

A GUIDE TO A NEW 21ST CENTURY STUDIO AT MARLOW

May 2022



PROPOSED MASTERPLAN



1 Entry square and mobility hub including public bus interchange with services to Maidenhead/Elizabeth Line and High Wycombe, as well as Marlow and Bourne End

2 Workshops and offices, with a saw tooth roofline to break up the built form in long views from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the north and Winter Hill to the south

3 Multi-storey carparks, for about 1,000 vehicles, including 20% with charging points and all with passive provision

4 Soundstages, with rooftop photovoltaic arrays angled south west

to avoid glare in views from Winter Hill, generating enough energy in a year for the base heating and lighting of the campus, and green living roofs to help with biodiversity, visual impact and water run off

5 Studio Hub – a facility for film makers and cultural events – located on the public right of way

6 Community building – similar to a village hall.

7 Unit base – central to a cluster of sound stages and workshops

8 Public art opportunity

9 Culture and Skills Academy, providing a permanent base for traineeships and other skills development opportunities as well as public and community uses

10 An area of 9 acres for quiet recreation with a network of footpaths linking to the public right of way which is retained and improved

11 New bridge to give access to the southern backlot

12 An area of 5 acres for outdoor filming ('backlot') with the surrounding 15 acres managed exclusively for wildlife

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NOBODY DOES IT BETTER

This document sets out the fundamental requirements to be considered when programming a UK production facility for the 21st century, optimised for not just efficiency and scale, but also so that crew and needs of filmmaking comes first. It explains:


- Why there is growing international demand for UK film and television;
- Why Marlow is uniquely placed to deliver on this opportunity; and
- How planning for sustainability benefits both filmmakers, and the public good.

The success of the film and TV sector is recognised as being a singular UK success story. As a nation we make a significant contribution to global culture and entertainment. UK expertise has grown to dominate the global industry. In 2015, we overtook California as the world's film capital, thanks in part to a long history of hits like the James Bond films, the Star Wars movies, and recent high end television sensations like The Crown.

Delivering well-placed facilities to power the industry's growth is part of a national strategy supported by central and local Government. This UK sector is of global importance, but is still operating largely in a transient way without much long-term planning or indeed thought about needs from first principles.

Essential to the future prospects of this sector is the wellbeing of and care for the individuals who come together to put 'magic' on to the world's screens. As the industry responds to the growth in demand, additional stresses are being placed on this crew base, made up of exceptionally talented individuals who operate largely on freelance contracts.

The great majority of this workforce lives in a broad westerly arc extending around 30 miles from London. Crew are required to travel to various locations for each day's work, so the UK's most important facilities and technical trades are co-located with the crew base in a tight footprint. 79% of the UK's film and television turnover is in this 'West London Cluster'



“The UK is home to some of the best creative talent in the world, and our TV and film industry is a jewel in our crown, driving hundreds of thousands of jobs and billions for the economy.”

- Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of the Exchequer Dec 2021.

Only ⅓ of stage space used for filming is purpose built, so most production now takes place in repurposed or temporary accommodation. This transience takes its toll on the well-being of the crew, and also on the environment, through a needlessly ad-hoc and wasteful operating model.

Many conversions and temporary facilities being used are too small for current industry needs, providing space for only one project at a time.

Any single project has periods of intensity and more fallow phases. Pre-production is a completely variable process, but often requires a longer use of space, so smaller facilities ‘go dark’ before and after the peak of filming. This inefficiency means they cannot support the amenities associated with most workplaces. Simple ancillary facilities such as cafes or work based creches become unviable. Permanent training facilities and provision of access by public transport integrated into the facilities becomes unachievable.

Increasingly, filmmaking sites are becoming dispersed, meaning crew have to travel well over an hour each way to get to the production base. This has a negative impact on work life balance, a particular issue given the freelance nature of employment in the industry. Crew working adhoc from a variety of transient facilities are not sensibly able to relocate near to their place of work.

Marlow Film Studios has been designed to overcome these issues from first principles. It will provide an unparalleled quality of working space for filmmakers, optimised for smooth operational flow and volume. As a consequence, significant public benefits to the local area will also be delivered.

SPACE FOR BRITISH FILM & TELEVISION

INTERNATIONAL DEMAND FOR BRITISH FILM AND TELEVISION IS GROWING

There are three essential reasons why demand for new studio space is not met: more people across the world are gaining access to high speed broadband, and so accessing on-demand subscription services; productions themselves are larger, needing more specialist space; and the UK industry has the talent with a unique track-record in producing content that provides a rich experience, keeping viewers engaged for many hours and coming back for more.

On their own, each of these three reasons account for significant fresh demand. Together they present an unusual moment of step change for the production of British film and television content.

RISING GLOBAL REACH

In recent years, about half of the world has connected to broadband internet for the first time. 1.25bn households are now physically connected. Quality entertainment is the 'killer app' for this new bandwidth. Streaming subscriptions are expected to reach 1.6 billion before 2025.

Increased commissioning by the biggest media companies, such as Disney, Netflix and Amazon fuels this trend. In 2020 Global spend on film and TV production and licensing, increased 16.4% to \$220 billion, reaching around \$250 billion in 2021. (source: Purely Streamonomics).

Giant businesses have started to appear to deliver streamed content, and they are thriving on fresh bandwidth. These new platforms have created large audiences in a short time. 2020 alone saw the arrival of four new subscription-video-on-demand (SVOD) platforms: Apple TV, HBO Max, Peacock, and Disney+ which continue rolling out around the globe.

Subscriptions to 'subscription-video-on-demand' services

Platform	Paid Subscribers (June 2021)
Netflix	208 million
Prime Video	200 million
Tencent Video	123 million
Disney+	103.6 million
iQiyi	101.7 million
Youku	90 million
HBO Max	63.9 million
Apple TV	40 million
Hulu	37.8 million
Eros Now	36.2 million

Source: Visual Capitalist, 2021. Trends in Film and TV

Disney+ now has 129 million subscribers. Their latest projections are for 100m more being added by 2024, showing four years of extraordinary growth.

Together these services are leading to a considerable increase in the hours of on-demand content consumed. UK content leads the way, and commissions continue to rise. The prospective impact of the second half of global households accessing broadband is yet to be factored in. The UK has a long track record of making projects that reach all parts of the globe.

Number of high-end television programmes produced in the UK

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Domestic	58	74	68	50	94
Inward investment and co-productions	57	80	94	66	117
Total	115	154	162	116	211

Source: BFI (Pandemic part year in dark grey)

“British programming has long had a brilliant reputation overseas...The contribution of the creative industries to the UK economy increased significantly in the last decade – nearly 50% between 2010 and 2019. The number of the people they employ has grown by more than a third since 2011. We want to see these trends continue, and our internationally renowned broadcasting sector – which forms a key pillar of the creative economy – go from strength to strength.”

April 2022 Government White Paper “Vision for the Broadcasting Sector”

Global market share of films made in the UK

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
UK share of worldwide Box Office (%)	24.6	17.3	20.6	22.8	24.6	9.2

Source: BFI, Comscore, Omdia (Pandemic part year in dark grey.)

This share of worldwide Box Office (tickets sold at cinemas) shows the outsize British contribution to cinema, and while the pandemic has prevented a substantial return to the movies in 2021, the record of selling tickets to a worldwide audience is an important part of understanding the UK’s lead in this sector.

This is demonstrated with film and television playing an increasingly important part for the UK economy. Since 2017 the UK has accounted for less than a 3% share of annual global GDP. However British film and television has an outsize global share, nearly an order of magnitude more than that of the general economy.

This lead in content provides a high degree of confidence for commissioners and broadcasters. Resources of a new global growing trade are naturally being directed here because of this enviable record.

LARGER PRODUCTIONS

Dramatic change, especially over the last 5-10 years, has also required productions made in the UK to become incrementally larger and substantially more ambitious.

This new quantum of investment per project mirrors consumer demand. Platforms are under pressure to stand out from others by delivering greater quality and scale. The budget for an average TV series from the U.S. reached just short of \$60 million last year. This is around seven times the scale of a traditional UK series budget.

This radically larger species of TV production is something that the UK now excels in. Shows like Bridgerton, The Witcher and The Crown are examples of hugely popular big budget projects made in the UK. These three are some of the most prestigious shows on the Netflix service. The other global media companies are equally enthusiastic about the creative opportunities the UK offers.

UK spend per production on high-end television programmes produced in the UK (£ million)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Domestic	6.1	6.3	7.2	7.5	6.9
Inward investment and co-productions	15.2	12.0	18.3	18.6	29.4

Source: BFI (Pandemic part year in dark grey)

“Just from the amount of work that we’re turning away, I know that the demand is still there. The desire to come to the U.K. [has remained], and I think it’s still a first choice for studios and TV companies coming out of the U.S.”

- Emily Stillman, SVP Warner Bros Studio.

Despite recent focus on the challenge that Netflix faces in growth, expansion continues at the systematic level. A new network effect is evident as fresh global audiences gain access to on-demand content for the first time, powering incremental potential commercial gains. The competition to deliver outstanding content of impact and scope continues to be fierce.

Data shows that the UK is a consistently smart destination for big budget production. Irrespective of the ups and downs of individual media company fortunes, there will always be a need to make wiser commissioning choices at a scale to serve the global market.

British talent and content demonstrates a remarkable ‘run rate’ at making projects which are essential to the success of multinational media commissioners. In the sector these projects are sometimes called ‘tentpoles’ because they are the stays around which everything else is supported.

“Of the top 200 highest grossing feature films worldwide of the last decade, those made by British Directors have accounted collectively for \$18 billion of Gross Box Office revenue”

Source: BFI, Comscore

As TV catches up with feature films, budgets continue to expand. One of the most expensive TV shows made recently was WandaVision, a Marvel series. This cost Disney approximately \$200 million (around \$25 million per episode).

Another example currently underway in the UK is the second season of Amazon’s The Rings of Power, based on the Lord of the Rings. Some sources estimate that the first season made in New Zealand had a budget close to \$50m an episode, and the second UK season is thought to be of a similar scale.

As TV production budgets rise, the lines between the scale of high budget feature films and expensive TV have started to blur. This presents an exceptional fit for British-made content as there is singular trust in UK expertise to deliver quality, scale and scope. The British ‘tentpole’ has entered a new era.

THE LONG TAIL AND FICTIONAL ‘UNIVERSES’

Alongside upward pressure on both quantity and scale, another factor has emerged in the evolution of broadcast media. Commissioning now targets audience loyalty in a way that was less important before the predominance of on-demand viewing.

The habit of viewing compelling content is sometimes pejoratively framed as ‘binge watching’ but what drives the new broadcast ecosystem is the need for platforms to deliver ‘appointment television’. Broadcasters are not just battling their peers, but also other screens used in leisure time, itself increasingly full of competing activities.

To cut through, content has to be crafted for a rich experience that keeps viewers engaged for many more hours and keeps them coming back. This incentivises a longer form (more episodes in each series), but also commissioning several seasons (returning for as many years as possible).

The UK is having to pivot from a tradition of low lifetime episode total count: Fawlty Towers (12 total), The Office (14), Brideshead Revisited (11), The Jewel in the Crown (14), Our Friends in the North (9) or Sherlock (13), to an entirely different length of commitment.

The new normal for the most impactful British shows are long arcs as seen in Game of Thrones (73), The Crown (60), and Downton Abbey (52).

Already the break-out hits of the last couple of years are being ordered in multiple season batches. Bridgerton, which premiered at the end of 2020, already has an order for seasons 3 & 4, but there are 9 books in the literary series which might mean another 5 years of production here. This illustrates the ambitions of broadcast commissioning being brought to the UK. A potential hit may require delivery of 70-90 hours of very expensive product over perhaps 80 months (spread over 7 or more years).

It doesn't stop there. More and more this is expanded not just to extra seasons, but a whole 'fictional universe' of commission. Content, whether Marvel or even Downton Abbey, now has an even longer 'tail'.

Prestigious feature films and television shows are now spinning off into other long-form high budget content. Recent examples made in the UK have been Andor (Star Wars), Secret Invasion (Marvel), Wonka (Charlie and the Chocolate Factory), and The Rings of Power (Lord of the Rings).

House of the Dragons (Game of Thrones) has 10 episodes 'in the can' filmed in the UK and due for release in August 2022. Already being filmed is the limited series Queen Charlotte (Bridgerton).

Making 'marquee' franchises is threaded into our history of filmmaking. Over the last 60 years some of the biggest, long running film series of all time originated here: Bond (23 UK films), Star Wars (6), Harry Potter (8), Batman (5). Many Marvel movies (12) have been filmed at least partly at Pinewood. Between them, Star Wars and Harry Potter have been spun off into 5 additional UK made feature films.

Simply put, overseas inward investment into British film and television is coming here because this sector here excels at the 'long-tail'. For capital looking to pursue long-term success in filmed entertainment, the UK has very few rivals worldwide. Long-term confidence is strong in the UK.

HUMAN CAPITAL

MARLOW IS UNIQUELY PLACED TO DELIVER ON THIS OPPORTUNITY

The 'West London Cluster' is the home of film and television in the UK. The facilities, government policies, and the all important human capital, have grown up together over 80 years to provide a unique ecosystem, well suited to capturing the step-change in global demand.

THE CREWBASE

Essential to the UK's success is a cohort of crew and technicians unrivalled the world over. This is the principal reason why the UK, beyond the USA, is the sector's single largest beneficiary of global inward investment. This workforce is integral to the success of the West London Cluster. The strength in talent and technical ability of the crewbase has developed alongside the studios in the area for more than eight decades.

This crewbase is almost entirely freelance, meaning that individuals are engaged by producers to work on a project-by-project basis. Each film or television project's team is uniquely assembled across many dozens of professional disciplines on shorter-term contracts. A high budget film may shoot for four to six months, with a season of a television series anything between three to twelve months. At 'wrap' these freelance specialists move on to other work and projects, frequently at different facilities.

Assembly of a crew for each short-term project is a considerable art in itself. The talent pool around the West London Cluster is particularly deep with an exceptional level of competence.

One key factor in a healthy work-life balance is the time it takes to travel to and from places of work. For this sector, this can vary from production to production because of the nature of the work. The global industry generally takes 30 miles in each direction as the reasonable daily limit. In Los Angeles this is known as the TMZ (thirty mile zone). A similar 30 mile limit is included as a standard term in UK freelance contracts, with prohibitively expensive overnight accommodation mandated for work further afield.

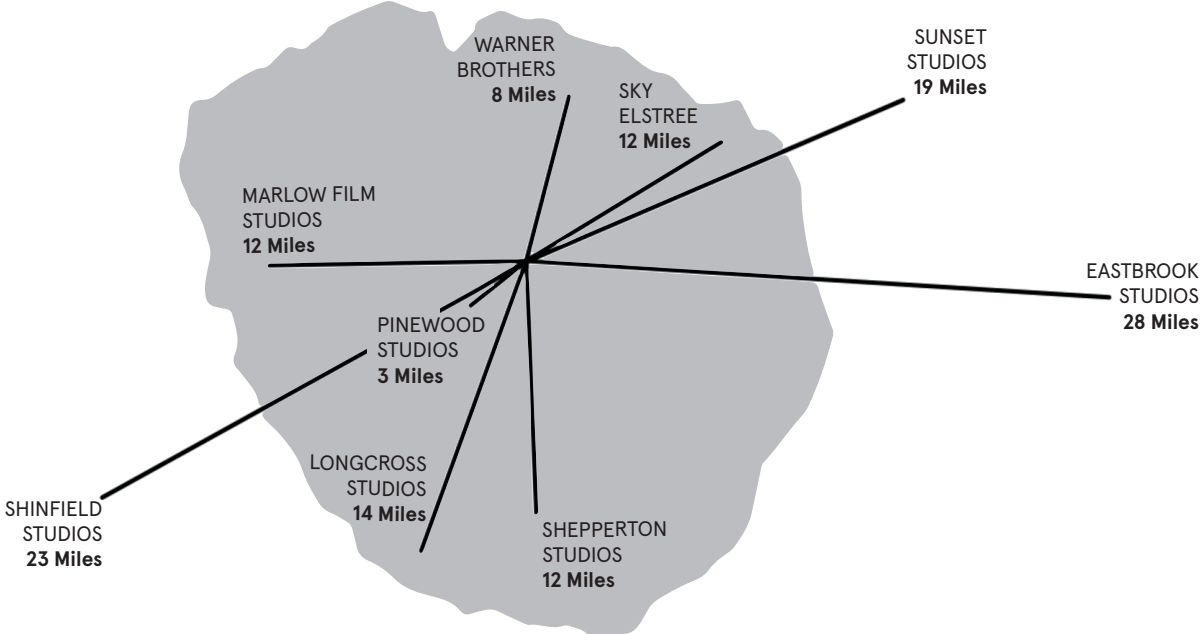
The further the daily travel distance, the more taxing it is on crew and the harder it becomes to fill the hundreds of exacting roles required for the most prestigious and economically important productions.

The natural consequence is that crews and companies need to be highly clustered around recognised production bases to avoid excess travel and cost. This applies not just to a studio but the wider production cluster itself. Any cluster must have physical capacity to take more than a few productions to ensure long term viability.

Distance from the Weighted Centre of the West London Cluster

(Rounded whole miles point to point)

Zone reachable within 30 road miles from all major production bases shown in grey



Daily travel limits (measured by road miles) are set in working conditions negotiated collectively by UK crew. Current agreements, broadly aligned with longstanding global sector standards, allow for commutes of up to 30 road miles both at the beginning and end of each working day. This allows crew to operate daily 30 road miles from their production base in another location. Having a production base within the grey zone above allows for daily use of all the facilities that zone contains. Asking crew to travel further afield comes with contractual penalties. Production for crew is an intense, variable and challenging working environment. These rules are designed to prevent crew burn-out and associated risk to health and safety, but also allows for certainty in terms of cost and logistical operations.

The health and well-being of the crew base clearly defines the success of the industry. Unlike conventional industries which have long term employment contracts often from a single location, where issues can be managed on an organisational basis, the film industry and freelance needs make this less possible.

Based on research undertaken by the British Film Commission, and working on an estimate of 20,000 crew who have worked at the highest end of the sector in the last 12 months, about 600 crew (around one third of the annual crew needs of Marlow) live within 15 mins of the Marlow Film Studios site.

Given that one hour of travel time roughly equates to the thirty mile limit, this expands to more than 12,000 crew (60% of the entire West London Cluster crewbase) who are within one hour of travel of Marlow Film Studios.

Being co-located with this population of outstanding talent is a key reason why Marlow is so well suited to hosting a first class studio of critical mass. This proposal presents a uniquely placed opportunity for the UK to continue attracting global investment for film and television production.

A second key factor for crew wellbeing is the quality of working facilities. Only about one third of the current studios the UK sector works in are truly purpose-built film facilities.

A large proportion of current UK soundstages are not in well-equipped buildings of a scale suited to major film and TV productions. Instead, repurposed spaces, including former warehouses, factories and airfield buildings, have undergone refurbishment for conversion. Typically, spaces designed for other uses will have been given some degree of soundproofing, with limited production facilities provided on site. This constant state of ad-hoc working takes a significant toll on crews.

Given the rarity of this unusually talented workforce, it is also true that their singular culture and skills are not easily passed on except through the rigours of working experience in decent conditions. The complexities of taking what is essentially a broad set of highly individual 'hand-made' specialisms and scaling them up or relocating them should not be underestimated.

As this sector matures it also must be recognised that an enormous change in demands has been placed on existing talent. Crew are expected to do more in less attractive working conditions, which is an unsustainable approach to growth.


Simply put, the needs of the precious crewbase should come first in any programming of working conditions, location and daily travel requirements. If these factors are not strategically considered, then the well being of the crew will suffer and training and transferring of skills becomes harder to deliver.

EXPANDING THE CREWBASE - SKILLS AND TRAINING

Buckinghamshire is well placed to expand the crewbase. Contributing to the continued growth and strengthening of the UK filmmaking industry in the years ahead is a natural fit with the local policy aspirations for coming economic success.

The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report 2022 sets out there are twice as many creative industry jobs within the Buckinghamshire economy than the national average, many of which are in the film and TV sector.

At the heart of the Marlow Film Studios proposals are expansive and inclusive plans for the training of coming generations, to stand on the shoulders of industry giants who have pioneered this work in southern Buckinghamshire.



“The strategic alignment between the University and the Marlow Film Studios project could not be stronger. We support your aim of providing a new, global centre for filmmaking, one with a local commitment to jobs and sustainability. Drawing on our experience of providing high-quality, industry-facing education at Pinewood Studios and of creating the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy, we affirm our commitment to work with you to deliver the Marlow Film Studios Skills and Cultural Academy and provision of an on-site, dedicated education facility, enabling students to work directly with industry.”

**Professor Nick Braisby, Vice-Chancellor and
Chief Executive Bucks New University**

In collaboration with education institutions at all levels, new cultural and skills programmes via a dedicated on-site educational facility will convene the most talented in the industry. Those aspiring to enter the sector will be able to engage with experts in the unique set of trades present at Marlow Film Studios, and learn through traineeship and skills development how to join the working crew base.

These initiatives will put an emphasis on accessibility. Inspiring, empowering and nurturing the next generations of crew. By design this will be far more open and diverse than what has gone before.

A SITE TO DELIVER FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF BRITISH TALENT

Nearly half (47%) of the sector's current working space is in repurposed buildings. In addition, over a fifth (22%) is in alternative spaces, such as temporary stages. This reliance on impermanence has implications for the ability of filmmaking to address its environmental impacts. Using unsuitable buildings not only has a knock-on in terms of working conditions, but potentially blocks more appropriate use of those spaces designed for other uses. There is a clear need for permanent, purpose-built facilities.

Marlow Film Studios site is one of only two potentially deliverable sites that are large enough (minimum 33ha) within the West London Cluster, and, of these two sites, is the most sequentially preferable site when assessed against location and the criteria of being achievable, available, and suitable.

A wide ranging search area for alternative sites was conducted in the West London Cluster. This search area encompasses some 33 local planning authorities. Authorities within London itself were screened out because of clear concerns over availability and achievability.

There were 91 potential sites of an appropriate size identified in the initial search, and a further four sites were assessed at the request of the Council. The first sift ruled out isolated and virgin greenbelt sites. An assessment of green belt constraints provided that only brownfield or despoiled sites within the greenbelt were taken to the next stage. The Marlow Film Studios site was previously quarried for gravel and subsequently landfilled. This first site sift reduced the number of sites to 20.

The second stage, assessing whether the sites were achievable and available, reduced the number of potentially deliverable sites to two. These two sites were assessed against nine planning site suitability criteria and separately against six operator suitability criteria. In both cases Marlow Studio Site was identified as the sequentially most preferable site in the West London Cluster.

Marlow Film Studios is, therefore, the sequentially most preferable Site within the West London Cluster to deliver a studio to meet the clearly identified need. It is also the sequentially most preferable site to capture benefits, such as training programmes.

The continued growth and strengthening of the UK filmmaking industry in the coming years cannot happen in isolation from the rest of the industry expertise and facilities. The co-location of the crewbase along with skills and training are required for future success.

DELIVERING CREATIVITY SUSTAINABLY

PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS BOTH FILMMAKERS AND THE PUBLIC GOOD

“The average television programme produces tens of tonnes of carbon dioxide, a feature film is in the thousands. This is a public relations and moral conundrum that the industry must address, and one that we have precious few years in which to do so. The pickle we are in is down to poor planning.”

- ALBERT (The sector’s sustainability champion)

While the toll on crews is clear, the status-quo of transient facilities, working conditions, and the effects of excessive travel, fails to embed sustainability into film and television production. Like all industries thinking about how to operate sustainably, this sector must alter practices which are wasteful and inefficient.

The industry has reached the limits of repurposing suitably sized buildings. The new dimensions of the industry, dictated by the contemporary demand for space, and needs of human capital, are poorly served by the available existing structures and sites. Programming new facilities in the right location and specified to operate at best attainable standards, enabling sustainable workflow, is an imperative.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Sustainability has guided the Marlow Film Studios masterplan, architecture and landscape, in a wide variety of ways. The design of buildings, the use of energy, the role of landscape and biodiversity, through to how we travel, and manage our waste – all have a part to play in designing for sustainability.

Masterplan and architecture

The layout is deliberately compact and flexible, largely confined to the northern part of the site which has a lower biodiversity value. Compactness helps with efficiency, avoiding the need for long journeys from workshops and offices to the soundstages. This also offers opportunities for a more convivial and enjoyable working environment, fostering a better sense of well being. Flexibility is achieved by the inter-relationship of workshops and soundstages, supporting 2 large or 4 smaller productions, ensuring the facility will be in constant use.

In order to reduce the impact on the wider landscape, the soundstages are clustered in the centre of the site, with workshops and offices, which are not so high, along the northern edge, facing the A4155 Marlow Road, and along the public right of way that passes through the middle of the site. This introduces a positive new local character as well as more human scale, which helps to break up the built form when seen from longer views.

The soundstages are not all the same height, and with careful use of the slope, they 'layer' in the landscape. The materials to be used are dark so that the buildings are 'visually recessive' when seen from the longer views. All the soundstages have green living roofs, and some have green walls. Areas of trees and hedges surround the studios, again, softening the impact.

All these measures mitigate the visual impact of the proposals, from close up as well as the longer views from Winter Hill to the south and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the north. They also help to moderate the impact of the Studios on the openness of the Green Belt.

Renewable energy

The buildings have been designed to be energy efficient, with the workshops and offices making use of natural solar gain through their orientation as well as positioning of windows. BREEAM Very Good or Excellent ratings are being targeted for many buildings - BREEAM is an assessment tool run by the British Research Establishment to indicate the sustainability of proposed buildings.

All the roofs of the soundstages are 'bio-solar'. They are green living roofs, which have the triple benefit of supporting biodiversity, assisting with visual impact, and helping slow water run-off. In addition, they have photovoltaic arrays generating enough energy over the course of a year to power the basic heating and lighting of the campus. These arrays are oriented south west to avoid glare in views from Winter Hill to the south. Additional energy needed beyond that produced by the solar arrays will be procured through a renewable tariff.

Landscape design for water management

The landscape design of the northern part of the site takes advantage of the swales and ponds that are needed to slow down the rate of water run off – known as sustainable urban drainage – with native planting choices maximising the benefit for wildlife. Rainwater recycling is also built into the scheme to reduce the amount of potable water needed for functions such as flushing toilets.

More than 80% of the trees on and adjacent to the site have been retained, and over 300 new trees will be planted, including creating landscaped buffers around the edges of the site to soften the appearance of the development. The tree planting, together with the green roofs, means that the site will achieve a 31% canopy cover.

The approach to sustainable urban drainage and the significant tree planting and canopy cover are both key ways of adapting to a changing climate. The tree planting will help to keep site temperatures lower, and in storm events water will be retained on site, avoiding flash flooding.

Landscape design for biodiversity

Landscape design has also been crucial in achieving the biodiversity benefits of the site. On the two southern parts of the site much of the existing mosaic of habitats has been retained. On the central plot (Plot 4) nine acres will be available for quiet recreation alongside the Culture and Skills Academy, and on the southern plot (Plot 5) 15 acres will be managed exclusively for wildlife, alongside the 5 acres to be used as ‘backlot’ for outdoor filming. Both these plots will achieve a positive on-site ‘biodiversity net gain’, and together leave more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of the whole site for recreation and wildlife, a design approach supportive of a country park if in due course this long held local ambition is realisable.

Coming legislation means that any qualifying development will in future be required to deliver biodiversity net gain. It is expected that Parliament will amend the Town & Country Planning Act to mandate 10% net gain for applications made after the autumn of 2023.

Despite being submitted ahead of the legislative framework, Marlow Film Studios will not only deliver biodiversity net gain in line with the emerging national requirement of +10%, but in addition has voluntarily set its own bespoke target to reach +20% net gain. To achieve this, additional land will be secured by appropriate planning mechanisms. The habitat provided will be covered by a 30 year conservation covenant and meet the standards of the coming statutory framework once passed into law.

Low carbon transport

Low carbon transport is also an integral part of the proposal. Trips to site by private car are targeted to be capped at 60% of journeys. This will be monitored, and financial contributions will be available should further action be needed to ensure this target is achieved and maintained.

Twenty percent of the parking spaces in the multistoreys will have electric charging points, and the rest will have 'passive provision' to be installed as demand increases. The peak times for traffic for the Studios is before the morning peak, and after the evening peak, meaning that the impact on congestion is reduced.

Two new public bus services will be established. One will connect the Elizabeth Line and Maidenhead town centre, through the Studio to Handy Cross Coachway and High Wycombe town centre and railway station. The other will be a local service between Marlow, Little Marlow and Bourne End. Both are expected to run on a half hourly schedule through the week (less frequently on Sundays). There will be a bus interchange in the Entrance Square at the Studio which is open to the public. These services mark a significant improvement on current bus provision – there are no bus services from Marlow to Maidenhead, and the local routes have only a few services, which do not run every day.

Recreation

Cycling provision will also be improved. The public right of way that passes through the site will be upgraded so that cycling will be safe alongside pedestrian use, and a new cycle path will be provided from the public right of way up to the A4155. With the agreement of the landowner, contributions will be made to establish a path south from the public right of way down to Fieldhouse Lane, providing level access connecting Bourne End and Little Marlow to Marlow. Cycle parking is also integrated into the design, and hire cycles will be available at the Entrance Square.

Recreational paths for walking will also be included along Westhorpe Lake and across the recreational area on Plot 4, complimenting the existing right of way which is maintained on its current alignment.

Reducing waste

Managing waste and recycling is a key issue for the film industry. Current custom and practice takes a 'disposable' approach, rather than one of the circular economy of re-using, repurposing and recycling. A waste management plan, for when the studios are in operation, has been developed to transform this practice, minimising waste and maximise the opportunity for filmmakers to recycle and reuse.

Sustainable design delivers places with a better standard of health and wellbeing to people that work there, as well as addressing important environmental issues. Marlow Film Studios is aiming, unashamedly, to be an inspiring place to work, and to set a new standard for what is expected of a film studio.

CRITICAL MASS

The Studios contain two film production clusters, made up of a mix of soundstages, workshops and offices, each big enough to take a blockbuster production for the duration of preparation, pre-production, shoot and strike. This provides for a 'critical mass', meaning not only that Marlow Film Studios is set up for success, but also that benefits are amplified for the local area.

Advantages to the local economy

By design, the efficiency of Marlow Film Studios allows two productions to be on site shooting at any one time, with a third in preparation. Together this provides year-round occupation and the virtuous circle of permanence in studio operations.

Without sufficient space for a rolling programme of film and television shows, a 'halo' effect of stable suppliers and production service providers would not be possible. However, through provision of adequate scale and the efficiency of land use, local businesses can rely on a 'base load' of commercial opportunity. Those essential specialist trades that require particularly close working with the industry are able to take viable premises on site in the trade clusters.

Without enabling a consistent level of activity on-site, these economic benefits are undermined. This is particularly important in induced and indirect spending and jobs, brought in as part of continuous inward investment.

By contrast, studios which can only house one production a time veer between 'feast and famine', with the studio 'going dark' in the void period between productions. Even when a smaller site is in use, the levels of activity vary greatly between preparation and strike and the much greater intensity of filming.

This is both undesirable and deeply inefficient. In this situation local businesses relying on spending from the users of the studio, and the supply chain, would be at risk.

Carefully sequenced occupation on site for multiple users also allows for permanent training to be established as part of the facility. Dedicated training depends on a consistent through-put of activity. The presence of an active Culture and Skills Academy, also allows for this space and surroundings to be available regularly for community activities.

Public transport infrastructure

Without a constant level of demand, public transport options cannot be viable, making studios much more reliant on private car journeys. Marlow Film Studios has set a target on the use of private cars capped at 60% of studio journeys.

Instead of the private shuttle buses which might be required at peak production to service a single production studio, with consistent flow of occupation these needs become permanent and are expanded to two new public bus services.

This availability of new sustainable travel modes for the public benefits a wider community. A public transport interchange on site enables further linkage to the new Elizabeth Line to be established for both public and private benefit.

Better health and wellbeing

A base level of continuous production also makes for a better place to work, as demand for a range of on-site services from occupiers does not stop and start. This assists in creating a better permanent ‘campus’ culture which helps foster the creative activity at the heart of filmmaking.

Benchmarking

Comparing what is proposed at Marlow Film Studios with what is planned at other studios shows that equivalent studios are taking a similar approach to ensure critical mass.

The table below shows planned expansions of studios (or newly planned sites with similar objectives) which by design are placed to operate in or around the West London Cluster. Noticeably these all have similar order of magnitude to Marlow in terms of number of stages, with Sunset being a significant outlier in stage quantity.

Equivalent recent studio applications or forthcoming applications Distance from weighted centre of West London Cluster (rounded to whole miles, point to point)

Distance	Planned Studios	Location	Type	Stages
3	Pinewood extension (Dec 21)	Buckinghamshire	Purpose-built	6*
8	Warner Brothers extension	Three Rivers	Purpose-built	11
11	Sky Studios	Hertsmere	Purpose-built	12
12	Shepperton River Ash	Spelthorne	Purpose-built	14
12	Marlow Film Studios	Buckinghamshire	Purpose-built	18
15	Longcross Studios^	Surrey	Rebuilt	TBA
19	Sunset Studios	Broxbourne	Purpose-built	35
23	Eastbrook Studios	Dagenham	Purpose-built	12
23	Shinfield Studios	Wokingham	Purpose-built	14

Source: publicly available data, Marlow Film Studios highlighted.

^ Announced but not yet applied for planning

*Site to be redesigned to provide further production space

A BESPOKE OPPORTUNITY

The British film and TV industry stands as one of this country's great ongoing success stories.

An enviable decades long track-record of providing empowering, challenging and rewarding jobs, is deeply embedded in this sector. This particularly applies within reach of Marlow Film Studios.

This proposal is not only a bespoke answer to the objectives so clearly set out in both national and local policy, but also responds from inception to the key demands ahead for the UK sector:

- International demand for British filmmaking is undergoing radical change because of the three dimensions of rising global reach, larger productions, and the long tail and fictional 'universes';
- Marlow is uniquely placed to deliver in relation to human capital; and
- Planning Marlow Film Studios to deliver creativity sustainability benefits both film-making and the public good.

These elements point to a highly specific requirement for a particular type of facility, designed for optimum operation. Provision of 'critical mass' through scale, capacity and for the needs of the future outstanding UK crew and technicians, means Marlow Film Studios will set new standards for film studio design.

It will be an unashamedly inspiring place to work, create, educate and learn, for a celebrated and award-winning workforce.

APPENDIX: A SHORT GUIDE TO PLANNING APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

For a scheme of this size, it is right that there is a huge amount of information as part of the planning application, to ensure that the Local Planning Authority and general public can give it appropriate scrutiny. But for people who are not familiar with planning, knowing where to start can be daunting. The information below may help with navigation.

Throughout the documents, reference is made to different parts of the site using plot numbers. A plan showing the plot numbers is included on the next page.

Document	What it does
Planning Statement	This sets out national and local policy, and how the scheme addresses these requirements. This document contains the justification for the 'very special circumstances' required for development in the Green Belt.
Design and Access Statement	This explains the thinking behind the layout and design. It is broken down into chapters which deal with different themes, such as landscape or architecture. On the local authority website it is broken into small chunks to make it easier to download. It also contains plans and drawings, which are easier to use than the large scale drawings also included with the application.
A guide to a new 21st Century Studio at Marlow (this document)	An easy read introducing the main rationale behind the project. It does not form part of the formal planning documents.
Sequential Assessment	This sets out the basis on which Marlow is proposed for the development, against other sites within the West London Cluster.
Drawings	There are a huge number of drawings, including the layout of the site as a whole, a landscape masterplan, and drawings for individual buildings. Many of these are shown in the Design and Access Statement, which is often an easier way to see what is proposed.
Topic based documents	There are a number of documents addressing different aspects of the project - the topic is included in the document title. Sometimes there is further information on these topics in chapters in the Environmental Statement
Environmental Statement	This is a series of documents, including some introductory chapters, and a number of chapters each addressing a specific environmental topic, as required to meet the regulations for Environmental Impact Assessment.
Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment	This assesses the impact of the development on views, including from the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is contained at Part 3 of the the Environmental Statement.

Red line boundary for Marlow Film Studios planning application, also showing plot references.

