

# Agenda Item 42.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
223083	09/11/2023	Arborfield and Newland	Arborfield;

<b>Applicant</b>	Angle Property (Arborfield) LLP and Farley Farms Partnership
<b>Site Address</b>	Land South of Bridge Farm, Reading Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9HT
<b>Proposal</b>	Outline application for the erection of up to 11No commercial units to provide 6,986sqm GIA commercial / employment development predominantly within Class B8 and/or Class E(g) uses with supporting facilities within Class E uses comprising ancillary offices, trade counters and food/drink facilities with highway works and strategic landscaping. Matters of Access, Siting and Scale to be considered only.
<b>Type</b>	Outline
<b>Officer</b>	Baldeep Pulahi
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major Application as site area is more than 1hecate and floorspace is more than 1000sqm.

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8 November 2023
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<p><b>1) APPROVAL subject to conditions, informative and S106 Legal Agreement securing the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Employment Skills Plan,</b></li> <li>- <b>Final Travel Plan</b></li> <li>- <b>Estate Roads (the carriageways and footways including the lighting to and drainage of the carriageways and footways to be constructed within the Site)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Or</b></p> <p><b>2) Refuse full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed within three months of the date of this resolution (unless officers on behalf of the Assistant Director – Place and Growth agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement)</b></p>

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>The proposal is for an outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access, siting, and scale, and whilst an illustrative masterplan accompanies the application, only the above including the principle of development are being considered at this stage. Therefore, detailed design including appearance and landscape are to be considered under any subsequent reserved matters applications should permission be granted.</p>

As the site is located within the Countryside, and not within the development limits as identified within the adopted Core Strategy, the proposals would not accord with adopted countryside policies which seek to restrict development in such areas other than in a limited number of exceptions.

The Council's latest employment need study highlights there is a need for B8 floorspace and that the site's location is practical and desirable for future storage and distribution uses. It is acknowledged the latest Employment Land Needs Review highlights there is no additional land need for office space, however the proposal is for a flexible use E(g) use.

Notwithstanding the spatial conflict with the Local plan, the site is bounded on all sides by the A327 (Observer Way) to the west, and woodland to the north and east. These acts as visual demarcation between the site and undeveloped open fields to the west. In this respect, the site is recognised and being well contained, and unlikely to harm the separate identity of settlements as represents an appropriate extension of the existing Bridge Farm. Notwithstanding this, a degree of harm is caused to the landscape which will ameliorate over time and be contained by structural landscaping along Observer Way.

From a highways and access perspective, the location of the development is considered to be sustainable and would allow safe access onto the site by foot, cycle, and private vehicle use. This is supported by the NPPF which requires LPA's to have due regard to development that is located outside of defined development limits provided it is in a sustainable location.

Given the location of the site the application proposals would not result in significant adverse impacts upon the surrounding highway network. The proposed access to the site is acceptable in principle.

There are residential properties along Greensward Lane, however the designated woodland (Ancient Woodland) along the boundary acts as a natural buffer to ensure the proposed units are shielded from view and residential amenity is protected.

No objections have been received on Drainage, Highways, Ecology, Environmental Health, Growth and Delivery, Public Rights of Way, and Heritage aspects of the proposal.

The NPPF requires 'significant weight' should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Such decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. Finally, the NPPF recognises that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements.

The proposed development would materially contribute to the local economy and socially perform a positive function, with any limited environmental impact mitigated by the structural landscaping and habitat enhancements.

These factors are considered to outweigh any principal policy conflict and moderate harm to the landscape. It is therefore recommended that the application is approved

subject to securing an Employment Skills Plan, Final Travel Plan and Estate Roads via a legal agreement and the conditions included in this report.

## RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
170433	Full application for the proposed extraction and processing of approximately 3.6 million tonnes of sand and gravel from a site of 190 ha, known as land, south west of bridge farm, together with erection of an aggregates processing plant, ready mix concrete plant and the provision of associated ancillary infrastructure and parking for HGV's and staff, with mixed restoration including importation of inert material to agriculture, lowland meadows, and wetlands. Proposed temporary diversion of public footpath 20 for the duration of operations.	Refused 23/08/2019
172209	Full application for the construction of a 2.3 km Arborfield Cross Relief Road (including shared use pathway) linking A327 Reading Road in the north and A327 Eversley Road in the south east. The proposal includes two new roundabout junctions link to the existing road network along the A327, a new staggered priority junction at Swallowfield Road and a new shared-use (non-motorised user) bridge where Arborfield Footpath 17 intersects the proposed relief road.	Approved 23/01/2018
181802	Application to vary the following conditions of planning consent 172209 - 2. Approved details. The planning permission is for the construction of a 2.3 Arborfield Cross Relief Road. The proposed minor material amendment seeks to enlarge the red line boundary to allow for a) amended staggered priority junction design at Swallowfield Road, and b) greater visibility at the southern roundabout junction with A327 Eversley Road. Proposed minor material amendment to the archway profile of green bridge at Arborfield footpath 17.	Approved 03/09/2019

<b>DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION</b>	
Proposed units	11
Proposed density -hectare	3
Previous land use	Undeveloped Land
Existing parking spaces	0
Proposed parking spaces	149
<b>CONSTRAINTS</b>	Countryside Ancient Woodlands Contaminated Land Consultation Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Local Wildlife Site Minerals Site Consultation Nuclear Consultation Zone – AWE 12km Zone Public Open Space – Pound Copse Tree Preservation Orders - TPO-0018-1968 Local Plan Update- Submitted Site 5AR024. Public Right of Way - ARBO FP 22 SSSI Impact Risk Zones Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zone – 5km Zone Ordinary Watercourses Main Rivers

<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>
<b>Internal</b>
WBC Growth and Delivery (Planning Policy) – No objection WBC Environmental Health – No objection WBC Public Rights of Way – No objection WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions WBC Highways – No objections subject to conditions WBC Ecology - No objection subject to conditions WBC Emergency Planning – No comments received WBC Landscape and Trees – Recommend Refusal WBC CIL- Advisory comment received
<b>External</b>
Berkshire Archaeology – No objection The Environment Agency – No objection Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No objection subject to condition Woodland Trust – No comments received. Natural England – No comments received. Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife – No comments received. Crime Prevention Design Advisor – No comments received. AWE Burghfield – No comments received. South East Water – No comments received. SSE Power Distribution – Advisory comment received.

Forestry Commission – Advisory comment received.  
 Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services – Advisory comment received.  
 South Gas Networks- Objection until such time as a detail consultation has taken place

## REPRESENTATIONS

Arborfield and  
 Newland Parish  
 Council

- Objects to the proposal due to the scale and location of these industrial units which would change irrevocably a rural setting on a site next to an ancient woodland.
- Any mitigations put forward by the applicant cannot offset the harms that would be caused to these irreplaceable environments.
- The proposal is contrary to policies IRS1, IRS2, IRS3, TC3, AD3 and GA1 from Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan and policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP7, CP9, CP10, CP11 and CP15 of WBCs core planning strategies.
- The siting of industrial units on the boundary of an ancient woodland would result in the deterioration of Pound Copse from light, noise and particulate pollution and have a detrimental effect to the wildlife that lives in and around the ancient woodland.
- The area proposed for development is currently classified as ‘countryside’ and no amount of additional planting around the site (which appears to be the conclusion of the assessment) will hide its very obvious industrial aspect from any visual aspects.
- The notion of additional landscape screening is there to hide development from view which tacitly admits the development is out of place in the location.
- The units would be in direct line of sight from the Observer Way by-pass and change a rural countryside aspect to that of an industrial estate no matter what steps are taken to colour the units.
- There is no demonstrable benefit from this application to the local area. There are already a number of small and medium sized industrial estates in the local proximity and a number are advertising for businesses to use their industrial units demonstrating that the area doesn’t need more industrial units as there is low take up of those already present with plenty of units vacant.
- Over-supply of industrial units in the area.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The building of a sizable industrial development next to Pound Copse will change the nature of the ancient woodland forever and cause a loss of amenity for the public who use these public open spaces by virtue of the scale and massing of the business units directly next to the ancient woodland, including noise and particulate pollution into Pound Copse.</li> <li>• The development is built of metal clad industrial units with no reference to local form or character of buildings.</li> <li>• The use of increased tree planting to screen the site is again acknowledgement of the impact on visual aspect of the site in both scale, massing, and design of the units.</li> <li>• The development would bring more heavy industrial vehicles to the roads across Arborfield parish and show marked increases in traffic volumes locally for both persons working at the development and the frequent lorries required to sustain an industrial estate and the businesses within.</li> <li>• There is little to no evidence of the inclusion of on-site renewables or any further environmental considerations for the site such as grey water recycling.</li> <li>• The development offers no alternatives to accessing the site but by car or industrial vehicle. This is an island site far away from any alternative travel arrangements.</li> <li>• This development would not contribute to local rural enterprises or to encourage rural enterprises, there are already many local industrial estates with vacant plots not being used. The development by its location is an expansion of the original farm building and away from the original farm building that have been on site for some time.</li> <li>• The development sits outside any of WBC Core employment areas.</li> </ul>
Ward Member(s)	<p><u>Comments received from Gary Cowen listed below:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unnecessary commercial development of a green field site that is situated within a Green Route Enhancement Area that would result in the erosion of the rural setting of the area.</li> <li>• The proposal provides no satisfactory protection to the adjoining ancient woodland.</li> </ul>

Neighbours	<p><u>11 neighbour comments received with the following concerns:</u></p> <p><b><u>General</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Objections to proposal</li> <li>• There are already a number of under occupied local commercial buildings available locally in Swallowfield Arborfield, Barkham, Winnersh, Spencers wood and other local villages and towns.</li> <li>• There are more suitable brownfield sites in Arborfield if there is a genuine demand for this development.</li> <li>• The development isn't required - local demand and uptake of similar units is low.</li> <li>• How many vacant units are there in the local area that could be used or be possibly up graded. This would save precious building materials and reduce the impact on the planet.</li> <li>• Proposal is not right use for the land – would be better suited for solar panels or allotment farming.</li> <li>• Impacts upon existing local infrastructure.</li> <li>• Concerns on light, noise, air, groundwater pollution and flooding to the local residents in this rural area</li> <li>• The promotion of the site is based on the proximity to an existing business park; however this is one which was established historically, not one which has been located due to its sustainability credentials.</li> <li>• The site is the highest quality agricultural land - 3a and 3b. At a time of uncertainty in food supply, it is more important than ever that we retained the best quality agricultural land for farming.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Principle of Development</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposal is in conflict with national and local planning policies and should be refused.</li> <li>• The proposals are contrary to paragraphs 174(a), (b), (d) and (e), 180(c) and 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework.</li> <li>• Conflicts with the Council's recent Climate Change Emergency Policy.</li> </ul>
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- Conflicts with the Council's Green Agenda.
- The site is located outside development limits and in the countryside and the proposals would cause harm to the character and quality of the landscape.

### **Character of Area**

- The proposed development will change the character of the local area - to add a modern development of commercial warehouse and buildings on the site will detrimentally change the nature and character of the local vicinity.
- Proposal will change the existing rural character setting into an urban industrial setting.
- Loss of more green fields with less and less space for wildlife. There will be none left soon, and this area will just be a mass of concrete.
- Harm to the character of the landscape, both in terms of the setting of Pound Copse itself and the wider surroundings.
- The size of the proposed buildings will have a huge effect on the amount of day light, sunshine etc on Pound Copse and its subsequent effect on its future growth development.

### **Neighbour Amenity**

- Impact on quality of life for nearby residential properties.
- Greensward Lane has been exposed to increased noise and air pollution due to the Observer Way construction and subsequent traffic use, and therefore local residents have already been negatively impacted by development in recent times – the proposal will add to this.

### **Highways and Parking Provision**

- The site is in an unsustainable location and therefore would increase reliance on the use of private motor vehicles as the primary mode of transport.



- There are no local facilities within reasonable walking distance of the development site. These cannot be anything but material considerations of significant weight against a proposed commercial development site, where frequent journeys would be generated by staff, customers, and delivery vehicles alike.
- The Transport Survey was undertaken before the Arborfield Village Road Improvement Scheme was implemented. The numerous traffic calming islands and reduced speed limits have affected the flow of traffic along Reading Road. The evidence used in the report does not reflect the current situation.
- The increased risk of accidents with more traffic turning right out of the estate onto Reading Road especially if there are a higher proportion of HGV's than currently use the site.
- Traffic generation calculations are not accurate- they do not take into account the new highway and traffic calming measures installed on Reading road to try and help reduce the volume and speed of traffic passing through the village.
- The site is not well served by public transport and would encourage over-reliance on the use of private motor vehicles, contrary to local development plan policies.
- The many pedestrians and cyclists who use the footpath which runs adjacent to Observer Way would experience detriment arising from the loss of these fields to built development.

#### **Flooding and Drainage**

- To increase an area of hard landscaping and building development will only cause further surface water runoff from this site and is likely to increase the probability and frequency of local flooding on Greensward lane and Pound Copse.
- Polluted water running off the site into Pound Copse will have an extremely detrimental effect on the existing veteran trees, wildlife etc that currently exists, in addition the chances of flooding in Greensward Lane will increase significantly.

#### **Landscape and Trees**

- The ancient woodland of Pound Copse, which runs parallel to the proposed development land, will lose natural sunlight from the west, potentially affecting the trees, flowers, and vast array of wildlife that the residents of Arborfield, as well as dog walkers from further afield, currently get to enjoy.
- Proposal will result in the deterioration of adjoining Ancient Woodland.
- The screening element proposed along the boundary with Observer Way, the purpose (or effect) of which would be to obscure the commercial development from view by the creation of a vegetative visual barrier rather than enhance anything.
- The irreversible harm that the proposals would cause to Pound Copse, an area of Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland recorded on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory, and the priority habitat it provides to a variety of species.
- The emphasis on 'softening' and 'screening' in plans and documentation submitted (as opposed to 'enhancing') serves to prove this and demonstrates also that the applicant is fully aware of the adverse visual impact the proposals would have.
- The LPA has relied periodically on a finding in planning appeal APP/X0360/C/16/3142135 that screening development proposals is not a good argument in principle, for the reason expressed therein. Another more-recent appeal (APP/X0360/C/21/3270397 - Land known as Woodlands Farm, Wood Lane, Arborfield RG41 4TS) which makes a similar point - unacceptable development cannot be made acceptable simply by trying to hide it.

### **Ecology and Biodiversity**

- The Ecological & Biodiversity Assessments were undertaken during a period of extreme drought and high daytime temperatures and in the weeks prior to them being done spoil was extensively piled up along the north border of the site. This may affect results of the survey.
- Detrimental impact upon on local wildlife and adjacent historic woodland which hosts a huge variety of species and trees.

- The proposed buildings will block the protected woodland from natural sunlight.
- The development will block wildlife from travelling from the ancient, protected woodland across to the fields on the other side of Observer Way.
- The industrialisation of agricultural land in a semi-rural environment, land permanently lost for food production and abundant wildlife.
- The development will damage functional habitat connections, such as open habitats between the trees in wood pasture and parkland.
- The proposals have included buffer areas to spaces adjoining the ancient woodland however hemming in such natural spaces with development on both sides will restrict the ability of these habitats to function as they would naturally and will lead to a convoluted green corridor with nowhere for the wildlife to disperse.

#### **Environmental Health**

- Concerns about noise, light, and air pollution during the construction phase upon residents of Greensward Lane which is a rural area.
- To confirm if there will be planning conditions in place to ensure there is no noise disturbance, no risk of toxic or dangerous fumes and no unsocial hours working if the activity generates noise.
- Use classes B8 and E(g) will include potential business activities - manufacturing, research and development, storage, distribution all of which could contribute to increased levels of the environmental pollutants listed and which cannot be controlled satisfactorily by condition.
- The undisturbed grassland performs the crucial task of carbon sequestration, which would be lost as a consequence of development.

#### **Public Right of Way**

- The local footpath enjoyed by many local residents and others from further afield will be totally detrimentally changed to a dark alleyway secluded and enclosed which is likely to become a magnet for anti-social behaviour and fly tipping.

	<p><u>Comments received from Greensward Lane Neighbourhood Group:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposals are located outside of Development Limits and are an unacceptable and unsustainable form of development for which inadequate justification exists.</li> <li>• The proposals would have a harmful, urbanising impact on the otherwise rural character and appearance of the countryside.</li> <li>• The buildings, by reason of their design, immediate proximity to the road and cumulative increase in built form, would result in an excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original farm buildings.</li> <li>• Harmful urbanising and industrialising impact on the visual and spatial amenities of the open countryside.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>PLANNING POLICY</b></p> <p><b>National Planning Policy Framework</b>  <b>National Design Guide</b>  <b>National Planning Practice Guidance</b></p> <p><b>Core Strategy (CS)</b></p> <p>CP1 – Sustainable Development  CP3 – General Principles for Development  CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements  CP6 – Managing Travel Demand  CP7 – Biodiversity  CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area  CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals  CP10 - Improvements to the Strategic Transport Network.  CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits  CP15 – Employment Development</p> <p><b>MDD Local Plan (MDD)</b></p> <p>CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  CC02 – Development Limits  CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees, and Landscaping  CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction  CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks  CC06 – Noise  CC07 – Parking  CC09 – Development and Flood Risk  CC10 – Sustainable Drainage  TB12 – Employment Skills Plan  TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use</p>
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TB21 – Landscape Character  
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development  
TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets  
TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character

### **Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)**

DM1 - Sustainable Development  
DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation  
DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species  
DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity  
DM10 - Flood Risk  
DM15 - Site History

### **Other**

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document  
CIL Guidance + 123 List  
Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document  
Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### **Site Description:**

1. The application site is located to the south of Bridge Farm Estate, the site is irregular in shape and measures approximately three hectares. To the north of the site lies Bridge Farm Estate which consists of several existing commercial buildings.
2. Primary access to the site is achieved by the access road linking an existing junction on Reading Road leading through the Bridge Farm Estates towards the northeast of the proposed development site.
3. The construction of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road (A327 Observer Way) runs parallel to the western boundary of the site and links to Reading Road.
4. The site is contained to the north and east by Pound Copse which is protected by a Tree Protection Order (TPO 18/1968), designated as ancient and semi-natural woodland and a Local Wildlife Site. This woodland is also designated as a public open space.
5. There is an existing PROW running alongside the eastern boundary of the site, this is identified as Footpath 22. This crosses observer way to the southwest.

### **Proposal Description:**

6. This application seeks outline permission for the erection of up to 11no. commercial units to provide 6,986 sqm GIA commercial/employment development within Class B8 and/or Class E(g) uses with supporting facilities within Class E uses comprising ancillary offices, trade counters and food/drink facilities with highway works and strategic landscaping.

7. The following Revised Plans and Documents have been received on 10 August 2023:

- Covering Letter 10 August 2023
- 18959 Design and Access Statement V4
- 18959 SK16K Site Location Plan (1)
- 18959 SK17F Existing Site Plan
- 18959 SK18U Illustrative Masterplan
- 18959 SK19L Massing Elevation (1)
- 18959 SK20M Proposed Typical Elevation (1)
- 18959 SK23I Illustrative Sections (1)
- 18959 SK24P Parameters Plan
- AP Arborfield TN 23-08-09

The following Revised Plans and Documents have been received on 23 August 2023:

- ANG 23850 09F Landscape Strategy Plan
- ANG 23850 Landscape Design Statement
- MBSK 230119-15 Proposed Shared Cycleway and Footway Link

The following Revised Plans and Documents have been received on 24 August 2023:

- 8149.LVIA 001f FV Part 1 August 2023
- 8149.LVIA 001f FV Part 2 August 2023
- Tree Protection Plan ANG 23850-03 B
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement Rev B August 2023 ANG 23850

8. Neighbours, Parish Council and Councillors have been reconsulted on the revised plans and documents on 17 August 2023. Whilst the Council Highways Officer is satisfied with the amendments on Highways and Access grounds, the amendments have not overcome the concerns of the Council's Landscape Officer. This is discussed in detail within the main body of the report.

9. The below table provides a breakdown of floorspace, height and car parking spaces provision for each proposed unit. The proposal will include 149 no. parking spaces. This would include 6no. unallocated car parking spaces and 40no. cycle parking spaces.

<b>Unit no.</b>	<b>Gross Internal Area (m2)</b>	<b>Maximum Ridge Height (m)</b>	<b>Car Spaces</b>
A	1144	9.25	18 (2 accessible)
B	502	9	12 (2 accessible)
C	502	9	12 (2 accessible)
D	645	9	12 (2 accessible)
E	645	9	12 (2 accessible)
F	645	9	11 (2 accessible)
G	323	9	14 (2 accessible)
H	645	9	14 (2 accessible)
I	645	9	14 (2 accessible)
J	645	9	14 (2 accessible)
K	645	9	12 (2 accessible)

### **Outline Applications:**

10. The application has been submitted in outline with access, siting, and scale to be considered, all other matters are reserved. Furthermore, the principle of development in this location will be assessed under the application.
11. An outline application must indicate the proposed use or uses, and the amount of development proposed for each use for consideration including the area where access points to the development will be situated.
12. Unless the applicant has indicated that those details are submitted “for illustrative purposes only” (or has otherwise indicated that they are not formally part of the application), the local planning authority must treat them as part of the development in respect of which the application is being made; the local planning authority cannot reserve that matter by condition for subsequent approval.

### **Principle of Development:**

13. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 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.
14. As a starting point, planning law requires that applications for planning permission must have regard to Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
15. In this case the development plan for the area is the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy 2010 (Core Strategy) and the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document 2014 (MDD). At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have regard to. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making but is a material consideration in any subsequent determination.
16. The application site lies outside of settlement limits and is within the countryside for planning policy purposes. The key considerations relating to the principle of this proposed development are:
  - National Planning Policy Framework
  - Local policy position
  - Neighbourhood Plan
  - Emerging Local Plan
  - Sustainable development

### National Planning Policy Framework

17. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the council’s Development Plan. The

NPPF is clear that where a development does not result in significant harm and is sustainable, it should be supported.

18. Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework relates to building a strong, competitive economy and makes specific reference to supporting a prosperous rural economy.
19. Paragraph 81 states that *'significant weight' should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*
20. Paragraph 83 states that *"Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings..."*
21. Paragraph 84 further states *"Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist."*

#### Local Policy Position

22. Given the current status of the emerging LPU, the proposals are to be considered against relevant policies within the current Local Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 – *Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development* 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.
23. The application site is located outside of the Core Strategy defined settlement boundaries and therefore, in policy terms, it is located within the countryside. Policies CP9, CP11 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC02 of the MDD are therefore relevant and seek to restrict development outside development limits other than in a few limited circumstances, however the scheme would not meet any of the cited exceptions criteria.
24. Development proposals beyond development limits, in the countryside, should be assessed against Core Strategy Policy CP11 - *Proposals outside Development Limits*. Policy CP11 establishes that development proposals will not normally be permitted except where specified exceptions apply:
  - 1) *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
  - 2) *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
  - 3) *It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*



- 4) *In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form, or footprint of the original building;*
- 5) *In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:*
  - a. *Bring about environmental improvements; or*
  - b. *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form, or footprint of the original building.*
- 6) *Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) *Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

25. It is acknowledged Criterion 3-7 are not relevant to the proposed scheme and therefore commentary is not provided on these aspects.

26. Regarding Criterion 1 which covers Rural Enterprise, the application site is also not located within Core Employment Area as designated by Core Strategy Policy CP15. The development plan approach to development for employment use is to provide for future employment needs in the borough through retaining the Core Employment Area's and encouraging their continued intensification by supporting development for Class B and Class E(g) uses.

27. In addition, Policy TB11 of the MDD Local Plan confirms that the majority of employment growth will take place within the identified Core Employment Areas, however, it is noted that CP15 also includes a qualitative element:

*“Provision will be made for a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of premises and sites in order to meet incubator/start up, move on, expansion and investment accommodation needs and having regard to the needs of specific sectors of the business community.”*

28. It is acknowledged the application site is not located within a Core Employment Area and that the existing development plan does not specifically foresee that employment growth will occur in this location, however the Council's latest employment needs study undertaken by Stantec highlights there is broadly an industrial need (which includes B1c, B2 and B8 uses) for 5ha floorspace over the longer-term plan period to 2036. This study discusses the need and supply balance, based on up-to-date monitoring evidence and a market review. This latest review was published on March 2023.

29. Whilst the existing development plan (and the emerging Local Plan Update) envisage that employment needs will be satisfied in Core Employment Areas, it is acknowledged the proposed scheme could contribute B1c (Now class E?) and B8 floorspace toward this identified need. The current Employment Land Needs Review by Stantec establishes additional B2 and B8 floorspace continues to be needed within the Borough.

30. Paragraph 1.19 of Employment Land Needs Review by Stantec 2023 outlines that the study will consider broad locations for new employment land, with two potential sites being identified within the brief that have been assessed as potentially suitable for employment uses in the council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2021). One the potential sites is the application site itself; Land to the south of Bridge Farm Business Park, Arborfield.

31. Paragraph 4.124 of the Employment Land Needs Review by Stantec states there could be scope for future industrial development in the form of micro, small and small/medium units

to capture demand for businesses that are servicing and/or have links to the area at Land to the South of Bridge Farm Business Park, Arborfield.

32. Paragraph 6.19 identifies Land to the South of Bridge Farm as a Potential New Site, with the observation made that subject to other policy considerations allocate for limited expansion. It goes on to state *Bridge Farm Business Park, Arborfield is a small industrial estate located on the A327 between Shinfield and Arborfield Cross. Similar to the expansion of Hogwood Industrial Estate we see that there could be scope for future industrial development in the form of micro, small and small/medium units to capture demand for businesses that are servicing and/or have/will links to the area. The future activities could include those associated with supply chain or 'spin offs' from the Shinfield Studios.* This is a material consideration and weighs in favour of the sites appropriateness for the intended use.
33. Furthermore, the evidence presented in the applicant's planning statement showing enquiries from various businesses corroborates this and broadly aligns with the Council's own evidence in terms of current and future needs.
34. Paragraph 5.8 in the Planning Statement states '*...It is anticipated the proposed development would generate up to 172 jobs once fully operated...., in addition to a number of jobs during the construction phase which would contribute significantly towards the local and wider economy*'. The creation of direct and indirect employment weighs heavily in favour of the development.
35. It is acknowledged there are already several businesses operating just to the north of the site, at Bridge Farm business park and whilst the proposal is not strictly defined as Rural Enterprise, the application site can provide a logical site for storage and distribution uses and an appropriate extension of the existing Bridge Farm commercial operations.
36. Regarding Criterion 2, proposals will not be permitted unless '*It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings*'. It is recognised the proposal will be located on undeveloped land; however, the application site co-exists with an existing commercial use at Bridge Farm, the natural buffer of the ancient Woodland to the east and the significant man-made intervention of Observer Way to the west. This relationship means the site is viewed as a logical and limited expansion of development into a visually constrained piece of undeveloped land in the countryside.

#### Best and Versatile Agricultural Land

37. Footnote 58 of Paragraph 175 of the NPPF states that, "*Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality*". It is acknowledged there is no definition in the NPPF of what is a "significant development" for the purposes of the Paragraph 175 test.
38. In this case the proposed development is a major development for the purposes of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 due to its size. That said, the site area is not considered to be significant in the wider context of available agricultural land in the vicinity or wider borough, furthermore, the land is not currently farmed, nor has been recently since the construction of Observer Way. Therefore, its loss is unlikely to alone render an agricultural holding economically unviable.

39. Policy CP1 of Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that avoid areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. This is consistent with Paragraph 170b of the NPPF which states that development proposals should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.
40. The site comprises three hectares of Grade 3 best and most versatile agricultural land which is not currently farmed. As of 2021 the typical average size of a farm in England was 85 ha with the smallest being 66ha, Gov.uk). Agricultural land is land or pasture which is used to grow crops or to rear animals intensively. The application site has not or is not being used in this way and if part of a larger holding its loss would not be detrimental to the farming industry. The development of this site would result in the loss of a small area of high-quality agricultural land; however, its designation does not outright prevent development providing a scheme can positively contribute to the natural and local environment.
41. In this case the proposed scheme intends to address this by concentrating the bulk of the built form towards the nearest commercial existing buildings within Bridge Farm i.e. the Clip and Climb building and grain store Building. The proposed units would be set back from the Observer Way, with Units J and K set further back within the site, the layout is presented as an appropriate extension of the existing Bridge Farm development.
42. Furthermore, it is an effective use of land which is of limited agricultural value and is contributing materially the local economy. Third party comments have been received suggesting alternative ways to put the land to use however this is outside the control of the Council.

#### Neighbourhood Plan

43. The Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in April 2020 and holds full weight in the decision-making process.
44. Policy IRS1 titled 'Preservation of separation of settlements' relates to development within countryside areas and seeks to preserve the character and appearance of the countryside.
45. Policy 1RS2 titled 'Recognise, Respect, and Preserve Identity and Rural Setting of Settlements' relates to new development being appropriately designed within a rural setting.
46. Policy IRS3 titled 'Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment and Green Spaces' relates to development proposals conserving and enhancing natural environments and green spaces.
47. Policy TC3 titled 'Conditional Support for Business in the Countryside and Agriculture' relates to new businesses or existing businesses being encouraged to reuse buildings that are vacant, derelict of unviable subject to scale, neighbour amenity, parking arrangements and no excessive encroachment. In addition, the best and most versatile agricultural land should be protected.

48. Whilst it is acknowledged the proposal would introduce new commercial units within Countryside and would not entail the re-use of existing buildings, the proposal is viewed as a logical expansion of an existing site enclosed by Observer Way and woodland but would make use of land which is not currently in an active agricultural use.
49. Policy AD3 titled 'High Quality Development with Generous Open Space, Properly Landscaped' relates to new development reflecting the character and historic context of existing dwellings. However in this case, the proposal is for commercial development, not housing therefore this policy does not apply.
50. Policy GA1 titled 'Minimise Additional Traffic on Unsuitable Roads' relates to development and their impact upon roads including road safety.
51. The application site is not located within settlements limits and is within designated countryside, whilst it is acknowledged the proposal would not fully comply with above policies, further consideration on the character, landscape, trees, natural habitat, and traffic are discussed in detail within the body of the report.

### The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste 2023

52. The site is located in an area where geological data suggests there are potential sand and gravel reserves. The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period.
53. Policy M2 aims to seek to protect mineral resources against unnecessary sterilisation by non-minerals development. The application covers an area approximately 3ha in size and this 3ha threshold is reflected in the supporting text under Policy M2, which states "*A minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved.*"
54. Whilst the northern most part of the site is in an area of sand and gravel deposits, the part of the site affected by this designation would appear to be the access road, with the great majority of the southern part of the site being located outside of the designated area. The designated area is well under the 3ha threshold and therefore it would be impractical to extract in this instance and safeguard the land for this purpose.

### Emerging Local Plan

55. The Local Plan Update (LPU) is at the consultative stage of preparation. The proposed site was promoted to the council as being available for Offices, Research and Development, Light/General Industry and Storage and Distribution (known as Land west of Greensward Lane (south of Bridge Lane Business Park) ref. 5AR024) in 2016.
56. Neither of the draft strategies proposed the allocation of the application site, either in full or in part, with other sites preferred to meet development needs. The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) exercise which supports evidence for plan-making by considering the broad performance of land, concluded that the site was considered to be suitable for employment development (then: B1c; now Class E, B2, and B8) of

approximately 5,000sqm as an extension of Bridge Farm Business Estate due to its positioning between it and the new Relief Road (January 2020). Whilst considered potentially suitable, the Draft Plan does not propose to allocate site 5AR024 for future development.

57. It is acknowledged here that Policy ER4 of the Draft Plan relates to ‘Supporting the rural economy’. ER4 states that:

*“The rural economy will be supported by small scale development within the countryside, where it is demonstrated that the proposal: Is genuinely required to support an existing or new rural business or enterprise;...”*

58. Criterion 2 of draft policy ER4 further requires that all development be contained within appropriately converted existing buildings or in well-designed new buildings which are proportionate to the use and respect the character of the rural setting.

59. Notwithstanding, given the Local Plan Update is at a consultative stage, the draft strategy and related draft policies have limited weight in determining planning applications. The assessment of land in the HELAA is high level with the purpose of informing options within plan-making and the conclusions of the HELAA are of limited weight in the decision-making process.

#### Sustainable Development

60. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development are defined within the NPPF as: economic, social, and environmental.

61. The economic role of the NPPF requires proposals to contribute to building a strong, responsive, and competitive economy. The social role requires planning to support strong, vibrant, and healthy communities and states that it should create a high quality-built environment. The environmental role states that the natural built and historic environment should be protected and enhanced and should mitigate and adapt to climate change. It is therefore necessary as part of any application for the LPA to consider carefully to what degree this proposal would meet the sustainable development goals of the NPPF in terms of its economic, social, and environmental roles.

*Economic role* – The proposal for 11no. commercial units including access and landscaping would clearly result in material economic benefits which would be brought about through employment opportunities associated with the construction period, whilst spin offs trade from construction workers and supplier sourcing would contribute to the local economy. The Council’s Employment Land Needs Review 2023 identifies Land to the South of Bridge Farm as a potential new site for future industrial development. The proposal would generate in the region of 172 jobs including 4 apprenticeships and 3 jobs created through the Employment Skills Plan. Following this, long-term job creation would undoubtedly result in a boost to the local economy and required planning obligations agreed within the S106 Agreement. These benefits fulfil an very positive economic role and in accordance with the NPPF, significant weight should be given the economic merits of the case.

*Social Role* – The proposal will provide local residents the opportunity to live and work locally. The proposal will include additional cycle and footpath links to the development. The proposal is located within a sustainable location with different modes of transport available to the site. This would in turn reduce commuting time, assist in creating a healthier work life balance for residents.

*Environmental Role* – The proposal can be expected to demonstrate a degree of inherent sustainability through compliance with current local plan energy efficiency objectives and up to date Building Regulations standards. The site has good access to the strategic road network for the proposed uses, with access to public transport modes and thus is considered acceptable in terms of site sustainability. On ecological grounds it is expected the development can achieve biodiversity net gains including opportunities to implement highly quality enhancements through the provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, and refugia/hibernacula for amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates. Although harm to the landscape character has been identified (which will be discussed in later sections) this impact is considered to be limited and localised due to the visual barrier of Observer Way which defines the westward extent of existing built form in this area, with a strong woodland buffer preventing and extended visibility beyond the site.

### **Character of the Area**

62. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. NR1 of the Borough Design Guide states development should respond to key characteristics and features of the site. NR2 to NR12 are also applicable in terms of ensuring a positive entrance, presentation, car park layout, boundary treatments and servicing and appropriate height, roof form and materials that are compatible with the area.
63. The application site is undeveloped greenfield land within designated countryside and the relevant policies in the development plan and the NPPF refer to the requirement to maintain and/or enhance the quality environment. As stated above, the loss of agricultural land for new development is not precluded in principle subject to other considerations.
64. It is acknowledged the proposals are outline in nature (with the exception of access, siting, and scale), however an Illustrative Masterplan, Illustrative Site Plan and Illustrative Sections Plan have been submitted to accompany the application. Landscape and Appearance are reserved matters and are not being considered at this stage.
65. During the application, a series of revision were made in response to consultee feedback and concerns expressed by the LPA. The revisions include the following:
- Reduction in size of Unit K and associated loading bay and removing high fencing to create a larger open space at the southern end of the PRoW (ARB022) and opening up views towards the wider countryside.
  - Reduction in roof heights of the units.
  - Revisions to the building cladding and use of a dark colour to ensure the buildings recede visually when viewed from the west against the woodland behind. (illustrative only)

- Additional mature tree planting positioned to provide visual containment of the western ends of the proposed building units. (illustrative only)
- Additional trees to the car park which will be in planted in linear tree pits to a high specification. (illustrative only)
- Additional tree and hedgerow planting off site on the western side of the A32 (illustrative only)

### Siting

66. The submitted Parameters Plan indicates the site access, proposed development zones, areas reserved for buildings (Siting), maximum heights of building, structural landscaping zones, protected landscaping areas and landscape buffers.
67. The proposed units would be primarily orientated east-west direction with the main vehicular access into the site via the existing junction with Reading Road and through Bridge Farm industrial site. This would result in their narrowest part of building being visible from Observer way, the main visible receptor.
68. Whilst travel by vehicle along Observer Way (speed limit 50mph) is not considered to be an activity for which views of a high amenity value would be expected, the development would undoubtedly be visible for a stretch, with or without structural landscaping. Recognising Observer Way is a main arterial route into and out of Arborfield Strategic Development Location, any part of the development visible for that short duration approaching or leaving the A327/Reading Road roundabout would be read in context to the status and nature of this road, and is not considered to result in significant long-term harm from a visual amenity perspective
69. Therefore, it is considered the application site is of an appropriate size to accommodate 11no. commercial units and their layout is appropriate.

### Scale

70. The proposal will predominately provide 1.5 storey high commercial units orientated in an east -west direction. The proposed dimensions of the units are detailed below:

<b>Unit no.</b>	<b>Gross Internal Area (m2)</b>	<b>Maximum Ridge Height (m)</b>
A	1144	9.25
B	502	9
C	502	9
D	645	9
E	645	9
F	645	9
G	323	9
H	645	9
I	645	9
J	645	9
K	645	9

71. The proposed development would be located next to an existing commercial use at Bridge Farm and ancient Woodland and residential properties beyond to the west. These comprise both single storey and two storey dwelling houses.
72. It is acknowledged the nearest commercial buildings to the application site have varying heights. The Clip and Climb building has a maximum ridge height of 9.6 metres and the building known as the Grain Store within Bridge Farm (nearest to the proposed entrance of the development) has a maximum ridge height of 6.9 metres. The heights of the proposed commercial units would be reflective of their intended purposes and appropriate in relation to nearby existing commercial buildings when viewed for a short duration along Observer Way. They would be read in context with Bridge Farm as a continuation/ existing expansion of commercial uses and to a lesser extent the established linear development along Greenswards Lane
73. Due to the separation distance between these residential properties along Greensward Lane and the proposed commercial units (including the ancient Woodland acting as a natural buffer), it is anticipated there would be little in the way of attainable views from Greensward Lane of the development for much of the year. Therefore, it is considered the scale, massing and form of the proposed commercial units would cause any significantly adverse effect on the character of the nearby residential properties.

#### Appearance

74. Whilst the detailed design of the proposed commercial units would form part of a Reserved Matters application, the submitted Design and Access Statement states the proposed units would have a hipped roof design with profiled metal cladding (dark colour finish) and rooflights. The external walls would comprise a mixture of composite and profiled metal cladding panels, with the Design and Access statement referring to the use of feature timber cladding panels to help emphasise entrance features and provide elevational interest. Aluminium framed glazed doors and windows will be provided to entrances and office areas with canopies over entrances. This appearance and materiality in principle is acceptable, with further details and material samples able to be secured by condition.

#### **Heritage:**

75. Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, states *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'*
76. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990) is the primary legislation in England covering both listed buildings and conservation areas. Section 66 of that Act requires the local planning authority in considering giving planning permission for development affecting a listed building or its setting to 'have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'
77. Section 72 of the Act states that 'a local authority shall have regard to the desirability of preserving features of special architectural or historic interest, and in particular, listed buildings.'



78. Policy TB24 relates to Designated Heritage Assets including Conservation Areas. The policy sets out the Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough, requiring a demonstration that proposals would at least conserve and where possible enhance a Conservation Area.
79. Bridge Farm sits at the northern end of Observer Way adjacent to the Reading Road. The historic farmhouse and associated farm building to west and south of it are seen on the 1873 OSMap when this was New Farm. These remnants of a traditional farmstead are non-designated heritage assets.
80. The proposed commercial units and the access (along with the new units) would maintain a sufficient separation distance from the group of historic former farm buildings to have no discernible effect on them or their immediate setting. The proposed new access points would not have heritage implications; therefore, no objections are raised by the Council's Built Heritage Officer.

### **Archaeology:**

81. Policy TB25 of the MDD Local Plan requires the retention of archaeological sites in situ.
82. The submitted Archaeological Assessment is reasonable in its conclusion that no further archaeological work is required at the application site following the two earlier phases of geophysics and evaluation trenching being undertaken as part of separate projects.
83. The conclusions of both evaluations established no archaeological features were encountered therefore the site appears to have low archaeological potential and no objections are raised on the proposal on this aspect.

### **Neighbouring Amenity:**

84. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity.
85. The nearest residential properties are situated beyond Pound Copse (tree belt) along Greensward Lane, which is located northeast of the application site.
86. Due to the presence of Pound Copse as a buffer between the site and neighbouring properties at Greensward Lane and the intervening separation distance of 60 metres at the closest point between the buildings and the nearest dwelling), the proposal is not considered to result in overlooking, overbearing or loss of light impacts.

### Noise

87. Paragraph 185 of the NPPF aims to minimise potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development. Similarly, Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity, Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact.
88. There are both commercial and residential properties located within 60 metres of the proposed site. Any expansion of business use is likely to lead to increased noise

generation through additional traffic movements to and from the site and within the site itself.

89. A Noise Assessment (BS4142 Standards) is to be submitted to ensure the proposal will protect residential occupiers from any noise impacts and include noise mitigation measures. This is secured by condition and will inform the overall design and appearance of the buildings. Existing background Noise from Observer way is also a consideration which must be taken into account in any assessment at reserved matter stage.

### **Highway Access and Parking Provision:**

90. Policy CP6(f) and (g) of the Core Strategy 2010 require mitigation against any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network and the enhancement of road safety.

#### General

91. The application has been supported by a Transport Assessment, and the response is based on the revised illustrative masterplan drawing number 18959-SK18 Rev U.

#### Parking

92. It is proposed that there will be 149no. spaces on site and each unit having their own parking. The level of parking is above the Council's Parking standards for this land use which is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.
93. It is proposed that there will be 23no. disabled spaces on site. This is above the parking standards of 8 disabled spaces which is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.
94. All the parking spaces are found to be 5 metres x 2.5 metres and there is ample space behind the parking spaces for safe manoeuvring. There is ample space for HGV parking in front of each unit.
95. A parking management plan is a required and is secured by condition. This will need to be read in conjunction with any landscape proposals.

#### Electric Vehicle Charging

96. It has been agreed that electric vehicle charging provision will be provided in line with Building Control Approved Document S which is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.
97. The Council's Highways Officer is satisfied the EVC spaces can be secured under Reserved Matters as part of the overall hard and soft landscape layout and appearance, and the details of the EVC spaces are secured by condition.
98. The parking management plan will need to include the process by which the passive spaces will be brought into operation. Passive spaces are defined as having the necessary infrastructure in place at the time of development.

#### Cycle parking

99. It is proposed that there will be 40 cycle parking spaces which is above the Council's standards and this level is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

100. It is proposed that these will be in five cycle stores around the site near the units, which is acceptable. The final details of the cycle parking can be included within the Reserved Matters application.

#### Trip Rates

101. The submitted trip rates have been reviewed by the Council's Highways Officer and are acceptable.

#### Traffic Impact

102. Two junctions have been modelled as part of this transport assessment, namely Observer Way/Reading Road and the access with Reading Road, with classified turning counts undertaken for these junctions on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2022. The junctions have been assessed and are acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

103. Furthermore, the Council's Highways Officer is content that the traffic from the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on the highway network.

#### Walking and Cycling

104. It is proposed that there will be a pavement on the eastern side of the site road. This is acceptable and will need to be 2 metres wide.

105. It has been agreed that all accesses would have dropped kerbs and tactile paving, final details of this are to be included within the Reserved Matters application.

106. The existing Public Right of Way through the site does not appear to be affected by this proposed development but will need to be protected during the construction period. This can be secured by condition under a construction management and tree protection plan.

107. It is proposed a cycle link into the cycle route along Observer Way will be provided, this is welcomed by the Council's Highways Officer. Full details of the cycle link are to be secured by planning condition.

#### Access

108. The proposed development will be accessed from the existing junction with Reading Road which is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer. Approval of this access will be dependent on the submission of further information on the junction modelling and the swept paths. This is secured by condition.

109. The amendment to the access would be the provision of a 2-metre-wide pavement, and the site access would be provided through an extension of the existing site road, this is acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

### Site Roads

110. A 6-metre-wide extension to the existing site road is proposed. The accesses to the existing uses on site would become priority junctions and there be a further four priority junctions off this access road to provide access to the units.
111. It has been confirmed that the access road will be maintained as a private road.
112. It has been agreed that the roads will be built to adoptable standards with 2-metre-wide pavements (including service margins) for the utilities. There would need to be limited crossing of the roads with utilities.
113. With the site roads remaining private, this is included in the s106 agreement.
114. No Road Safety Audit is required as there is only a minor change to the junction with the A327.

### Visibility Splays

115. Visibility splays have been submitted which are acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

### Swept Paths

116. Swept paths for a 16-metre articulated HGV and a 10-metre lorry have been submitted, and the swept paths of the turning and parking area have been submitted which are acceptable to the Council's Highways Officer.

### Framework Delivery and Servicing Plan

117. A Framework Delivery and Servicing Plan is required and is secured by condition.

### Framework Travel Plan

118. A Framework Travel Plan is required given the scale of the development and is secured by condition.

### Framework Construction Method Statement

119. A Framework Construction Method statement is required and is secured by condition.

### Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

120. The Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service have provided an advisory comment which states the following - Fire services access should comply with B5 of ADB Volume 1 2019 with additional local requirements below under the Berkshire Act 1986:
  - The minimum carrying capacity for a pumping appliance is 16 tonnes.
  - The minimum carrying capacity for a high reach appliance is 26 tonnes.
  - Structures such as bridges should have the full vehicle carrying capacity.

121. Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors.

### **Highways – Sustainable Location:**

122. Policies CP1, CP6, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of access to local facilities and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. Expanding on this, paragraph 4.57 aims to prevent the proliferation of development in areas away from existing development limits as they are not generally well located for facilities and services and would lead to the increase in use of the private car.
123. The Council's Highways Officer raises no objections to the proposal on unsustainable location grounds. The site is located adjacent to Bridge Farm Business Park and to the east of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road and has good access to the strategic road network for the proposed uses and is considered an acceptable location in terms of site sustainability.
124. There is a bus stop located approximately 230 metres from the site which provides a regular service between Wokingham and Reading, and provision of cycle routes, footpaths and crossing facilities.
125. The proposal will include on-site ancillary facilities for food and drink, it likely these would reasonably be incorporated internally within the units.

### **Flooding and Drainage:**

126. Section 10 of the NPPF, Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC09 and CC10 of the MDD requires flooding protection, sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.
127. The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted and drawing no. APGREENSWARD.23/23 shows the proposed drainage strategy. The Council's Drainage Officer is satisfied with the information provided and raises no objections to the proposal on drainage or flood risk grounds. The maintenance of the drainage strategy is secured by condition.

#### The Environment Agency

128. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is defined as areas having a low probability of flooding. There is a statutory designated main river within the north of the site and the access road crosses the main river within an existing culvert.
129. The Environment Agency raises no objection to the proposal as it appears that there would be no changes to and widening in the access road or the existing culvert.

#### Thames Water

130. Thames Water have identified an inability of the existing foul water network infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the proposed development and recommend a condition to secure details on the foul water network is applied.

## **Landscape and Trees:**

131. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local aims to protect green infrastructure networks, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.
132. The site is contained to the north and east by Pound Copse which is protected by a Tree Protection Order (TPO 18/1968), designated as ancient and semi-natural woodland and a Local Wildlife Site. This woodland is also designated as a public open space, which is accessed by a public footpath.
133. Public Right of Way ARBO 22 runs from Greensward Lane and along the western boundary of Pound Copse. A new bypass has recently been constructed (Observer Way) to the west of the site.

### Arboricultural Assessment

134. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement and associated Tree Protection Plan has been provided to support the application. It identifies the trees and woodland within and adjacent to the site including Pound Copse. A 15-metre buffer has been maintained between the edge of the proposed development and woodland edge which is the minimum required within the Standing Advice for Ancient Woodland and no objection is raised in this regard

### Landscape Character

135. Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA), dated November 2019, identifies a number of different landscape character areas (LCA's) across the Borough and provides key information regarding each of the LCA's. The site falls within two landscape character areas: C1 Arborfield River Terrace and J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay.
136. The relevant Valuable Landscape Attributes, Landscape Condition, Landscape Strategy for each of the areas as listed below:

#### *C1 Arborfield River Terrace*

- *Surface water, including ponds, historic moats, and drainage ditches, adds visual interest and provides potential for small-scale wetland habitats.*
- *Small deciduous woodlands, some of ancient origin and containing BAP priority habitat punctuate the agricultural landscape providing visual diversity within the open arable fields, and form a backdrop to views, as well as providing important ecological habitats.*
- *Dispersed settlement pattern linked by tree-lined rural lanes emphasises the open and rural character of the landscape.*
- *Valued area for recreation with a network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape.*
- *Historic parkland landscapes at Swallowfield and Arborfield provide time-depth. Mature oaks create visual interest and strong silhouettes against the open sky.*
- *Clear views to adjacent character areas due to the gently undulating, open landscape.*

- *A tranquil area with a sense of remoteness, removed from roads and visual intrusion of settlement.*

#### *Landscape Condition*

*Individual landscape components of the Arborfield River Terrace are generally in moderate-poor condition. The most intact components are the physical landscape, particularly the terrace landform, and the tranquil rural environment, although the area generally lacks a strong sense of place. The hedgerow network and historic field system have declined, many of the coppices are unmanaged and the vernacular architecture is being eroded by the introduction of unsympathetic components. The M4, Winnersh Relief Road and on-going construction of the Arborfield Cross Relief Road and expanding development north of the M4 will further fragment the agricultural landscape.*

#### *Landscape Strategy*

*To maintain the landscape character of the Arborfield River Terrace the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the quiet, rural, and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural settlement and rural lanes.*

*The key aspects to be enhanced and actively managed are the areas of historic parkland (registered and not currently registered), the former hedgerow boundaries and trees, and the coppiced woodlands. Open views should be maintained, including to Arborfield Church and across the Loddon river valley.*

*In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern, minimising primary, and secondary influences from adjacent landscape areas.*

#### *J2 Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay:*

##### *Valuable Landscape Attributes*

- *Barkham Brook and associated wetland which provide important ecological habitats including wet meadow and BAP priority habitat wet woodland.*
- *Pattern of arable and pastoral fields, which provides a rural character away from settlement, and creates an important separation between settlements.*
- *Mature hedgerow trees and in-field trees which provide a wooded character and visual interest within the landscape.*
- *Historic Second World War pillboxes and other defence works, which are now a scenic part of the landscape.*
- *Rural settlement pattern of farms, hamlets and small nucleated villages outside the urban area which provides a rural character and a link to the past.*
- *Recreational value of the network of rights of way between settlements.*
- *Views across the landscape to surrounding character areas, particularly across the river valleys to the west and to the wooded hills to the north and south provides a loose sense of enclosure.*

#### *Landscape Condition*

*The landscape is in overall moderate condition, due to the pattern of arable and pastoral fields, and remnant wetland influences associated with Barkham Brook. However, the hedgerow network is fragmented and the introduction of further development through the Arborfield Garrison SDL and associated infrastructure will further fragment the rural settlement pattern altering the character of the area.*

### *Landscape Strategy*

*To maintain the landscape character of the Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the remaining rural character of the landscape.*

*The key aspects to be conserved and enhanced are the field pattern with mature hedgerow trees, wetland and woodland habitats, rural lanes, and historic features.*

*In terms of development, the aim is to integrate new development into its landscape setting and retain the open and rural character of the landscape between settlements.*

137. A number of incremental changes have been made through the application process to address the earlier concerns raised regarding the impact on the wider landscape. The revisions are as listed in Paragraph 62.
138. Whilst the Council's Landscape Officer welcomes the improvements that have been made to the proposed scheme as listed above including off-site on the western side of Observer Way and as illustrated on the Landscape Strategy Plan (ANG23850 09E), they maintain their objection to the proposal.
139. In considering the revised LVIA that has been submitted, the Council's Landscape Officer has provided revised comments to this effect which are detailed below.
140. In the assessment of the site, Paragraph 3.34 states '*The condition of the Site is poor with the ground still marked by its use as a works compound. The poor appearance of the field detracts from the woodland setting behind it which blocks views to the village of Arborfield.*' It is observed the site has been returned to greenfield site with no traces of the original works compound. There has been however dumping of rubble and subsoil adjacent to the scrub on the northern boundary of the site as seen in the Photo 1 below, but this has a limited impact on the wider landscape character. In looking to the south from PRow ARBO22 across the site towards the landscape beyond (Photo 2) it is difficult to distinguish a difference between the landscape character of the site and the wider rural countryside to the south-west.
141. However it is acknowledged the revisions to the proposal has increased the area open land retained at the southern end of the development, following the removal of the initial loading bay and associated fencing, therefore the views of the countryside to the south-west are likely to be retained.



Photo 1



Photo 2



142. Landscape Sensitivity is discussed in Paragraph 3.5 which assesses the site as having a Low Landscape Sensitivity. This is due to the combination of low susceptibility of change and low landscape value. Although it is agreed the site has a low landscape value when assessed against GLVIA3 Box 5.1, the assessment of Landscape Susceptibility (paragraph 3.40) is not agreed by the Council's Landscape Officer.
143. It is agreed there is an existing commercial use at Bridge Farm to the north of the site which is strongly related to the existing activity found along Reading Road, however the site is significantly influenced by the TPO woodland and the rural character of the surrounding countryside rather than the adjacent commercial element. It is not considered the susceptibility of the landscape resource is Low.
144. There is no definition within the LVIA methodology in regard to levels of susceptibility to change, the following definition noted by the Council's Landscape Officer suggests that the site has a medium /high susceptibility to change based on the following:

*The landscape receptor is moderately/highly susceptible to the proposed development because the relevant characteristics of the landscape have some/limited ability to accommodate it without undue adverse effects, taking account of the existing character and quality of the landscape.*

145. The assessed landscape sensitivity for localised and wider rural landscape around the site, is discussed at Paragraph 3.6 of the LVIA. It is agreed that the within the wider landscape setting the site has a medium landscape sensitivity to development within the site especially as there are visual connections to the wider rural landscape to the west as seen in Photo 2.
146. Following improvements in the level of tree planting across the site and as described in the bullet points above, on balance that there would be a minor beneficial effect from the landscape scheme as shown on the Landscape Strategy Plan (Rev E) on the wooded context aspect of landscape character area J2.
147. Further key characteristic are the rural roads and associated ditches, hedgerows, and trees. The LVIA states that the proposed development is considered to be beneficial to this key characteristic as it would '*...introduce new rural elements to the A327 road corridor such as hedgerow and tree planting along the western boundary.*'
148. Although the planting within the site and alongside Observer Way will be increased to supplement the existing planting in this location as shown in Photo 3 below, it is not clear how any new planting in this location '*...will reduce the impact of noise and movement on the village of Arborfield*'. In response, the impact of noise has been considered above and the Council's Environmental Health Officer and noise mitigation measures are to be secured by a planning condition. Regarding the *movement on the village of Arborfield*, it is not clear what is meant by the Landscape Officer on this aspect, however the Highways Access and traffic movements to the site have been considered within the *Highways* section of the report.

Photo 3



149. The effects of the proposed development on the localised landscape character are discussed in paragraphs 5.11 – 5.16 of the submitted LVIA. Paragraph 5.14 states that *‘there would initially be a high magnitude of change within the site because of the introduction of new built form and landscape planting’* but goes on to say that *‘where the development can be glimpsed through the planting it will be perceived within the context of the established residential Bridge Farm development on the land adjacent to the Site and so would not be untypical of this village edge situation’*.
150. With the additional proposed planting the conclusion is that the significance of effect at Year 1 will now be amended to Moderate to Minor Adverse (combination of Sensitivity & Magnitude of Change) within the site and Minor to Negligible Adverse on the localised landscape.
151. It is noted the Bridge Farm development can only be seen in the context of the site when travelling south along Observer Way and adjacent to Bridge Farm, and with open fields seen on either side of the road. Looking north along Observer Way towards Bridge Farm from the footpath crossing, the existing commercial buildings are not obvious in the view behind the existing tree line even in winter months as seen in Photo 4.

Photo 4



152. The site is not in a village edge location and is well contained by existing landscape features from the north and east, however it is very open to the west with strong visual connections to the rural landscape towards the River Loddon. However, it is noted here that there no clear views of the river or other water bodies from this northern part of the site. The Council’s Landscape Officer considers even with the increase in the proposed planting within the site, there will be a Moderate Adverse significance of effects in terms effects in relation to the local landscape character.
153. The LVIA indicates in Paragraph 5.15 that the more comprehensive landscape strategy proposed will integrate the development *within the immediate landscape and village setting resulting in a reduced degree of change*. The Council’s Landscape Officer does not agree that the setting of the site relates to a village character given the site is within a rural agricultural landscape with negligible built influences. However, the built influences identified as *‘negligible’* is not solely agreed, the application site is surrounded

by a high degree of built development taking into account the construction of the Observer Way, nearby roundabout, the existing commercial buildings at Bridge Farm and associated parking areas and perimeter fencing. Views of existing buildings are visible from the Observer Way.

- 154. The LVIA suggests the magnitude of change will reduce to Negligible (rather than Low as previously assessed) therefore the significance of effects within the site will be Minor Adverse at Year 10, and within the local landscape will reduce to Negligible Adverse. Whilst it is recognised the additional landscape planting reflects the surrounding landscape character of the area in a more positive way, it would not significantly reduce the magnitude of change that will occur from the 11 commercial units, new access road and extensive car parking and which was assessed at Year 1 as being High.
- 155. The Council's Landscape Officer considers the Magnitude of change from the proposed development at Year 10 to be Medium rather than Negligible as there is likely to be visible deterioration in the landscape due to the proposed development, with the Significance of Effect of the proposed development on the site being Moderate Adverse at Year 10.
- 156. In considering the Effects in the Visual Environment, Table 4: Effect on Visual Environment gives a summary of the various viewpoints taken in and around the site, the location of which is indicated on the Viewpoint Location Plan. It is agreed viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 have limited or no visibility of the site from these locations due to the intervening vegetation, therefore as a result there will be no effect on views from these locations by the proposed development.

Viewpoint Location Plan



157. The revised LVIA has made changes to the assessment of viewpoints taken from the PROW at locations 6, 7 & 8 where the significance of effects were assessed at Year 1 as having a Major Adverse effect, but at Year 10 this had completely changed to being Major Beneficial. The LVIA now states this will now be Moderate Adverse, whilst the Council's Landscape Officer agrees the revised significance of effect, they do not consider that the Magnitude of change will reduce to Low at Year 10.
158. All three viewpoints are just within or very close to the site boundary so although the planting will help in a minor way, the views will still contain the commercial units in a substantial part of the view which will have a significant detrimental impact on views from the footpath.
159. In addition, the Council's Landscape Officer notes the setting of the PROW is important and although it is shown to pass through the 15m landscape buffer, now with native woodland and wildflower planting, the character and nature of the footpath will completely change from being rural, to peri urban where it transitions at the edges from rural to urban. However, the 15-metre landscape buffer would separate the route from the development and is seen as an extension to the existing woodland walk located further north. The revision to the proposal ensures the remainder of the PROW would remain open and retain views towards the wider countryside.
160. One of the valued landscape attributes of the LCA's is the network of bridleways and public footpaths which allow enjoyment of the landscape and the Council's Landscape Officer notes the PROW will be affected by the development. However, the Council's PROW Officer has raised no objections on the proposal.
161. In the revised LVIA the assessment of Viewpoints 9 & 10 now identifies the Visual Effects from both viewpoints to be Moderate Adverse at Year 1 but reduces slightly to Moderate to Moderate / Minor Adverse at Year 10 as the proposed landscape planting matures, and therefore starts to break up views of the site. This reflects the additional proposed planting on the Landscape Strategy Plan (Rev E) which now includes off-site planting to the west of Observer Way. The Council's Landscape Officer notes the new commercial buildings will be seen from PROW 22 & 20 in the west due to the size, scale and massing of the buildings and the introduction of vertical elements within the site.
162. There are wide ranging views from the west to the site and protected woodland is clearly seen in views from the PROW giving a defined wooded horizon. Due to the slight rising landform to the north and existing vegetation, the existing commercial buildings at Bridge Farm have limited visibility and form only a very minor part of the view from the west. This is illustrated in Photo 5 below which was taken from Footpath 22 west of the site and close to the junction with PROW 20.

## Photo 5



163. The Council's Landscape Officer considers the proposed development would be a significant component in views from the wider landscape and within Photo 5 than the existing Bridge Farm Buildings, taking a substantial part of the view.
164. The Council's Landscape Officer recognises as the proposed landscaping matures the buildings will become softened in this view, though the extent of the site and numbers of large buildings within the site will mean that the prominence of the buildings will still be discernible at Year 10 post completion and consider the Visual Effects at Year 10 to be Moderate Adverse.
165. Overall, the Council's Landscape Officer does not consider the findings of the LVIA has shown that the site and surrounding landscape has the capacity to accommodate the proposals without harm to the site and local landscape character or views from the various PROW.
166. They recognise a number of changes have been made to the scheme that will have a positive benefit to the scheme, proposed development will have a Moderate Adverse effect on the local landscape character and the site itself, with Moderate Adverse Effects from a number of viewpoints close to the site and in views from the west even after 10 years post completion.
167. In terms of the landscape strategy for both Landscape Character Areas C1 & J2, the Council's Landscape Officer considers the proposal does not conserve the sparse settlement pattern nor retain the open and rural character of the landscape between settlements.
168. The applicant has submitted a rebuttal to the Council's Landscape Officer's response to the scheme (8149 Arborfield Addendum 002 Landscape and Visual Assessment dated 10 October 2023), which summaries as follows:
- *It is acknowledged that the Site is within two-character areas, although there are no obvious signs of this on Site. The boundary between the two-character areas is*

*arbitrary in relation to the Site's features and is loosely based upon the 50m contour.*

- *With regards to being contrary to Policy CP11, as the Site is in the countryside and outside a settlement boundary, this is again not how the Site is perceived when visiting it. The Site lies adjacent to a community woodland with housing along Greensward Lane facing this. The buildings of Bridge Farm are prominent from the roundabout of the A327 by-pass road and give a sense of settlement. The by-pass reads as a road that defines the edge of a settlement on the perimeter of a village.*
- *The Site consists of an open field with similar vegetation and gently sloping topography on both its northern (C1) and southern (J2) sides. With regards to C1: River terrace, the river is not visible from the Site and the B327 by-pass separates the Site from the wider river terrace landscape to the north, west and south. The northern part of the Site, within C1, is closest to the Bridge Farm commercial area and has soil and rubble fly tipped upon it.*
- *With regards to being contrary to Policy TB21, because the development would be unable to retain or enhance the features of landscape character areas C1 or J2, it was found that many of the generic characteristics of these character areas do not apply to the site-specific situation of the Site which is adjacent to a by-pass road and commercial estate.*
- *The development will result in the planting of mature hedgerow trees and hedgerows, the PRow adjacent to the Site will be surrounded by a 15m buffer of additional woodland improving the existing woodland habitat, and a loading bay and buildings have been removed and re-sized to accommodate views of the wider countryside from the southern end of the Site.*

169. Despite the objections raised by the Council's Landscape Officer on the proposal, the Landscape Strategy is indicative at Outline Application and is to be considered as part of the Reserved Matters. The Landscape Strategy and Tree Protection measures are to be secured by planning conditions. Notwithstanding this, the proposal is recognised to cause moderately adverse effects, to certain views in proximity to the site and this identified harm will be considered in the planning balance alongside all over factors.

### **Ecology:**

170. Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy 2010 requires the conservation of sites for nature conservation in accordance with national, regional, county, and local biodiversity action plans. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.

171. An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) (ACD Environmental, Ref: ANG23850\_EclA Rev A, September 2022) alongside a spreadsheet of condition assessments with the baseline habitats mapped has been submitted with the application.

### Ancient Woodland

172. The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment recognises that the adjacent Pound Copse local wildlife site is identified as ancient woodland according to Natural England's ancient

woodland inventory. The submitted plans indicate a 15-metre buffer being applied to the ancient woodland, with this buffer being subjected to appropriate landscaping for a buffer to ancient woodland. The Landscaping Scheme is secured by Condition.

173. A 15-metre buffer is in line with the minimum stand-off that national government guidance recommends. The Ecological Impact Assessment has not explicitly considered whether a greater stand-off is necessary for the nature of the proposal. There is explicit consideration of an external lighting strategy to minimise light spill into the woodland during the operational phase. If a lighting strategy for light sensitive species is secured, then a 15m buffer is appropriate for this proposal. The lighting strategy is secured by condition.
174. The Council's Ecology Officer further recommends a Construction Environment Management Plan is secured by a planning condition to the construction activities have appropriate mitigation measures relevant to the ancient woodland – protection from dust, other pollution.

#### Biodiversity Net Gain

175. Section 7 of the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment provides headline results of a biodiversity net gain calculation and indicates that the calculation used the Defra metric 3.1. The spreadsheet submitted is not the complete Defra metric 3.1 for this site, however it does help explain how the baseline condition assessments were made for the habitats identified in the Phase 1 habitat map (indicated in Appendix 1 of the ECIA).
176. The Council's Ecology Officer has attempted to replicate the DEFRA metric assessment for this site to see if the headline figures are reasonable and concludes at this outline stage where landscaping remains a reserved matter, that it is possible for this development to achieve a biodiversity net gain on-site. The Council's Ecology Officer states this will need to be examined in the submission of any future Reserved Matters Application.
177. In order to avoid a net loss for habitat biodiversity, it will be crucial for enhancements to occur in the ancient woodland buffer and within the woodland on-site. At this stage, it has not been established how these enhancements will be secured and maintained for a minimum period of 30 years. It is recommended the maintenance and management of the on-site enhancements under a Landscape and Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) is secured by condition.

#### Protected Species and Species of Principal Importance

178. The Council's Ecology Officer agrees the development proposal is unlikely to adversely affect Great Crested Newt, Common Toad, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, or Water Vole.
179. Additionally, the risk to Badgers, Hedgehogs, Reptiles, and Nesting Birds during the construction phase can be adequately mitigated through the application of mitigation measures as outlined in the Ecological Impact Assessment. It is recommended the collation of mitigation measures relevant to the construction are integrated with the detailed construction plan. This should be included within the CEMP required for the ancient woodland mitigation which is secured by condition .
180. A potential for lighting to cause an impact on commuting and foraging bats has been identified. The Council's Ecology Officer agrees there is a risk in both the construction



and operational phases. It is recognised that bat roosts are present in Pound Copse, and it is likely that foraging and commuting will occur across the site.

181. The risk in the construction phase can be adequately mitigated via measures secured within a CEMP condition. The risk in the operational phase will need to be assessed and appropriate mitigation secured as the reserved matters detail is resolved.

### Species Enhancements

182. Section 7 of the Ecological Impact Assessment proposes a number of species-specific enhancements. The provision of bat boxes, bird boxes, refugia/hibernacula for amphibians, reptiles, and invertebrates are welcomed to deliver high quality biodiversity enhancements to the scheme.
183. It is not agreed Schwegler 1FF bat boxes are the optimum choice of bat box for the development proposal and there are better boxes suited to integration with buildings. Additionally, the proposal for just two bat boxes is not proportionate to the scale of the development proposal and the Council's Ecology Officer recommends a minimum of eight are to be included within the final design in any future Reserved Matters application.
184. It is not agreed three bird boxes are proportionate to the scale of the development proposal and it is recommended a minimum of eight bird boxes are included within the final design in any future Reserved Matters application.
185. It is recognised that the full detail of species enhancements has not been brought forward at this stage as this is an outline application; the detail and implementation of the species enhancement is secured by condition.

### **Building Sustainability:**

186. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption.
187. This is amplified by MDDL policies CC04: Sustainable design and construction and CC05 Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010).
188. As the proposal is for commercial development of over 1,000sqm, Policy CC05 also advises that planning permission will only be granted for such proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
189. The Design and Access Statement states the development would be designed to achieve a BREEAM 'Very Good' rating, incorporating sustainability initiatives and reduce the buildings energy consumption. The proposed units will be designed to ensure they comply with the energy efficiency requirements including Part L of the building regulations In addition, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;
- Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport;

- Electric vehicle charging points
- Provision of more natural light into the units through Roof lights
- South facing solar panels
- Responsibly sourced materials
- Energy systems designed to minimize pollutant emissions

190. As the application is in outline, a detailed sustainability and energy efficiency report to demonstrate compliance with Policy CC05 is secured by condition.

#### **Air Quality:**

191. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states planning permission will be granted for development that minimises emissions of pollutants into the wider development and, inter alia, avoids areas where pollution may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers.
192. The application is supported by an Air Quality Assessment and Transport Assessment (Mayer Brown) that has modelled current and predicated traffic flows, including the air quality background and modelled scenario once the development is in place.
193. The proposal will open up the area to an increase in traffic flow particularly of HGV's and LGV's, this has been modelled to show an insignificant effect in term of air quality in the area, therefore no objections are raised by the Council's Environmental Health Officer on air quality grounds.

#### **Land Contamination:**

194. The site is listed as being potentially contaminated. A preliminary ground investigation survey will need to be provided to demonstrate suitability of the site for the proposed use which is secured by condition.

#### **Waste Storage:**

195. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan requires adequate internal and external storage for the segregation of waste and recycling, as well as provision for green waste and composting and an appropriate area for ease of collection.
196. Full details of waste storage and collection have not been provided, this will be secured by condition.

#### **Public Right of Way:**

197. Footpath ARBO FP 22 runs from Greensward Lane and is close to the site boundary. Users of the footpath would only travel a short duration alongside the development and the Council's PROW Officer envisages there being no impact from a PROW perspective and recommends the footpath is kept clear in the event of an approval. This would require the footpath to be kept clear of the storage of building materials. This can be controlled by condition.

#### **Thames Basin Heath SPA:**

198. Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
199. The site is within 5km of the TBH SPA however the scope of the works does not result in a net gain in the number of dwellings whereby there is no requirement for mitigation.

#### **Employment Skills Plan:**

200. Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD, requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an employment skills plan (ESP) with a supporting method statement.
201. Based on a cost of works of £7,160,650, the Employment Skills Plan would generate a need for seven community skills support positions (e.g., work experience or CSCS training courses), four apprenticeships and three jobs. This is incorporated into a s106 legal agreement. At the time of writing, the s106 agreement is in draft stage and awaiting completion.

#### **Planning Balance:**

202. It is acknowledged that there is a conflict with Local Plan Policy CP11 which seeks to protect the countryside by restricting development, however the site is well contained and represents an appropriate extension of the existing Bridge Farm. It is recognised the proposal would have a degree of landscape harm resulting in moderately adverse effects, to certain views in proximity to the site, however, this is considered to be outweighed considerably by the economic and social benefits of developing the site as envisaged, giving rise to substantial employment opportunities and contribution to the local economy. Furthermore, despite the degree of landscape harm in the short to medium term, the proposal does present opportunities for Biodiversity Net Gains and habitat species enhancement which are additional environmental benefits.
203. As outlined within the report, the Council's latest employment need study highlights there is a need for B8 floorspace and that the site's location is practical and desirable for future storage and distribution uses. It is acknowledged the latest Employment Land Needs Review highlights there is no additional land need for office space, however the proposal is for a flexible use E(g) use. The site location is well contained, and the proposal would represent an appropriate extension of the existing Bridge Farm.
204. The location of the development is considered to be sustainable and would allow safe access onto the site by foot, cycle, and private vehicle use; in addition, the residential properties' amenities would be protected from the proposed uses.
205. Overall, the application will deliver high quality development in accordance with the Council's overall spatial strategy and although it is situated beyond the existing settlement boundary within the countryside, the benefits of the scheme are considered to outweigh limited conflict with the underlying aims and objectives of the development plan.
206. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to the conditions listed and an accompanying S106 agreement.

**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. Timescales

a) No development shall commence until details of the access, appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale (hereinafter called "the reserved matters") have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and the development shall be carried out as approved.

b) Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority not later than three years from the date of this permission. The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved.

*Reason: In pursuance of s.92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).*

### 2. Approved Details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings outlined below. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

The following plans and documents received on 14 October 2022:

- Biodiversity Metric DRXL SX
- Biodiversity Metric Habitat Condition
- Tree Survey ACD Environmental ANG23850ts
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy Mayer Brown
- Archaeology Desk Based Assessment RPS Group
- Air Quality Assessment Mayer Brown
- Ecological Impact Assessment ANG23850\_EcIA

The following plans and documents received on 9 February 2023:

- Junction Modelling Geometrics
- Swept Path Analysis MBSK220725-01
- Arborfield Response Note (Highways)

The following plans and documents received on 28 March 2023:

- 1.0 LVIA Addendum
- Revised ECIA D with Plan
- Revised Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Calculation Rev C

The following plans and documents received on 10 August 2023:

- Covering Letter 10 August 2023
- 18959 Design and Access Statement V4
- 18959 SK16K Site Location Plan (1)
- 18959 SK17F Existing Site Plan

- 18959 SK18U Illustrative Masterplan
- 18959 SK19L Massing Elevation (1)
- 18959 SK20M Proposed Typical Elevation (1)
- 18959 SK23I Illustrative Sections (1)
- 18959 SK24P Parameters Plan
- AP Arborfield TN 23-08-09

The following plans and documents received on 23 August 2023:

- ANG 23850 09F Landscape Strategy Plan
- ANG 23850 Landscape Design Statement
- MBSK 230119-15 Proposed Shared Cycleway and Footway Link

The following plans and documents received on 24 August 2023:

- 8149.LVIA 001f FV Part 1 August 2023
- 8149.LVIA 001f FV Part 2 August 2023
- Tree Protection Plan ANG 23850-03 B
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement Rev B August 2023 ANG 23850

The following document received on 12 October 2023:

- 8149 Arborfield Addendum 002

*Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved*

### **3. Units Limit**

The number of units constructed on the application site pursuant to the planning permission hereby approved shall not exceed 11 units.

*Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning*

### **4. Details of car and motorcycle parking**

The reserved matters application for the development shall include details of car and motorcycle parking in accordance with the Council's policies and which are to be approved in writing by the Council. No building shall be occupied until the vehicular accesses, driveways, parking and turning areas to serve it including any unallocated space have been provided in accordance with the approved details and the provision shall be retained thereafter. The vehicle parking shall not be used for any other purposes other than parking and the turning spaces shall not be used for any other purposes than turning.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6, CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (Feb 2014), the Parking Standards Study within the Borough Design Guide 2010.*

## **5. Cycle parking**

The reserved matters application for the development shall include details of secure and covered bicycle storage/parking facilities serving that dwelling for the occupants of, and visitors to the development. The cycle storage/parking shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details before occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

*Reason: In order to ensure the development contributes towards achieving a sustainable transport system and to provide parking for cycles in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6, the Parking Standards Study within the Borough Design Guide 2010 and CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.*

## **6. Materials**

Prior to commencement of development samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

*Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the buildings are satisfactory.  
Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3*

## **7. Drainage- Exceedance Flow**

Development shall not take place until an exceedance flow routing plan for flows above the 1 in 100+40% climate change event has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The proposed scheme shall identify exceedance flow routes through the development based on proposed topography with flows being directed to highways and areas of public open space. Flow routes through gardens and other areas in private ownership will not be permitted. The scheme shall subsequently be completed in accordance with the approved details before the development is occupied.

*Reason: To ensure satisfactory drainage of the site and avoid flooding. It is important that these details are agreed prior to the commencement of development as any works on site could have implications for drainage in the locality.*

## **8. CEMP (Construction Environment Management Plan)**

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 secure appropriate mitigation measures for protected species, species of principal importance and ancient woodland during construction, as appropriate under section 15 of the NPPF and local plan policies CP7 and TB23.*

#### **9. Ecological Permeability and Species Enhancements**

Prior to commencement of the development, a detailed strategy for species enhancements and ecological permeability for the site shall be submitted to the local authority for its approval. This strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and appropriate to the local ecological context. Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local authority in writing.

*Reason: To ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance) and complies with Planning Policies for Wildlife including CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.*

#### **10. Highway Construction details**

Prior to the commencement of development, full details of the construction of roads, cycleways, footways, and cycle link to Observer Way, including levels, widths, construction materials, depths of construction, surface water drainage and lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Each building shall not be occupied until the vehicle access to serve that building has been constructed in accordance with the approved details to road base level and the final wearing course will be provided within 3 months of first occupation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

*Reason: To ensure that roads and footpaths are constructed to a standard that would be suitable for adoption as publicly maintainable highway, in the interests of providing a functional, accessible, and safe development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

#### **11. Visibility Splays to be approved**

Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, details of the proposed vehicular access to include visibility splays of 43 metres x 2.4 metres. The access shall be formed as so-approved, and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The access shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no



other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

## **12. Construction Method Statement**

No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:

- i) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
- ii) loading and unloading of plant and materials,
- iii) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
- iv) the erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate
- v) wheel washing facilities,
- vi) measures to control the emission of dust and dirt during construction,
- vii) a scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works

*Reason - In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

## **13. Accommodation of construction vehicles and deliveries**

No development shall commence until provision has been made to accommodate all site operatives, visitors and construction vehicles loading, off-loading, parking, and turning within the site during the construction period, in accordance with details to be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The provision shall be maintained as so-approved and used for no other purposes until completion of the development or otherwise as provided for in the approved details

*Reason: To prevent queuing and parking off site, in the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP6*

## **14. Travel Plan to be approved**

Prior to the commencement of the development a Travel Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The travel plan shall include a programme of implementation and proposals to promote alternative forms of transport to and from the site, other than by the private car and provide for periodic review. The travel plan shall be fully implemented, maintained, and reviewed as so-approved.

*Reason: To encourage the use of all travel modes. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policy CP6.*

## **15. Electric Vehicle Charging**

Prior to commencement of development above finished floor level, an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This strategy shall include details relating to onsite electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including a plan showing coverage of electric vehicle

charging provision across the site in accordance with Building Control Approved Document S and details of installation of charging points and future proofing of the site. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed strategy thereafter.

*Reason: In order to ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.*

#### **16. Cycle link**

Prior to commencement of the development, there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, details of the proposed cycle link on to Observer Way to include visibility splays and surfacing. The cycle link shall be formed as so approved, and the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height prior to the occupation of the development. The cycle link shall be retained in accordance with the approved details and used for no other purpose and the land within the visibility splays shall be maintained clear of any visual obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

*Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel, convenience, and highway safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6.*

#### **17. Hard and Soft Landscaping**

Prior to the commencement of the development, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority. 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. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.*

#### **18. Protection of trees**

a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until a scheme which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority (the Approved Scheme); the tree protection measures approved shall be implemented in complete accordance with the Approved Scheme for the duration of the development (including, unless

otherwise provided by the Approved Scheme) demolition, all site preparation work, 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.

b) No development (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 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.*

## **19. Decentralised Energy Supply**

Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for generating 10 % of the predicted energy requirement of the development from decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

*Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.*

## **20. Boundary Treatments**

Prior to the construction of the development hereby approved, details of all boundary treatments and other means of enclosure (including the entrance and pedestrian turnstiles) shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority for a written approval. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development hereby approved is first brought into use and shall be retained and maintained in

the approved form for the lifetime of the planning permission unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The boundary treatment and means of enclosure shall be installed in accordance with the details so approved and maintained for so long as the development remains on the site.

*Reason: In the interests of amenity and highway safety, in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3 and CP6, and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21.*

## **21. LEMP (Landscape and Ecological Management Plan)**

A landscape and ecological management plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and be approved in writing by, the local planning authority prior to commencement of above ground works of the development. The content of the LEMP shall include the following:

- a. Description and evaluation of features to be managed.
- b. Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- c) Aims and objectives of management – to include delivery and maintenance of biodiversity net gain on-site, buffering of the adjacent ancient woodland, and delivery and maintenance of species enhancements on site.
- c. Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- d. Prescriptions for management actions.
- e. Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- f. Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
- g. Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed, and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme. The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

*Reason: To secure biodiversity net gain and appropriate landscape management in proximity to the ancient woodland in line with section 15 of the NPPF and local plan policies CP7 and TB23.*

## **22. External Lighting**

Prior to occupation, a lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and

b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

*Reason: To avoid and mitigate adverse impacts on protected species as per local policies Core Strategy CP7 and MDD TB23.*

### **23. Parking Management Strategy**

Prior to the first occupation of the development, a Parking Management Strategy for the management of the on-site parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The management of the parking within the site shall be in accordance with the approved details thereafter.

*Reason: To ensure satisfactory development in the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6 and CP21.*

### **24. Delivery Servicing Plan**

Prior to occupation a Delivery and Servicing Plan be submitted to and approved in writing by Local Planning Authority.

*Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.*

### **25. Lighting – Highways**

Details of external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority before the development is occupied. The details shall include location, height, type and direction of light sources and intensity of illumination for all external lighting strategies including details of lighting for all highways, cycleways, footpaths, public areas, and buildings. No further external lighting shall be installed without the written approval of the local planning authority.

*Reason: To prevent an adverse impact upon wildlife and safeguard amenity and highway safety in accordance with NPPF and Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP7 and TB23.*

### **26. Bin Storage**

No building shall be occupied until details of bin storage area/ facilities have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The bin storage area and facilities shall be permanently so-retained and used for no purpose other than the temporary storage of refuse and recyclable materials.

*Reason: In the interests of visual and neighbouring amenities and functional development. Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04.*

## **27. Noise Assessment**

Before the development hereby permitted commences a Noise Assessment shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority which specifies the provisions to be made for the control of noise emanating from the proposed units and the approved scheme shall be fully implemented prior to the occupation of the units.

The noise assessment shall be carried out by a suitably qualified acoustic consultant/engineer and shall consider the provisions of BS4142. The assessment shall identify all sources of noise including vehicles, plant or machinery and proposed operating times.

*Reason - To protect the occupiers of the nearby property/dwellings from unreasonable noise levels and to ensure satisfactory noise attenuation measures are installed. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06*

## **28. Plant / Machinery to be attenuated.**

All fixed plant/machinery installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be enclosed and/or attenuated so that noise output does not exceed at any time a level of 5dB[A] below the existing background noise level when measured at a point one metre external to the nearest residential or noise sensitive property. Any recommended noise mitigation measures should be retained and maintained thereafter.

*Reason - To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the occupiers of properties. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.*

## **29. Unexpected Land Contamination.**

If land contamination is found at any time during site clearance, groundwork, and construction the discovery shall be reported as soon as possible to the local planning authority. A full contamination risk assessment shall be carried out and if found to be necessary, a 'remediation method statement' shall be submitted to the local planning authority for written approval.

*Reason - To ensure that any contamination of the site is identified at the outset to allow remediation to protect existing and proposed occupants of property on the site and/or adjacent land.*

## **30. Retention of trees and shrubs**

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*

### **31. Future Buildings Standards**

The building(s) shall meet the interim Future Buildings Standard in accordance with the requirements of the Building Regulations. No building shall be occupied until compliance has been confirmed by an accredited assessor certifying that a 27% reduction in carbon dioxide emission has been achieved per the Standard.

If BREEAM certification is intended to be used to discharge this condition: prior to works proceeding beyond the slab level, a Design Stage Certificate for each building comprised in the development, shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Design Stage Certificate shall be prepared by a suitably qualified assessor and shall demonstrate that that the building(s) will achieve a minimum BREEAM (or equivalent) rating of 'Excellent'.

Within three months of first occupation of the development, a Post-Construction Certificate in respect of that building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Post-Development Certificate shall be prepared by an accredited assessor and shall demonstrate compliance with BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' as a minimum.

*Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development in accordance with the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04 and CC05.*

### **32. Permitted Uses**

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) (or any other statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification) and of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any other statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), the development hereby approved shall not be used for any other purpose other than B8 and E(g) uses without express planning consent from the Local Planning Authority being obtained.

*Reason: In the interest of proper planning, employment, and to avoid adverse impact on the public highway in the interests of highway safety. Relevant Policy: Core Strategy Policies CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policies CC07.*

### **33. Additional Floorspace**

No additional floorspace, including mezzanine floors, shall be constructed within the building/s hereby approved without prior written permission of the local planning authority.

*Reason: To prevent an over-development of the site and to ensure adequate parking. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.*

#### **34. Hours of operation**

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 CP3*

#### Informatives

##### 1. Legal Agreement

This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act dated (TBC) the obligations in which relate to this development.

##### 2. Pre-Commencement Conditions

The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details. If this is not clear, please contact the case officer to discuss.

##### 3. Access Construction

The Head of Highways at the Council Offices, Shute End, Wokingham [0118 9746000] should be contacted for the approval of the access construction details before any work is carried out within the highway (including verges and footways). This planning permission does NOT authorise the construction of such an access or works.

##### 4. Travel Plan

The requisite Travel plan would need to comply with the latest national and local guidance:

- 1) NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport)
- 2) The Essential Guide to Travel Planning (DfT, March 2008)
- 3) Delivering Travel Plans Through the Planning Process (DfT, April 2009)
- 4) A Guide on Travel Plans for Developers (DfT)
- 5) Making Residential Travel Plans Work (DfT, June 2007) All accessible at:  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/sustainable/travelplans/>
- 6) <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-local-transport>



Also:

WBC Transport Plan 3 and Active Travel Plan 2011 – 2026

WBC Workplace Travel Plan Guidance and Residential Travel Plan Guidance Documents, covering workplace travel plans and residential travel plans provide local guidance and are available on the Borough's website.

5. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of:
  - amended plans being submitted by the applicant to overcome concerns relating to siting and landscaping.

The decision to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF is considered to be a positive outcome of these discussions.

**APPENDIX 2 - Parish Council Comments (attached separately due to length of comments)**