of cities are smaller.

So, could you contextualise this in the scale of data centres? And also, I'm not quite clear whether your proposal is to set up a data centre and then just have other people come in and use it, or whether you actually run and provide these services.

And I know it's a PPP, but I just think trying to understand this from our point of view about what might come forward at the next stage would be helpful.

**Applicant / Agent**

I'll answer the second part, Councillor, if that's OK.

Stephen can answer the first part.

Just to be 100 % clear, our client is the landowner of this site. It's not a data centre operator. There is an agent that's appointed and has been in advanced discussions with a number of data centre operators, some of whom appeared on the slide.

We can't say any more than that at this point in time, but the interest in this site is enormous for all the reasons that we're talking about. But in terms of the scale, I'll maybe just ask Stephen to comment. It's interesting because myself and Mark were having the same discussion over coffee before we came here this morning, the term hyperscale. I think it can be quite misleading using the term hyperscale across all these facilities. It's not specifically designed as a or referred to as a megawatt of capacity range. It's generally a lot of different applications referred to hyperscale so it could be a 10 -12 megawatt facility referred to as a hyperscale facility.

Equally a 500 megawatt facility can be referred to as hyperscale as well in the narrative so it can be quite misleading. In terms of the physical the capacity of the sites and the scale of the sites generally how they're defined as in terms of IT megawatt capacity and you will have seen the recent announcement last week for the AI growth zone in Scotland and I think they were referencing a 500 megawatt IT capacity allowance in that announcement so that gives you an idea of the scale in terms of IT capacity on that proposed site they are talking about AI and I think cloud services on that site but they're very much emphasising AI on the site. AI wouldn't affect the IT capacity of the site. The IT capacity of the site is based on what's available at the site that doesn't change whether it's cloud or high -density curling. So how these sites are referenced in terms of scale is IT capacity of the site so hope that partly answers your question. And in terms of the scale of the sites of what we're seeing all across the UK, it can be anything from, you know, a 12 to 20 megawatt site right the way up to campuses that are talking around one gigawatt in terms of capacity scaled across eight buildings. I think DC Blythe that you might be familiar with is about 11 buildings or something, 10 or 11 building scaled across a gigawatt campus to be deployed over a long period of time. Thank you. Did you

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:47:53**

have a follow up to that Councillor Mowat?

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 2:47:56**

Yeah, how big is it? I mean, if we're now measuring this in IT capacity gigawatts or megawatts, what are we envisaging?

I mean, you've just said eight buildings, one gigawatt, this is two buildings. So I'm somewhere in about, I don't know, I might have to do a percentage there, 12 % of that.

**Applicant / Agent**

My recollection from the space planning exercise was I think it was coming in at a hefty load of about 140 megawatts between the two buildings, so not exactly twice the size of each other, or half the size of each other, and tolls run about 140.

Probably worth adding that the end client could choose to carve that up in different ways. It could be a number of 2.5 megawatt data holes, they could be 10, they could be 5.

That will have to be confirmed once there's an operator on board.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:48:53**

And just to clarify, the parameter plans, you will only be approving two plans as Lewis highlighted. they're referred to as parameter plans and on the parameter plans there is a reference to the 140 megawatt so the entire design and capacity of the site is based on that figure.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:49:10**

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:49:13**

So to clarify then at the end of this conversation the maximum capacity for the site is 140.

**Applicant / Agent**

Correct.

All righty.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:49:25**

So, moving on to second questions.

Councillor Mumford, Councillor Parker.

Thank you.

I think this might be my third.

I think it's third questions actually.

Perfect, thank you.

Looking at the wrong column.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:49:36**

Didn't want to skip the queue.

Thank you.

So, on district heat network potential, which obviously it is at this stage potentially, we've heard really clearly that we don't have, we haven't got an approved delivery strategy yet. I'm looking again at the sustainability statement around the heat networks, and it's talking about that this could be a potential anchor load development for any future heat network zone.

That says it's at least 500 megawatts per hour per year, and you've said it's gonna be 24 hour operation in heat creation.

So we know that things take a long time. before that heat network is in place, if this is operational, what happens to that excess heat being put into the local environment?  
Thanks.

**Applicant / Agent**

In the meantime, obviously, I've attended quite a lot of the LHEs and Edinburgh, Scottish, Scotland -wide district heating development forums, and I think the target is to treble, quadruple the amount of the amount of heat generated by district heating by 2030. I will achieve that target, it's another question, but it's quite a long development phase and we're still going through the development of the LG's standard.

The data centre would also take a number of years to develop and hopefully in that time, an operator and an agreement with Edinburgh Council would be in place that that's going to come in the future.

In the meantime, we've looked at the plan so that if there's no demand from the district heating, the chillers deal with the heat, and if there is demand, the heat goes to the district heat network. So the facility could work without the district heating network, but the plan is in place to switch over to connecting to the industry network once it's ready.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:51:51**

Sorry, can I just...

Could I just ask, because obviously there's a brief, I'm just trying to tighten this up a bit. So can we just try to keep our responses and our questions shorter, because I'm now where it's one o'clock and we've still got questions.

Thank you.

If you have a brief follow up to that.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:52:01**

Thank you. So on that scenario, you've said where it's used by chillers and it's closed loop. Is that taking into account in the emissions and energy use figures or is that on the basis that it will be connected to a district heat network? Thank you.

**Applicant / Agent**

I think the figures in the report are almost a benchmark in the worst case. If you look at the table which is given an overall CO2 emissions, the figure that we've based it on was the UK grid carbon intensity at the time. I think at the time we were looking at the figures for Scotland were a bit...So we published what we received.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:52:35**

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:52:37**

In relation to Councillor Mumford's question, is it that it has been connected or it hasn't been connected, I think is actually what her question is.

**Applicant / Agent**

No, that isn't, the figures, the best, the consumption of power figures doesn't take into account the knock-on effect of decarbonising a bunch of houses, a bunch of homes and business around the world.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:52:59**

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 2:53:03**

Councillor Mumford covered both of my questions.

Okay, is there any further questions from committee?

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:53:09**

Okay, is there any further questions from committee?

No. Thank you very much indeed gentlemen.

Now committee, I'm aware that it is now 5 past 1.

We've obviously got clarification to officers, discussion and then decision.

Do we want to break? Because I'm conscious of the fact that that would actually be lunch.

or are people, are members happy to continue and do questions and clarification to officers, discussion and decision and then finish?

It's not really possible to have a short five minutes, we'd have to have a minimum of at least

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:53:43**

10 minutes. But that then does stray into lunchtime, which is why I'm pointing it out.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:53:56**

Can we do a 10 minutes then, like people need a toilet break, but I'd be happy to continue,

But if there's reasons not to them if committee is happy with ten minutes, that's absolutely fine

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:54:02**

The time now is four minutes past. I suggest we come back at quarter past. Okay

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:54:17**

Being on to next stages I'm going to open up to

Clarification to officers. So is there anything that anybody would like to clarify with officers?

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 2:54:32**

Thank you.

It's just about the sustainability statement which was submitted.

And I think what came out in the discussion just now with the developers is that there was some errors in there in terms of what is actually being put forward and what is not being put forward. And I think I've also had some concerns about it in general terms in terms of the sort of general grammatical mistakes and such like throughout.

So I suppose my question is, in planning terms, if I am struggling to have confidence in that document, could officers advise how that should be considered as part of our deliberations?

**Paul Devaney - 2:55:14**

Convener, I think it's part of the support and suite of documents that you would need to consider, but you would then have to look at that and see whether that demonstrates

compliance with the wider policies and the development plan and particularly those on sustainability. That's something you would then have to make a plan in judgement on.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:55:38**

Okay I've got Councillor Lang, Mumford and then Mowat.

**Cllr Lang**

Yeah thank you very much convener. So in answer to the questions I asked the developer clearly believes that the application is consistent with Planning Policy Place 19. And I just wanted just to clarify, convenor, from officers that is it the position of officers that the application doesn't fully comply with Planning Policy Place 19, but it's the fact that that policy needs to be balanced against other planning policies and in particular.

**Paul Devaney - 2:56:25**

The fact that it's a national development. Can we know that? I think that position set in the report, that would be correct. We consider it as an infringement but the other thing I think we would identify as a material consideration is the fact that there's an extant plan permission where there was equally an infringement because that office permission did not include the likes of residential but we consider it as an infringement rather than a complete failure of policy.

**Cllr Osler**

Councilman Mumford.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 2:56:49**

Thank you.

I'm keen to understand a little bit more about the climate change implications of this.

So we heard that we've got sort of worst case figures, but even if that's the case, we're still seeing from the applicant's documents that their equivalent, annual CO2 equivalent emissions equivalent to 3.2 are of the council's current emissions. I don't understand why the climate crisis isn't listed as a material consideration here, given that we look at the housing emergency when we're looking at developments, for example. This seems to me to be a huge area that is under -explored. Thank you.

**Lewis McWilliam - 2:57:32**

I think, yeah, I mean, I think the climate change aspects, a key consideration of the NPF4 policies and LDP and if I just go to the report. Yeah, so I mean one of the headings is climate change mitigation and adaptation.

So and then follows on sustainability waste heat. So, I mean, that's where the climate change aspects have been considered in relation to the policies.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 2:58:19**

Councillor Mowat

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 2:58:21**

Yeah, if I can just go back to place 19. Looking at the plan on page 79 of our papers, which you did put as part of your submission, Now, the area that is being taken out, is being utilised, we have in front of us, before us, was quite a central area in the site and removes the new open space and new green space provision and the building. And I just wondered, you've obviously said you've considered that this is an infringement of Place 19, but is that because you're content that the green space, which is I think significantly smaller than the green space that will be, that has been allotted in it, or it's certainly, I think it's smaller by about a quarter actually, are you comfortable with the removal of, the change of location of that space? Is that why it's only an infringement rather than a breach, given that this is a mono use with a new green space? Because there's nothing mixed use about the data centre.

**Lewis McWilliam - 2:59:40**

Yeah, I think broadly that that does form, that forms part of the consideration of it being an infringement. You're replacing an existing green space with a larger, more accessible green space in terms of its proximity to the roadside as opposed to within the centre of the site.

So yeah broadly that does form part of the consideration of it being an infringement.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:00:12**

Councillor McNeese-Mechan.

**Cllr McNeese-Mechan**

Thank you, Convener. My question was my understanding is that it is the remit of this committee to determine whether this is a green specifically. So we keep hearing this defined as a green data centre, but it is within this committee's purview to decide whether we think what we've been presented with is green in that sense.

Is that correct?

**Paul Devaney - 3:00:51**

I think it's within this committee's gift, but I think having looked at all the information that's been submitted and put in front of us and looking at the definitions or the lack

of definitions, we're kind of struggling to see how we can say that it's not a green, without something that was very specific.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:01:13**

Okay, I know Councillor Lange wants to ask a second question. I'm just checking who has....a... Councillor Key, you haven't asked a question yet. Clarification. Not question, clarification.

**Cllr David Key - 3:01:26**

It's a sort of clarifying question, really. One of the benefits of this scheme that has given to us is the district heating element. If this application was to be passed by us, that are approved by us today, at the planning stage later on, if there was no district heating aspect to the new application, would it be an issue for us to not grant the application at that stage, having granted it at this stage, if that makes any sense to you at all?

Thank you.

**Paul Devaney - 3:02:03**

Thank you, I think what you're really looking at is the principle of a green data centre today and obviously the very limited matters which have been submitted in with that in terms of the scale and height, et cetera, and the parameter plans.

I think the difficulty that's probably been raised at that planning committee as well is that the difficulty is we don't have a district heating network in this location. It wouldn't be reasonable to ask the applicant to instal a district heat network. And I think if you go back to, is it policy INF 16 in your development plan, it talks about when we've got development proposals that are within or adjacent to such an area, a local heat energy efficiency strategy, will only be supported whether designed and constructed to allow for the cost -effective connexion to a future heat network at a later date.

And I think, Lewis, you might want to come in on the condition on that.

But ultimately, if no heat network gets developed, we had the same situation across winds,

**Lewis McWilliam - 3:03:12**

where with a plan of permission and principle, they would see what they could try and do but they didn't have anything in front of them.

Which is maybe a bit different from some of the other things that the council has been involved in.

**Paul Devaney - 3:03:23**

Where they put a heat network in for a couple of multi -storey blocks in Craigmillar.

**Lewis McWilliam - 3:03:33**

Yeah, so just to clarify it's you know condition nine that relates to the heat and power plan coming forward prior to the commencement of development. A heat and power plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. The plan shall include details of how recovered energy from the development will be used to produce electricity and heat. Yeah, and as kind of outlined before there be the separate requirements for any actual physical connection.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:04:11**

Before I move on to secondary points of clarification, is anybody who hasn't asked a question of clarification so far wishing to ask one. Now moving on Councillor Lang followed by Councillor Mumford.

**Cllr Lang**

Thank you, Convener. So Paul I just wanted to get some clarification just in response to the answer you gave me before because I I send some caution from you on place 19 on the basis of the previous the exit planning permission that's been provided. On page 9 of the case officer's report, it says it's acknowledged that the Ex -Im planning permission aligned more closely with place 19 principles in terms of its office use and grid layout.

So just, can you explain to me why what was agreed did align more closely than this application?

**Paul Devaney - 3:05:16**

I think, conveyor, I think the first issue was that it was creating an office. There was an office previously on the site. There was an office being proposed. There were, and I think when Edinburgh Park was developed, it was kind of the concept at the time was pavilion blocks chucked in the middle of sites with landscaping and fencing around them.

And the scheme that had been approved was kind of providing more perimeter block.

There were some other uses in there from memory, including cafe, restaurant,

I could pull the thing, the application up. So we felt that that probably more closely aligned, But to be clear, when this was previously put in front of committee, we were clear that we felt that that was also an infringement of Place 19.

And I think coming back to the point about caution, as I think there has to be a degree of caution, obviously you have to look at each application on its merits, but there has to be a degree of caution from the point of view that we have accepted a development that for example did not include a residential component previously in that permission very recently under the same development plan by this committee, by this administration

and I think the other point being is that that permission, although it has not been implemented to my knowledge, is still capable in its lives.

So we think that's a significant material consideration. But obviously how you weigh up the material considerations is ultimately with the gift of the committee.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:06:54**

Councillor Mumford, Thank you.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 3:06:56**

just a clarification with the with the moving of the open space from the middle Mine's also on Place 19 and of the site to the edge does that have any impact on the existing green space corridor the Lochins which is in Place 19 I just don't know the area. Thanks.

**Paul Devaney - 3:07:14**

No.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:07:19**

Do we have any further points of clarification for officers?

No?

Okay.

Moving on to discussion.

Who would like to begin?

Councillor Mumford.

**Cllr Alys Mumford - 3:07:32**

Thank you.

I have a lot of thoughts, I had a lot of questions and it's been really useful thanks to everyone, and particularly Louis for giving us the presentation and talking through it.

For me, a lot of this rests on the fact that we've heard really clear today that one of our jobs is to determine whether this data centre is, in fact, green.

That's relevant because it's only green data centres that are considered to be of major scale and therefore of national importance. And we're told in the report of handling that the fact that it's national infrastructure is the reason why, on balance, it's been recommended, even though it doesn't comply with several of our policy areas.

So we know we don't have a discussion of this, a definition of this.

We have been told there's a number of things that we as a local authority should consider in determining this.

It's really tricky. This is planning permission in principle, and lots of them will be discussed in more detail at AMC stage.

But when looking at the planning permission in principle, I think we can't consider this to be a green data centre, given that at least three of the four categories are unmet in my view.

So looking at power from renewable energy sources, we've been told there's something in place, that's great, but we have not been given, here's the capacity, we haven't got the figures of this, we don't know, we haven't been able to hear from the power providers, we have to make use of efficient technologies, that's the second one, any new development has to do this, that's fine, but we haven't had that much reassurance around the air cooling system.

Seeks to minimise water consumption, we know that hasn't been pre-engaged with Scottish Water and no real detail about cooling, I think if this was a serious plan that this was gonna be sustainably done on a water basis, this would have been at the forefront of discussions. There are examples of data centres doing this well, and it's been there at the forefront of those conversations, so it really worries me that we haven't heard about that yet. And reuse heat, I think, is the really key one for me. We were told by the applicants that this was one of the main advantages for the council, this is the sort of selling point of it.

We're nowhere near being able to realise this currently. We already have a policy expectation that this should happen for major developments in general, and officers have very clearly told us that Edinburgh hasn't yet decided on our approved district heat delivery method.

A report we received as planning committee says we don't have an agreed delivery method for taking forward heat networks in Edinburgh.

It's limited to the degree in which we can engage with the opportunity provided by data centres currently.

So I think we have to discount that at the moment.

So if this isn't a green data centre, which I believe it isn't, there are major issues with this proposal, which can't be balanced out by that national consideration.

It doesn't comply with Place Principle 19. It removes over a quarter of the trees on site.

There's no permeability. We've heard about parking and cycling policies. It uses far more energy than the extant planning permission.

The scale is unacceptably large and dominant on the skyline for me compared to the extant planning permission. We haven't even got into things around increase in traffic, the giant hogweed on site, various things, because I think we've accepted its national importance.

I don't believe it is. I don't believe this is a green data centre. and therefore, for me, those issues with the proposal, even at this early stage, can't be overridden by that balance.

So I'm really keen to see us reject this. Obviously, we won't go through all the reasons now, but my final question there about climate change

I think is also incredibly key for this. We know MPF4, we know the local development plan, you know, have this really as prime policy here.

I don't believe we can be complying with our policies if we agree to this.

Thanks.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:10:57**

Thank you.

Actually, Councillor Mumford said some of the things that I wanted to say.

I don't see the evidence that this is green.

What I've seen more is it could be made green in future as long as somebody else puts in this, that or the other.

So I don't think, therefore, it meets that criteria of being national infrastructure.

And I know that the arguments been made that the merits outweigh the infringements of policy, but it seems clear to me that if it's not delivering homes, significant employment, good quality green space, more space for a 20 minute neighbourhood kind of approach, I I really don't think that the negatives can be said to outweigh the infringements of policy, particularly in Place 19, NPA4.

I cannot see that argument.

Councillor Mowat

**Cllr Joanna Mowat - 3:12:08**

Yeah, I mean, this has been a, well, obviously we've spent hours on one application, but it's actually been a particularly interesting application.

It has yet again demonstrated the deficiencies of that lot down the road trying to write planning policy.

And frankly, I think we should have a committee construction that we will invite the next lot after the elections in May to come up and witness what we absolutely have to do so they can understand that. Because if you look at NPF4, if you look at the guidance that supposedly backs up what is a green data centre.

Well, who the hell knows? But I certainly do not have enough information to say whether this is or isn't.

What we have in front of us today is a speculative development for planning permission in principle.

And it is in principle, so a lot of matters could be conditioned at the next stage in the matters approved and conditions coming forward.

So, looking at this in principle, what we would lose is 5.74 hectares of a significant site in the middle of Edinburgh Park, which we have gone back, changed the original use of Edinburgh Park in our local development plan to say we want mixed-use development.

Now the previous application which we're saying well we've got a monolithic use there, well it's not monolithic use because it's six office blocks, it's got permeability, it's got a civic space and sports facilities, open access sports facilities in the middle.

This is not equivalent. This is most of the space will be behind what is going to be quite a large fence. And actually, as someone who use it, as all of us who use data and use the cloud, we want that fence to be quite big. Because the fence needs to be big, because we want the stuff behind the fence to be secure.

Because that's really important, whether it's storing government records, NHS records, or even your Amazon shopping habits.

We need that to be secure.

So what I see here is some big buildings behind a large fence right in the middle of Place 19. And for me, that is the biggest bugbear.

I think we can condition if we ever work out what a green data centre is, we could probably condition that.

But we don't know because what we have is someone saying, we've got this big site, you could put a green data centre here.

But these are all the conditions.

We don't know how that's going to fall out.

We don't know how that's going to.

But for me, it's the loss of this site right in the middle of what we're trying to make

is a bigger, more coherent mixed -use area that I am really concerned about.

So I don't think that the breach, and I think it is a breach rather than an infringement of place 19, to be perfectly honest, I don't think for me that has been demonstrated as being acceptable for this use.

And I want to park a lot of the issues that other colleagues have had and other people outside have had because I think a lot of them we can't deal with them in planning. And I think there's a great insufficiency and guidance to give us that support as a committee. But if you're sitting there with a planning permission and principle and a plan, you've got to see where this is, what this is going to block and what is going to happen to that wider Place 19, which is meant to be an integrated site.

I mean, yes, having a great data centre next to the homes for your off -heat use is good, but there is a wider question.

And when you look at the national planning of where the government thinks data centres should go, especially large -scale ones, they're all round the coast where the water is.

They're not in built -up urban areas. So I think we've got a real job on our hands here today. But I'm saying I don't think Place 19 has been satisfied and I don't think I can support this today.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:16:00**

Councillor Lang.

**Cllr Lang**

Yeah, thank you, Convener I'm in a very similar space to Councillor Mowat.

I agree and actually share all of the concerns which Councillor Mumford set out around, is this really a green data centre?

I think there are lots of outstanding questions around energy consumption, water usage. I think the thing that I am wrestling with, and really have wrestled with since we started talking about this, has been, is, are those issues sound issues upon which you can reject an application at a PPP stage given the fact that we we don't have objections from Scottish Water or the utilities. We have had advice that these are things that we can look at in more detail when it comes to the detailed planning application. So

I'm not, I'm certainly not dismissive of those issues at all, I'm just not sure if those are sound reasons on which to reject a PPP application. Where, like Councillor Mowat, I feel I am in a place of being able to say no to this application is because of planning policy in place 19 and you know we are relatively fresh into City Plan 2030. We have through that process set a very clear vision for how we want Edinburgh Park and South Gail to

develop. I quote directly from City Plan when it says the vision is to change the character of the Edinburgh Park area over time from a business dominated environment with limited evening and weekend activity to a thriving, mixed use and well integrated part of the city.

And I think, yes, we have had previous applications which have been approved, which arguably infringe upon it. But we've also heard about how those did align much more closely

with the principles set out in Place 19. I actually worry that this application, if approved, drives a coach in horses through Place 19. I think it's totally at odds with that vision that was agreed for how this important part of Edinburgh should change and develop over time. Office space is one thing, people come, people are there, they are part of a change community and a very significant part of this site is simply going to be used for storage with actually quite limited employment on site.

So I personally think it's more than an infringement. I think it is a breach of place 19. And on that basis, I feel quite confident and comfortable in rejecting the application.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:19:00**

Councillor Parker.

**Cllr Ben Parker - 3:19:03**

Yeah, thank you very much.

So I should say I'm in a similar place.

I think I have significant concerns about the sustainability of this development.

And I think that the points that Councillor Mowat makes around actually potentially we could look to alleviate some of those concerns at a later stage in the process,

I think probably are accurate in the sense that we could put conditions on this. But I suppose when I look at the sustainability statement which has been submitted alongside the application, it contains so many errors and so many glaring emissions conditions for me, that it undermines my confidence and the ability of the applicant to actually satisfy those conditions at a later date.

So I suppose it's about saying that I put limited weight, I suppose, on that fact. I think the other thing, Councillor Mumford mentioned it, but I think it's really important that it comes out very clearly in our deliberations, which is that the proposal that is in front of us is to look at a development which would emit 200,000 tonnes of CO2 equivalent each year, which is more than three times the total emissions of the entire Council's operations.

That is not insignificant when it comes to our considerations in relation to NPF4 Policy 1, which says that all development has to have due regard for the climate emergencies.

So I think those are really important considerations, but I think what Councillor Lange has just said and what Council Mowat has set out in terms of Place 19, I would agree that this certainly is a breach. I don't think this is an infringement. I think Councillor Lang just said this rides coach and horses through the development of the wider site that we're looking at, and I would agree with that.

So I suppose I'm in a similar space in that I would like to move that we do reject this on the grounds of Place 19, but I think we do need to put a line in the sand with this as well and have reference in any of our reasons for refusal to the global climate and nature emergencies, because I think it's a really relevant consideration still.

Thanks.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:21:02**

OK, so anybody else that wishes to say anything?

No?

OK, then, to finish off.

Yeah, we spent a long time discussing that.

I think that's been really, really important.

I think this is a classic example of chicken and egg, where we are trying to achieve certain things. We haven't got the infrastructure, and which comes first, and so on, and so on, and so on.

We discussed at length last week at planning committee about what is a green day and how do you define something and so on. The difficulty was having a planning. Planning is a very, very blunt tool. And a lot of this needs to be quite agile. So it doesn't conform and it doesn't mix terribly well together. So we are then having to look at what policies we have and what we are trying to achieve. And I think what clearly comes out of this, what we're trying to achieve for this area when it was first developed, when it was first thought of this was going to be offices is we wanted to then change that idea towards it to make it more of a mixed development area.

So, in terms of planning, we have to think about what is it that we've agreed in particular places versus what is an application that's put in front of us. And I would agree that this idea that there's an infringement on place 19, due to the fact that we had agreed something previously, when is an infringement an infringement, and when is an infringement gone so far it becomes a breach.

I think we've tiptoed over and fallen off the edge of that, because we've kind of moved it further on, and a bit like the boiling of the frog scenario, it's sort of, you know, if we keep going and we keep unpicking, then we're actually not actually within, for those individuals within that area, we're not providing them with the environment that we first envisioned.

So I would agree that we have a breach rather than infringement of policy, despite what was previously agreed, because there were considerations given to the previous application that are not present within this one, despite the small part with the mongers on the side of it.

There's another couple of things. I do agree that we do have a bit of an issue with NPF 1 and 2 here because this is the difficult with the PPP

versus ...

Because the issue that we have later on is, as we've had when we've had other applications come back to us, and we're looking at discharging conditions.

When things are picked apart on an individual basis, it's then what happens to the entirety of what we're trying to sort of...

And I think in this, there's too many questions.

Yes, some of this is not to do with us, some of this to do with Scottish Water and to do with Scottish Power, and they will deal with their own parts of it. But bits of it are to do with us, and there is an issue about what is being proposed, the size, the impact that it will have in this present state that we are in when we don't have a district heat network set up for this particular area and we don't know what's going to happen.

That is not the fault of the applicants because that is something we need to go away and have a think about, but we do need to take that into consideration.

So, in summation then, I'm going to be proposing when we go formal the fact that we do reject this application on place 19 and NPF 1 and 2.

So, I will now move formal.

I will not be moving the officer's recommendations.

So if there is somebody here who wishes to move the officers' recommendations, then please feel free to raise your hand.

**Paul Devaney - 3:24:41**

Sorry, Convener. So I think from your deliberations there's three potential reasons for refusal.

I think the first reason is it's considered that the proposal is contrary to Policy 1

of NPF 4, that it's not been demonstrated how proposals will adequately address the climate emergency.

I think the second reason for refusal is that it's contrary to NPF 4 Policy 2, as proposals do not demonstrate how life cycle greenhouse gas emissions can be minimised. I think the third reason relates to the proposals being contrary to LDP City Plan Place 19 policy. The EP1 criteria as of proposals do not incorporate a mix of business and residential uses.

And I think the other subsection in there which says it does not extend the existing grid layout to ensure a cohesive townscape or deliver sustainable movement through the site. And I think what you're saying is you do not consider the proposal as a green data centre, as defined in the NPF 4 document and those considerations are not outweighed.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:26:06**

Is committee content with that?

Is there any counter proposal to that?

No?

**Daniel Baigrie - 3:26:18**

Thank you, convener.

Just to confirm, there are no other proposals, so the application is refused on the grounds;

Three grounds, as it's contrary to NPF policy one in relation to the climate emergency, contrary to MPF 4 Policy 2, how the life cycle of greenhouse gasses can be maintained and in relation to LDP City Plan Place Policy 9.

Thank you very much indeed committee. I believe that is the end of business for today. Thank you very much indeed.

**Cllr Hal Osler - 3:26:43**

Thank you.