

Agenda Item 22.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
213610	15/03/2023	Wargrave	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe;

Applicant	C/O Avison, Young, Bristol
Site Address	Hatchgate And Kentons Kentons Lane Upper Culham RG10 8NU
Proposal	Full application for the erection of a 2 storey Estate management buildings including gardeners accommodation and underground tunnel linking the estate buildings and ancillary to the main house on Strowdes estate, following demolition of 3No dwellings, 1No pool house, garages and outhouses, stables and hay barn.
Type	Full
Officer	Stefan Fludger
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY REPORT PREPARED BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 10 May 2023 Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	<p>APPROVAL subject to conditions, informatives and the signing of a S106 agreement, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Integrated Estate Management Plan within the blue line for the combined Strowdes estate incorporating the following provisions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Description and evaluation of features to be managed ○ Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management. ○ Aims and objectives of management ○ Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives ○ Prescriptions for management actions ○ Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period). ○ Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures ○ Improvement works and ongoing maintenance of the two bat barns on site ○ Creation and implementation of the woodland management plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retain and protect the original parkland woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump ▪ Carry out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue

- Management works to the clumps and to the Chiltern woodlands to bring them back to health in keeping with the park and Chiltern landscape.
- Provision of barn owl boxes

Details to be Submitted for Approval

- Details of tree planting including full species, name and size
- Details of the proposed meadow grassland, including enhancement to lowland calcareous grassland, including on the chalk slopes including specification, areas and wildflower species, including amalgamation of these areas to create extensive areas of meadow grassland, especially on the steeper slopes.
- Earthworks and level changes including finished heights of the mounds, extent and their formation
- Size, form and profile of Ha-Ha
- Details of new water features including lakes, ponds and water canals, including detail of the lining and ongoing management of Ponds 1 and 2

Agreement that the outbuildings will be used as ancillary to the new dwelling 'Strowdes' – planning ref number 213587.

Secure an employment skills plan.

SUMMARY

This application is before Planning Committee because it constitutes major development which is recommended for approval.

The estate management building accompanies an application for a single dwelling within the Park Place Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. Both of the applications under consideration were also approved in identical design, position and layout in 2017. The committee resolved to approve this, subject to a s106 agreement on 10th May 2023.

There has been little change in policy and the application is acceptable.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App. no.	Proposal	Decision
O/2008/1353	Outline application for the demolition of 8 dwellings and erection of 5 new dwellings. Change of use of 3 dwellings to form 2 boathouses and guest accommodation.	GRANTED 09.12.2008

	Conversion of 2 dwellings to form 1 dwelling. Alterations to the barns and the bungalow to form a single residential unit plus alterations and extensions to existing buildings.	
RM/2010/1237	Erection of one dwelling (Conway Park House)	GRANTED 04.08.2010
RM/2011/2274	Erection of one dwelling (Bell House)	GRANTED 20.12.2011
153077	Erection of 3no estate buildings to serve as estate management, security offices and stores with associated parking and alterations to access (Hatchgate and Kentons, ancillary to Stowdes) <i>S106 agreement for 173097 revoked this permission</i>	GRANTED 16.12.2016
152499	Erection of 4no single storey staff residential units, together with a machinery shed / parking and associated estate management store / office, at Bell House, ancillary to Stowdes <i>S106 for 173097 subsequently required that this only be occupied by staff employed on site</i>	GRANTED 06.12.2016
160131	Erection of one dwelling (Stowdes) <i>S106 agreement for 173097 revoked this permission</i>	GRANTED 05.07.2016
173097	Erection of one dwelling (Stowdes) <i>S106 required permissions 173098 and 173100 to be ancillary to 173097 and not sold off or disposed of separately to this dwelling</i>	GRANTED 13.04.2018 Permission expired
173098	Erection of gatehouse with associated parking ancillary to Stowdes	GRANTED 13.04.2018 Permission expired
173100	Erection of estate management buildings including gardeners' accommodation and underground tunnel linking the estate buildings, ancillary to the main house on Stowdes estate	GRANTED 13.04.2018 Permission expired
213588	Erection of a gatehouse ancillary to Stowdes	Awaiting determination
213587	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling with associated landscaping.	On Ctte agenda for determination

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION	
Proposed units	None
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	Associated with 1 house in 80 hectares.
Number of affordable units proposed	None
Previous land use	Parkland
CONSTRAINTS	Green Belt Countryside Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) Ancient Woodland Veteran Trees

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CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Ecology	No objection subject to conditions and a S106 agreement for an IEMP
WBC Trees and Landscape	No objection subject to conditions and a S106 agreement for an IEMP
WBC Highways	No objection, subject to conditions.
Historic England	No objection on heritage grounds.
Berkshire Gardens Trust	No objection subject to suitable provisions within the S106 for the IEMP.
WBC Employment Skills Plan	No objection, subject to an ESP or ESC secured through a S106.
WBC Built Heritage	No objection, subject to conditions.
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection, subject to condition.
WBC Drainage	No objection.
WBC Environmental Health	No objection.
Thames Water	No objection, subject to the imposition of an Informative

REPRESENTATIONS

Wargrave Parish Council:
 Consider the traffic movements along Kentons Lane to be detrimental to highway safety.

Local Members:
 No comments received.

Neighbours:
 1 comment received regarding the following:

- Kentons Lane is not suitable for increased traffic. It is narrow with lots of blind corners and there have already been accidents.
- The access will be adjacent another neighbouring access and it will not be suitable for any commercial activity and there will be additional noise.
- There is a more suitable entrance further down Kentons Lane.
- There may be an increase in rubbish from the buildings, which might attract vermin.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework
National Design Guide
National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

CP1 – Sustainable Development
CP3 – General Principles for Development
CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
CP7 – Biodiversity
CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)
CP12 – Green Belt

MDD Local Plan (MDDLDP)

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02 – Development Limits
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
TB01 – Development within the Green Belt
TB21 – Landscape Character
TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
TB25 – Archaeology

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
CIL Guidance + 123 List
Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document
Wargrave Parish Design Statement

PLANNING ISSUES

Site and Surroundings:

1. The application site measures about 198 acres (80 hectares) in size. It is within the open countryside and within a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) listed by Historic England as 'Park Place, and Temple Combe'. It is also within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The northern part of the site is predominantly level; the southern half falls steeply down towards the river, The overall site is bounded by Culham Lane, Kentons Lane, Wargrave Road, the River Thames and, along the western boundary, by other tree-lined Estates within the RPG.

Description of Development:

2. This application accompanies a separate planning application to create a single substantial mansion, the principle of which was established in the outline permission of 2008 and endorsed in various subsequent permissions. The committee resolved to approve the dwellinghouse, subject to a s106 agreement on 10th May 2023.
3. The proposal for which this application relates involves the construction of estate management buildings. Both this and the application for the mansion house are identical to those which were approved in 2018, but have now lapsed. The function of the estate management building is to provide accommodation for estate managerial functions, including offices, gardeners accommodation, plant and equipment store and store for waste and recycling.

ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHEME

Principle of Development:

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP). Policy CC01 of the MDDLDP states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
5. Notwithstanding the locational constraints, the principle of development of a single dwelling in this location has already been established under the overarching masterplan for the site: O/2008/1353. Two Reserved Matters applications were subsequently submitted and approved in 2010 and 2011 for a single dwelling in the location of the current proposal (RM/2010/1237 and RM/2011/2274). These were unimplemented and are no longer extant. Planning permission granted for a single large dwelling at this site under PA ref 160131 had its permission revoked by a S106 agreement under PA ref 173097.
6. Development for new dwellings within the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate within NPPF policy. Notwithstanding this, development for new dwellings may be acceptable where Very Special Circumstances (VSC) outweigh the material harm caused by the development. In this instance, VSC exist due to the approach agreed within the masterplan for the estate as a whole. It outlined the overall net loss in dwellings and built form across the estate, the removal of unsympathetic buildings and the restoration of the parkland. The removal of buildings was secured under the outline application, ref O/2008/1353.
7. The location of the proposed dwelling has previously been appraised and is in a 'sensitive and exposed position' above the Thames Valley. However, the principle of development has been considered acceptable previously and this remains the case: the specific design, placement and orientation of the building must be assessed in terms of its impact on the character of the area, on the Registered Historic Park and Garden (RPG) and on the Green Belt, as well as whether or not the volume proposed is within the requirements and the spirit of Outline approval O/2008/1353. The outline

application agreed the parameters of the volume of proposed development across the site in relation to the volume of the buildings to be demolished. The current applications (213587, 213588 and 213610) are identical to those granted in April 2018 (173097, 173098 and 173100).

Traded Volume:

8. With each of the applications made on the whole of the Park Place Estate (which exceeds the area subject of this application), an indicative table is provided, demonstrating the traded volume of buildings altered or demolished against that of consented and proposed development. This approach was accepted as an appropriate means of restoring the Estate and RPG whilst improving the built form within the Green Belt.

	Cubic Metres
Outline Development Total	52677
Additional land purchase total	12944
Total original volume	65671
Minimum acceptable loss of volume	-9970
Proposed overall volume	40043
Total reduction in volume against agreed loss	-18771

9. Following further purchases of buildings and land enlarging the estate, the total volume of buildings has increased since the original purchase of the estate. However, the built form has been reduced overall through different proposals. The original volume of buildings prior to the restoration of the parkland, Park Place mansion, Hamilton mansion and the structures associated with the polo pitch development in the north of the site was some 65,671 cubic metres of built form (52,677 with the original purchase and a further 12,994 purchased later). The proposed mansion has a proposed volume of 10,800 cubic metres. However, this is still significantly lower than that of the 'pre-development' built form, with the combined total volume of redevelopment over the entire site having a volume of 40,043 cubic metres: some 25,629 cubic metres less than what was once on the site.
10. Overall, the proposed trade-off of volume is considered acceptable and within the spirit of the original project and permission that was granted. Notwithstanding this, the character and appearance of the proposal and its impact on the landscape and all other material planning considerations need to be assessed.

Ancillary buildings: Relationship with Park Place:

11. The outline consent of 2008 accounted for the provision of ancillary buildings in association with the formation of the new dwellings, as prescribed in the decision notice. The proposed estate management buildings would be ancillary to the consented Stowdes mansion and in the location of a series of stable buildings, the planning consent for which has since expired. The established trade-off of the volume of buildings removed through their inappropriate nature and the erection of buildings in support of the approved use has been long-established. Subject to the estate management buildings being permanently ancillary (ensured through a S106), the principle of these ancillary buildings to a residential property is considered acceptable, given that it is within the curtilage of the Stowdes mansion.

12. Notwithstanding the volume issues, the use of the estate management buildings would only be acceptable in association with a host dwelling and estate, to which the buildings would be ancillary to. A S106 has been agreed in principle by the applicants which ensures that the estate buildings are not to be sold, leased or disposed of separately from the dwelling or the site/estate? The restriction therefore ensures that the buildings remain ancillary and can never become independent planning units. The introduction of buildings to help with the running of an estate such as this is common, and the ancillary nature is assured through the legal agreement.
13. Overall, the development would have an acceptable impact on the character of the countryside, the setting of the Green Belt and it would not be out of keeping with the estate as a whole, but instead enhances the individual and special character of the estate as a whole. It is therefore considered acceptable, subject to conditions and the sealing of a S106.

Impact on the Character of the Area:

14. Due to the status of the site as a Registered Park and Garden, the most important considerations in terms of the impact on the character of the area are from Historic England, the Berkshire Gardens Trust, WBC Ecology and WBC Trees and Landscape. These are considered in turn. Historic England Have no objection to this application.

Berkshire Gardens Trust:

15. Their comments are as follows:

At our site visit it was suggested by the Project Manager that he included the current proposals for the staff quarters, tunnel to the river side and development by the river at this stage so that all proposed developments could be looked at together and in context. I heartedly support this. (Officer note: These have not been included).

BGT were not involved in the earlier applications and the proposals for the estate are quite complex so at this stage we are not fully up to date with them or their status in planning terms. We agreed that I would write to highlight BGT's main concerns, although we recognise that they may be overridden by the existing permissions.

Key documents include the IEMP and the LUC Conservation Plan Edition 1, which includes work carried out by Lovejoy on the visual sensitivity of the Green Belt and Park, 2005 which was prepared for Park Place Estates & Aspect Park Ltd is also helpful.

LUC Figure 8 Index of Openness shows the site in three bands of sensitivity to change (levels range from highest at 1 to lowest at 5): the most southerly is in level 2, the central belt above is in level 1 with the northernmost part in level 4, except for the area proposed for the new house which is in level 3. I understand the visibility of the site was considered carefully in 2018 in siting and designing the proposed buildings.

The Key Significance and Objectives from this document of relevance for 'Area I' Strowdes are:

- *Parts of this area are highly visible from the Thames River valley, and provide excellent views across the open agricultural landscape*
- *Three woodland clumps of mixed native species and several mature specimen parkland trees exist within the agricultural landscape, known as Garden Clump, Pit Clump and Pond Clump. Of these Pond Clump is the oldest, with part of it dating from before the 1815 Estate Plan. These still exist as features of the historic landscape*
- *An avenue of Cedar trees crosses the agricultural landscape. First shown as an avenue on the 1900 OS plan, the alignment originally stretched in an arc from Kenton's Lodge through Pond Clump, into the open field beyond: this avenue remains in part*
- *The agricultural land formed an important buffer between the 18th-century designed landscape and adjoining land uses to the south*
- *Recommends bringing woodland clumps back into active management to ensure future regeneration. Retaining and protecting the woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump*
- *Carrying out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue. Planting new specified trees in accordance with the 2nd edition O.S.*

The IEMP has similar requirements for Area I:

- *Retain and protect the original parkland woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump*
- *Carry out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue*
- *Management works to the clumps and to the Chiltern woodlands to bring them back to health in keeping with the park and Chiltern landscape.*

The following are notes on my observations, based on the submissions from the applicant to date, which I hope you will find helpful.

- *The proposed locations for the new house, estate house and gate house fit in with the pattern of development in the Park and I understand has been designed to minimise any visual impact*
- *The current proposals show new woodland planting next to Garden Clump and Pit Clump. The purpose of these areas is not clear but they would result in the loss in the form and pattern of these two clumps, blending them into more amorphous woodland planting.*
- *Placing large houses on the cusp of the hillside, where well designed, is a feature of the Park and gives these properties wonderful views to the SE. These new woodland blocks would narrow the view.*
- *The current scheme does not include proposals to restore the cedar avenue which has lost some of its trees. This did not eventually lead anywhere but the trees follow a shallow ridgeline creating a partial distinctive feature on an intermediate skyline when viewed from the west (and also possibly from the South Oxfordshire side of the Thames).*
- *The open mix of pasture, clumps and perimeter woodland is very visible from the south and Templecombe*
- *The details of the proposed tunnel under the Wargrave Road are of concern – in particular the deep cut needed on the east side and the portals which ideally*

need to be understated (Case Officer: These have not been included in this application)

- *The Planning Statement omits any reference to NPPF 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment*
- *The Heritage Impact Assessment October 2021 does not include any analysis of the impact of either the built form or the landscape proposals on the heritage of the site or of the significance of its assets*
- *HE has no objection to the proposed development on the grounds that the current proposals would not have a greater impact on the significance of the registered park than the consented ones, and state that while the site (known as Strowdes) forms part of the grade II* registered Park Place Estate it has always been agricultural land rather than part of the landscaped park. The site is therefore of limited significance in itself. The HE entry for Park Place does include 'Areas of open parkland', many containing clumps and specimen trees, are enclosed by belts of trees and woodland and 'The north-east section', incorporated in the C19, has been overlaid by a golf course (late C20), the remainder being a mixture of arable and pasture. However, Strowdes is clearly an important part of the setting of the landscape park, confirmed with the inter-visibility between the Templecombe and Hamilton estates and the typical arable pasture with wooded boundaries setting*
- *References are made to mounding which seems to be to avoid taking material off site as part of the cut and fill for the buildings and tunnel where a considerable amount of material will have to be excavated. Some existing mounding is out of keeping with the gentle chalk slopes so it is important that this artificial landform is not repeated elsewhere.*

My initial thoughts are that the other landscape proposals by Christopher Bradley-Hole for around the buildings, the avenues, the ha-ha, the perimeter woodland planting, the ponds on the northern part, and the lavender field would not result in harm to the historic landscape.

Conclusion:

16. The issues raised by BGT have been addressed with the proposal for an Integrated Estate Management Plan, to be secured through a S106 agreement.

Ecological Matters:

17. The Council's Ecology Officer has responded to consultation on the newly submitted documents. For three reasons, his comments are conveyed in full detail:
 1. The application has been held in abeyance awaiting these surveys.
 2. Their subject area is that affected by changes in policy, particularly with reference to paragraphs 174 and 180 of the NPPF, with a clearer expectation that development should contribute to biodiversity net gain and that development that results in significant harm to the environment should be refused.
 3. The content of their comments, about which Members should be aware, as follows:

Further ecological information has been submitted in the form of:

- *An Ecological Addendum Report (ACD Environmental, Ref, PR123977, November 2022),*
- *Survey Condition Sheets in Excel format for a Defra metric 3.1, and*
- *A Defra metric 3.1 calculator referenced for application 213610 dated 5 October 2022.*

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Ecological Addendum Report (EAR) considers the main habitat on-site (within the red line boundary) to be 'other neutral grassland' in poor condition. I think this is a reasonable assessment. Table 5 of the EAR indicates that the development proposal will result in a net gain of biodiversity habitat units on-site but that this will be below a 10% net gain. However, I am not convinced that the on-site grassland habitat enhancement to lowland calcareous grassland in close proximity to the estate management buildings and including an area proposed to be an amphitheatre in the Landscape Masterplan is realistic. Further, I am not convinced that it is appropriate for this area to be set out as enhancement instead of habitat creation because all of this area will be subject to extensive reprofiling.

Considering the above mentioned flaws in the post-development scenario modelled in the calculator, I think it likely that the proposed development will result in a net loss of biodiversity on-site.

It is proposed that an overall biodiversity net gain greater than 10% for this application can be achieved via off-site (but within the blue line) enhancement. Paragraph 3.9 of the EAR proposes to enhance 1.62ha off semi-improved grassland to lowland calcareous grassland. Lowland calcareous grassland is appropriate for the local geology and is a rare habitat of principal importance in Wokingham Borough so its creation/restoration and ongoing sympathetic management would be a significant benefit.

*The area 1.62ha does not tally with the area used in the Defra metric calculator Neither does it tally with the area and location shown in Appendix 7 of the EAR. The location indicated in Appendix 7 of the EAR is sub-optimal for enhancement to lowland calcareous grassland when compared to the Landscape Masterplan because this location is proposed to be planted with a number of trees including the non-native species, *Quercus ilex*.*

Whilst there is some doubt about the suitability and size of the area indicated in Appendix 7, I do accept that it is possible to make such an enhancement of such a scale within the blue line and in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan (in addition to that required for habitat compensation for the main house). Having looked at the units generated in the Defra metric calculator if an enhancement area of 1.62ha is used, I am convinced that a 10% habitat biodiversity net gain could be achieved if 1.62ha of enhancement within the blue line is secured against this development.

The final detail of the grassland enhancement could be resolved through revision and agreement of a detailed Integrated Estate Management Plan (IEMP). I therefore recommend that, if permission is granted, a planning obligation is secured to seek submission and approval of a revised IEMP with this specific enhancement measure as a set objective.

I note that sections 5 and 6 of the EAR provide some proposals for chalk grassland creation/restoration. I am not convinced that the green hay seeding will be sufficient on its own as a method for restoration as the lower meadows are identified as being in a degraded state. The application of a bespoke seed mix and or planting of wildflower plugs will be needed for successful enhancement. I am of the opinion that the density of plug planting needs to be higher. Paragraph 6.1 indicates a plug planting density of 0.03 plugs per m² whereas I would expect planting to be in the realm of 10-20 times as dense.

The species proposed for wildflower plugs in paragraph 6.2 are appropriate but the list is missing some key species that I think need to be included to meet the target enhancement. I recommend that the following species also need to be included for the introduction (at a minimum for species diversity):

- *Agrimony - Agrimonia eupatoria*
- *Eyebright - Euphrasia nemorosa*
- *Horseshoe vetch - Hippocrepis comosa*
- *Common bird's-foot trefoil - Lotus corniculatus*
- *Sainfoin - Onobrychis viciifolia*
- *Marjoram - Origanum vulgare*
- *Salad burnet - Sanguisorba minor*
- *Common thyme - Thymus polytrichus*
- *Dark Mullein - Verbascum nigrum*

However, I accept that this sort of detail can be resolved through revision and agreement of the IEMP.

Landscape Masterplan

As I understand it, this application does not seek approval of the Landscape Masterplan for the site within the blue line. If the Landscape Masterplan is a matter for approval then I do not recommend approval of the design set out in Drawing No. 051_1101 (dated 18 October 2017) because this seeks to create a new pond in the location of a small parcel of ancient woodland, Pit Clump. On the ecological evidence so far presented, it would be more appropriate to create such a pond in a nearby location but beyond a 15m buffer of this ancient woodland. If there is scope to resolve conflicts such as this one by looking at detailed landscaping through a condition or the IEMP than I would recommend that this would be an appropriate way forward.

The submitted EAR has provided a response on my questions regarding the restored pond near Pond Clump ancient woodland (referred to as Pond 1 in the EAR). The survey conducted by ACD Environmental in August identified more aquatic vegetation than I could see from a visit in the winter months. However, I maintain that the pond liner is showing signs of degradation and I am not convinced that it will be viable for much longer. I accept that some form of liner is required to prevent rapid infiltration of water (as explaining in paragraph 8.6) and I accept that it would be possible for a replacement liner to be installed. I recommend that maintenance of this pond, and 'Pond 2' as identified in paragraph 8.9, should be included as a set objective in the IEMP for this site. My recommendation would be for the replacement liner to be a bentonite clay liner instead of plastic. Not only does this style of liner have a longer lifespan but it also more closely matches the traditional approach of creating a pond in a chalk landscape using puddled clay.

The submitted EAR has provided more information regarding the estate lakes in section 9, perhaps in response to my question as to how they will retain water. Unfortunately, the additional information does not answer the key question of their design, which is still to be determined. Clearly, from the previous section paragraph 8.6, the applicant's ecologist is aware that these lakes will not be viable unless they are lined. It seems strange that this is not a core consideration set out in section 9. Again, I would recommend that the best way for these to be lined is with a bentonite clay lining. It would then be possible to create the profile and substrate variation proposed in section 9 over the top of the liner. I accept that this kind of detail and the ongoing management prescription in line with paragraph 9.8 could be resolved in the IEMP.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Section 10 of the EAR provides a fresh consideration of the potential impact of the development proposal on amphibians and reptiles. Absence of Great Crested Newt or any of the widespread reptile species has not been demonstrated through survey effort. Instead, it has been proposed that the risk to these protected species could be adequately mitigated during construction through reasonable avoidance measures.

I am inclined to agree that this is an acceptable approach. As a detailed mitigation strategy of reasonable avoidance measures is not yet set out, I recommend that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) condition is applied to secure detail and implantation of the mitigation measures.

Bats

The EAR reports on further up to date surveys of the Meter House which is proposed for demolition in order to facilitate this development. There is clear evidence of continued use. I am inclined to agree that the evidence of use so far collected indicates that the roost(s) present in the Meter House are of species and character that the demolition could be covered under a Bat Mitigation Class Licence. I can advise that a derogation licence from Natural England is not unlikely to be granted.

On this basis, and following the British Standard 42020:2013, I recommend that a condition is applied that secures the submission of a copy of a Natural England derogation licence (or evidence of registration under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence) prior to commencement of the development.

The EAR has provided an update on the condition of the two bat barns on site. It is somewhat surprising that the applicant has not been given key hand over information for these bat barns as I think they are related to a development licence for the site. However, I accept that the applicant is proposing to do the right thing by recommending work to make the barns more suitable for bats and bring them back up to spec. I recommend that the improvement works set out in paragraph 12.14 and ongoing maintenance of these barns should be a set objective of the revised IEMP for the site.

Barn Owls

ACD Environmental have identified use of the site by Barn Owls and made recommendations to install Barn Owl boxes on site. The site is suitable to support nesting Barn Owls with good quality foraging habitat surrounding.

The Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan does have a target to see a net increase of Barn Owl box provision across the Borough in order to provide a key feature in the landscape to support this Schedule 1 species. If Barn Owl boxes were to be provided on site as a result of this development then this should be seen as a biodiversity benefit. As the detail of the Barn Owl box provision could be resolved as an item within the IEMP, I recommend that this should be the preferred mechanism to secure this species enhancement.

18. The proposals put forward by the Ecology Officer are satisfactory solutions to the seek to address the additional requirements put forward in the revised NPPF. It is noted that these comments apply to both this application and that for the dwellinghouse and the ecological solutions will need to relate to the site as a whole.

Tree and Landscape Matters:

19. Similarly, the Tree and Landscape Officer requested additional information in the light of local-level changes to published documents, and has responded as follows:

Further information has been submitted to support this application as previously requested in my comments dated 7th February 2022, including:

- *Landscape Visual Appraisal rev 02 (November 2022)*
- *Tree and Woodland Appraisal Report (November 2022)*
- *Revised Tree Protection Scheme rev.02 (17.11.22)*

The Landscape Visual Appraisal considers the information within the revised Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment dated November 2019 and the draft Valued Landscapes Topic Paper dated January 2020. I have no objection to the information submitted within this document and do not disagree with the conclusion.

Tree & Woodland Quality, Survey and Appraisal Report has been provided which identifies the trees and woodlands within the Stowdes Estate as well as a number of recommendations regarding future tree planting and woodland management. I have no objection to the recommendations in this report.

A Revised Tree Protection Scheme by Fulford-Dobson Associates provided high level tree protection for the trees in close proximity to the proposed development, however, we will require more detailed information relating to the tree protection and the proposed estate buildings (this will be requested as part of my comments on 213610).

It has been agreed that the red line of the application will remain as submitted, with

the land edged blue indicating the wider parts of the estate. The Landscape Masterplan submitted includes the whole of the Stowdes Estate which is edged in blue with the residential curtilages of the main house, estate management buildings and gatehouse outlined in red. A landscape condition will be required for the details of the landscape proposals in the curtilage of the dwelling, but also will need to include all areas of the wider site outlined in blue.

It is important that some sort of mechanism is included within any approval for an updated Integrated Estate Management Plan which will need to be reviewed and updated to take account of landscape and ecological changes, and the additional land which is now included in the Stowdes Estate previously outside the IEMP area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

20. There are no neighbours in close proximity to the site that would be impacted by the proposal in terms of privacy, overbearing issues, or loss of light.

Highways:

21. CP6 of the Core Strategy relates to Highway Safety. CC07 of the MDD Local Plan relates to parking provision. It is noted that the parish Council and a local neighbour have raised concerns relating to highway safety on Kentons Lane, which is a narrow lane.
22. The applicant has carried out speed surveys, which have determined that the a site line to the south of the site entrance would be interrupted by existing trees. The applicant has indicated that a number of trees should be removed and trimmed back as necessary.
23. The above being said, the trees are on an embankment, which would restrict visibility for drivers, whether the trees are removed or not. The Trees and Landscapes Officer objects to the removal of the trees on this basis. It is noted that these trees contribute positively to the character of the area. The Council's Highways Officer has accepted the limitations of the embankment and considers that the scheme is acceptable and would maintain highway safety, subject to the undergrowth being removed and the trees remaining in situ. This has been secured by condition.

Employment Skills Plan:

24. The proposal meets the threshold to provide an employment skills plan or a financial contribution in lieu. It is recommended that this is required by s106 agreement, as outlined in the recommendation section of this report.

Environmental Health:

25. The Environmental Health Officer has recommended a condition which requires the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan. It is considered that this is reasonable and necessary and is acceptable.

Archaeology:

26. Berkshire Archaeology have highlighted that there is potential for archarological deposits on the site and have recommended a condition requiring approval of a phased scheme of archaeological works. It is considered that this is reasonable and necessary and is acceptable.

Conclusion

27. The proposal is a re-submission of a scheme which was not implemented and the permission subsequently lapsed. Subject to a legal agreement which requires a formal estate management plan to be completed (which in particular relates to heritage, landscape and ecological issues and addresses evolutions in policy requirements since the approval of the first application), the proposal is again acceptable.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts upon protected groups as a result of the development.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / informatives

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

1. Timescale – The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved Plans – This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered:

SK903 P1

0001 PL1

0002 PL1

P-F-001-XX-030 REV 00

P-F-007-XX-010 REV 00

P-F-001-XX-008 REV 00

P-F-004-XX-030 REV 00

P-F-004-XX-020 REV 00

P-F-004-XX-040 REV 00

P-F-003-XX-020 REV 00

P-F-004-XX-010 REV 00

P-F-001-XX-020 REV 00

P-F-001-XX-010 REV 00

Surface Water Strategy Sheet 1 – 2170453-EW-00-L00-DR-C-1000 REV P1

Surface Water Strategy Sheet 2 - 2170453-EW-00-L00-DR-C-1001 REV P1

Proposed Landscape Masterplan 051_1101 Dated 18/10/2017t **(APART FROM THE PROPOSED POND IN THE LOCATION OF 'PIT CLUMP', WHICH IS NOT APPROVED)**

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. No development, including any demolition or ground works, shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured the implementation of a phased scheme of archaeological works (which may comprise more than one phase of works) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition.

Reason: The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The condition will ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated and recorded in order to advance our understanding of the significance of any buried remains to be lost and in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the

Borough.

4. No development [including demolition and site clearance] shall take place until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to control the environmental effects of the demolition and construction work has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The CEMP shall include measures for:-
- the control of dust, odour and other effluvia - the control of noise (including noise from any piling and permitted working hours) - the control of pests and other vermin (particularly during site clearance) - The control of noise from delivery vehicles, and times when deliveries are accepted and when materials can be removed from the site.
Construction activity shall be carried out in accordance with the approved CEMP.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area.

5. Demolition of the Meter House shall not commence until a licence for development works affecting bats has been obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England) and a copy (or an email from Natural England that the site has been registered under the bat mitigation class licence) has been submitted to the local planning authority. Thereafter mitigation measures approved in the licence shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details. Should conditions at the site for bats change and / or the applicant conclude that a licence for development works affecting bats is not required the applicant is to submit a report to the council detailing the reasons for this assessment and this report is to be approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to commencement of work.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal is in accordance with ODPM circular 2006/05 guidance on protected species and local plan policies CP7 and TB23 and fulfil duties under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 199.

6. No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:
- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
 - b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
 - c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
 - d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
 - e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
 - f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
 - g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW or similarly competent person).
 - h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal is in accordance with ODPM circular 2006/05 guidance on protected species and local plan policies CP7 and TB23.

7. Protection of Trees –

- a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).
- b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) shall commence until the local planning authority has been provided (by way of a written notice) with a period of no less than 7 working days to inspect the implementation of the measures identified in the Approved Scheme on-site
- c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.
- d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

8. Detailed Landscaping - No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works (in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan 051_1101) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The details shall include, as appropriate
- a) scheme drawings
 - b) proposed levels, contours and mounding including construction of Ha- Ha and amphitheatre
 - c) profiles and construction details of ponds and lakes
 - d) soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate
 - e) a Landscape Specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant

- and grass establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls
- f) hard landscaping materials including samples
 - g) minor artefacts and structures including specifications for the product and installation.
 - h) all boundary treatments, and other means of enclosure or controlling access such as gates, bollards and vehicle restraint systems, which shall include consideration of ecological permeability
 - i) measures required for ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain.

Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

9. Prior to commencement of development, the following shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval in writing:
 - a) Plans showing appropriate site lines on either side of the site entrance(s).
 - b) A scheme showing demonstrating the removal of undergrowth within the site lines and the continued maintenance of the site lines.

The scheme (b) shall be implemented prior to commencement of development and continued in perpetuity.

Reason: To ensure the safety of highway users.

10. Prior to commencement of the tunnel full details, including section drawings, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The tunnel and grassed amphitheatre shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, as there is lack of adequate detail on the plans received.

11. Before the development is commenced above slab level, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the buildings shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory. Relevant policy Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3.

12. Before the development is commenced above slab level, full details of a drainage system for the site shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:
 - A maintenance management plan for the SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development, as well as who will be responsible for the maintenance.
 - Details of the package treatment proposed and confirmation from the EA regarding the environmental permit.

Reason: To prevent increased risk of surface water runoff.

13. Lighting – Prior to their installation, details of a lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include measures to minimise sky glow and light spillage to neighbouring properties. Such details as may be approved shall be implemented in full before the first use of the development and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area.

14. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

15. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National holidays,

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy Policies CP1 and C)P3 and managing development delivery Local Plan CC06.

16. Parking to be provided -No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking space shall be permanently maintained and remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate on-site parking provision in the interests of highway safety, convenience and amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy

APPENDIX 2 - Parish Council Comments

PLANNING REF : 213610
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Council Office
: Pavilion, Recreation Road, Wargrave, Wokingham
: RG10 8BG
SUBMITTED BY : Wargrave Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 14/12/2021

COMMENTS:

Wargrave Parish Council objected to this application.
The proposed entrance and exit point and traffic movements along Kentons Lane are considered to be detrimental to highway safety.
Note: If approved, a condition is requested requiring the submission of a traffic management plan during the construction phase to take into consideration the impact upon the surrounding narrow roads of construction traffic.