

Agenda Item 52.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
231524	15/12/2023	Wokingham Without	Wokingham Without;

Applicant	Hall Hunter Partnership
Site Address	Heathlands Farm, Honey Hill, Wokingham, RG40 3BG
Proposal	Full application for the proposed installation of no. 1,762 Photovoltaic Panels, each panels mounted on no. 4 concrete footings.
Type	Full
Officer	Marcus Watts
Reason for determination by committee	Major application (<1 hectare)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 13 December 2023
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL subject to conditions and informatives listed at Appendix 1 below.

SUMMARY

This application proposes the installation of 1,762 solar panels on an agricultural field associated with Heathlands Farm, Honey Hill. The energy produced would largely support the operations of the farm.

The proposal is acceptable in principle and is considered to be of an acceptable scale with no adverse impact on the surrounding countryside. The development would be sited on a contained field and viewed in the context of the surrounding development associated with the farm. Views of the site from public vantage points are very limited due to intervening vegetation and development.

All other material planning considerations have been assessed and no adverse harm has been identified. Through negotiation with the applicant additional landscaping has been proposed which secures a biodiversity net gain following the development.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is an extensive planning history relating to the wider site and its operations but no planning history relating the parcel of land subject to this application. Recent planning applications for the wider site include:

230627 – Full application for the proposed stationing of 12no. 2-bedroom static mobile homes for seasonal agricultural workers associated with Heathlands Farm, June to September inclusive (Part-retrospective). – Conditionally Approved 06/07/2023

223019 – Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the use of land for the siting of 41 mobile homes occupied by agricultural workers with associated operational development. – Approved 07/12/2022

192245 – Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey extension to the south elevation of the existing soft fruit processing plant to provide covered storage for pallets and packaging. – Conditionally Approved 17/12/2019

192244 – Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey extension to the east elevation of the existing soft fruit processing plant to provide additional space for automated processing and packaging. – Conditionally Approved 17/12/2019

F/2012/0176 – Proposed installation of solar PV panels to SSE roof of refrigeration unit. – Conditionally Approved 22/03/2012

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION	
Previous land use	Agricultural
Proposed parking spaces	N/A
CONSTRAINTS	Countryside Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone (Red) Archaeological sites consultation zone Mineral Safeguarding Area Thames Basin Heaths - Special Protection Area – 5km

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Ecology:	No objection
WBC Highways:	No objection, subject to conditions
WBC Flood Risk & Drainage:	No objection, subject to condition
WBC Landscape and Trees	No objection, subject to condition
WBC Environmental Health:	No objection
WBC Built Heritage:	No objection
Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust:	Advice regarding ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancements
Berkshire Archaeology:	Request further information prior to determination
Natural England:	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council: No objection, provided that the level of visual impact on public viewpoints is acceptable.

Local Members: No comments received.

Neighbours: No comments received.

PLANNING POLICY

**National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance**

Core Strategy (CS)

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
CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)

MDD Local Plan (MDD)

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02 – Development Limits
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks
CC07 – Parking
CC09 – Development and Flood Risk
CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
TB21 – Landscape Character
TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
TB25 – Archaeology

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document
CIL Guidance + 123 List
WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan (2020)

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development

1. This application is for the proposed installation of 1,762 Photovoltaic (solar) panels on a parcel of agricultural land associated with Heathlands Farm. Each panel would be mounted on 4 concrete footings while additional landscaping has been secured through negotiation with the applicant. The generated electricity would largely serve the farm's operations with any surplus sold to the National Grid. The applicant has advised that an interim agreement has been made with National Grid.
2. Heathlands Farm produces and handles the distribution of soft fruits for many of the UK's supermarket chains with operations peaking in the summer season. The site is to the immediate south of the main farm buildings and currently hosts 11no. polytunnels which almost span across the whole site with a track road around the perimeter for access. The applicant has advised that the control unit and other paraphernalia associated with the solar panels would be hosted within the buildings to the north and not on the site itself.
3. The site is bordered to the east by mobile homes which are occupied by seasonal workers during the summer period only. To the west and south are the other operational fields associated with the farm and the site is well screened from the highway (Honey Hill) due to the surrounding development and mature trees adjacent to the boundary.

Principle of Development

4. 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.

Renewable Energy

5. The principle of renewable energy infrastructure is strongly supported in the local Development Plan and the NPPF. Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 which commits it to playing as full a role as possible in reducing our carbon footprint to be net carbon zero by 2030.
6. MDD Local Plan policy CC05 states "*Local opportunities to contribute towards decentralised energy supply from renewable and low-carbon technologies will be encouraged*". Additionally, part 3 of the policy states "*Proposals for renewable energy and decentralised energy works, including wind turbines, must demonstrate that:*
 - a) *They are appropriate in scale, location and technology type;*
 - b) *Are compatible with the surrounding area, including the impact of noise and odour;*
 - c) *Do not have a damaging impact on the local topography and landscape;*
 - d) *There is no significant impact upon heritage assets, including views important to their setting*".

7. Section 14 of the NPPF refers to meeting the challenge of climate change and paragraph 152 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Paragraph 158 is relevant to this proposal and states that *“When determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon development, local planning authorities should:*
 - a) *not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and recognise that even small-scale projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions; and*
 - b) *approve the application if its impacts are (or can be made) acceptable.”*
8. Overall, the principle of a medium-scale renewable energy development is supported by local and national policy concerning sustainability, subject to its impacts being acceptable.

Development within the Countryside:

9. The development plan does not allocate sites or identify suitable areas for the provision of renewable and low carbon energy. Each application for renewable energy use needs to be assessed on its merits against the development plan as a whole and impact on the landscape.
10. The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in designated Countryside. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not ordinarily permit development outside of settlement limits apart from the exceptions set out in the policy. The relevant exceptions which should be considered in this case are:
 - 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;*
11. Firstly, it must be acknowledged that the proposal would support a sustainable rural enterprise. The generated electricity would contribute significantly to the farm’s sustainable practices by supporting the transition away from reliance on fossil fuels while also cutting operational costs in the long term. Any surplus energy produced would be sold to the grid, allowing the business to further invest in its practices. The proposal would therefore accord with CP11’s first exception. The development and diversification of agricultural businesses is also supported by Paragraph 84 of the NPPF.
12. The proposed development would be carried out on a self-contained field within the existing boundaries of Heathlands Farm and would replace existing polytunnels on site. It would also be located immediately south of the main farm buildings and would subsequently be viewed in the context of these buildings as well as the surrounding structures rather than as an isolated form of development within the open countryside. It is therefore considered that the proposal would not lead to

excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings in accordance with CP11's second exception.

13. The proposal would partly comply with the third exception due to the proposed solar panels replacing existing polytunnels within the site. While it does not comply expressly with its criteria, the overall aims of CP11 must be assessed when considering the principle of development. The proposed development does not conflict with the policies aims in protecting the separating identity of settlements and maintaining the quality of the environment which will not be notably impacted by virtue of the site's self-contained nature within the working farm and localised impact on character. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy CP11 in principle.

Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land

14. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that avoid areas of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF refers to the natural environment and recognising the natural and capital benefits of BMV land. The Planning Practice Guidance for solar development also states that LPAs will need to consider that *“where a proposal involves greenfield land, whether (i) the proposed use of any agricultural land is shown to be necessary and poorer quality land has been used in preference to higher quality land; and (ii) the proposal allows for continued agricultural use where applicable and/or encourages biodiversity improvements around arrays.”*
15. BMV land is classed as grades 1 – 3a. Grade 3b is considered moderate quality while grades 4 and 5 are deemed poor and very poor quality. The application site is classified as grade 4, while part of the wider farm site falls within grade 3. It is considered that the applicant has demonstrated the necessity of the site for the proposed development while its arrangement also encourages biodiversity improvements around the arrays. The proposal therefore avoids BMV agricultural land entirely and accords with the aforementioned policies and guidance.

Conclusion on principle of development

16. Overall, the proposal is supported by national and local policy relating to sustainability and renewable energy provision and would contribute significantly to a sustainable rural enterprise in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP11 and the NPPF. The selected site also avoids BMV agricultural land and does not disrupt the use of higher quality agricultural land within the wider site. The proposal is therefore acceptable in principle, subject to an acceptable impact on other material considerations.

Landscape and Character of the Area

17. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

18. As discussed within the Principle of Development section of the report, the proposed development would be well contained within the farm and viewed in the context of the surrounding development rather than as an isolated form of development within the open countryside.
19. The proposed siting of the solar panels in 15 arrays (rows) would mitigate the visual bulk of the overall development from viewpoints within the farm. While the proposal is reflective of its function in terms of its height and appearance, due to its appropriate siting and bulk it is not considered that the panels would introduce any adverse visual harm. Indeed, the proposal is of a smaller scale than the existing polytunnels.
20. The Wokingham Landscape Character Area Assessment (LCA) 2019 shows the site falling within the landscape area *N1 Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland* which is described as of moderate character with moderate capacity for change. The landscape strategy for the area includes:

“to conserve and enhance the existing landscape character. The key opportunities are to improve the condition, intactness and presentation of the farmed landscape – with potential for replanting and management of field boundaries, and enhancement of ecological character.”
21. The proposal would not disrupt the farmed landscape through respecting the existing field boundaries. The Council’s Landscape and Trees Officer has advised that it is unlikely that the proposal would be perceived in the wider landscape, although there may be limited views from the upper floor windows of dwellings to the south of the site and from WOKW Footpath 8 to the east. However, views from public vantage points would be heavily restricted due to the mature trees that run along the boundary adjacent to Honey Hill and the existing development immediately to the east, west and north of the site. Subsequently they have raised no objection to the scheme.
22. To further mitigate long-term impact, a condition is recommended requiring the removal of the development when it is no longer operational. Overall, the proposal would be appropriately sited, taking advantage of the south-facing position and area size required for its intended function while not encroaching significantly into the open countryside or introducing and visual harm on the verdant landscape character.
23. Therefore, the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the immediate character of the area and the wider verdant character of the countryside in accordance with the aforementioned policies. Through negotiation with the applicant, the planting of an additional hedge on the eastern boundary of the site and the transformation of the existing greenfield to a wildflower meadow has been agreed. Details of this further mitigation is secured by condition.

Neighbour Amenity

24. Immediately to the east of the site is circa. 65 mobile homes which are occupied by seasonal workers during the summer period only. The nearest residential properties are a small cluster of buildings to the south-east of the site along Honey Hill.

25. The edge of the site would be approximately 70m away from the nearest residential boundary. given the limited height of development on site and the intervening development and vegetation there would be no detrimental impacts with regard to loss of light or overbearing.
26. Glint and glare from solar panels can impact residents; however, in this case the proposed development would not result in a detrimental impact. The applicant has submitted a Glint and Glare Assessment (Mabbett & Associates Ltd, October 2023) which concludes that there would be low impact on the residential dwellings to the south east and moderate impact on the adjacent mobile homes. To mitigate the impact on the mobile homes the assessment recommends that a 2m high fence is erected on the eastern boundary of the site prior to operation. The agreed hedge on the eastern boundary would visually soften the required fence.
27. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the assessment and raised no objection to the scheme, subject to the fence on the eastern boundary being secured.
28. There would be very limited noise from the operational phase of the development. The solar panels would be remotely operated from the farm buildings where the associated paraphernalia would also be located. There would also be no significant comings and goings from workers once the development is operational.
29. The development phase would be managed by a Construction Method Statement that would incorporate measures to mitigate noise and disturbance. This is secured by condition,
30. Overall, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on resident's amenity in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3.

Access and Movement

31. Core Strategy Policy CP6 indicates that proposals should allow for transport choice, improve infrastructure, provide appropriate parking, mitigate adverse effects, enhance road safety and not cause highway problems.
32. The vehicular access to the site would be via the main farm entrance off Honey Hill to the north. Once operational, any additional traffic to and from the site would be limited to maintenance vehicles and engineers and would therefore not detrimentally impact the capacity of the highway network or result in any safety implications. Due to the development being connected with the operations of Heathlands Farm no separate parking provision is proposed.
33. The Council's Highways Officer has raised no objection to the proposal advising that there would be no impact on the highway network following construction. To ensure that traffic impact during the construction period is acceptable the Officer has recommended the submission of a Construction Traffic Management Plan and Construction Method Statement. This is secured by condition.

Flooding and Drainage

34. Policy CC09 of the Core Strategy relates to flood risk and policy CC10 relates to sustainable drainage. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 where the risk of fluvial flooding is low.

35. The solar panels would be attached to concrete footings at ground level and would therefore not substantially affect the porosity of the field. The Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has therefore raised no objection to the scheme, subject to a condition requiring sustainable drainage details to be agreed prior to commencement. The proposal therefore complies with the aforementioned policies.

Ecology

36. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF is clear that new development should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impact on and providing net gains for biodiversity. 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.

37. The site is within a red risk zone for Great Crested Newt (GCN). The LPA should explicitly consider the potential harm to this protected species. It is unknown whether the nearest known pond (circa. 140m to the south-west) or any other ponds within 250m support the breeding of GCN. However, the Council's Ecology Officer has advised that the proposal is unlikely to harm GCN as the site is unlikely to be able to provide suitable foraging habitat due to ground level vegetation in the polytunnels being regularly cut short.

38. Due to the current condition of the site with the polytunnels in situ the proposal is unlikely to result in biodiversity net loss, subject to the creation of a grassland habitat at surface level. Following discussion with the applicant, the planting of a wildflower meadow at surface level which is more biodiversity friendly and subsequently results in a biodiversity net gain following development. The agreed hedge on the eastern boundary would further support biodiversity while the less frequent maintenance of the land following the development could also support the provision of a suitable foraging habitat for GCN.

39. The proposal would therefore not adversely harm protected species during or after the development and would secure a biodiversity net gain for the site in accordance with the aforementioned policies.

Built Heritage

40. Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan outlines that the Council will conserve and seek to enhance the designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by supporting development proposals that will conserve the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets. Paragraph 195 of the NPPF states that LPAs should avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

41. There are designated heritage assets with the wider area however these are lie a substantial distance from the site, the closest being Grade II Listed The Crooked Billet circa. 450m to the north-west.

42. The Council's Built Heritage Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection, advising that the substantial distance and intervening vegetation and development would result in no visual impact on the setting of any designated heritage asset. The proposal therefore complies with the aforementioned policies.

Archaeology

43. Policy TB25 of the MDD Local Plan states that where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ.

44. The application site does not fall within an area of high archaeological potential. However, its southern boundary is in close proximity to Archaeological Site 55. Berkshire Archaeology has requested the submission of a desk-based assessment to establish the likelihood of any archaeological remains to establish whether any mitigation would be required.

45. Following discussion with the applicant, it has been indicated that the foundations of the solar panels would be 'ballasted', meaning that they would not penetrate into the ground and would sit above the ground level. Subsequently, there would be no works below the ground level and therefore no need for any archaeological mitigation. To ensure there will be no impact, a condition is recommended requiring the submission of further details on the foundations prior to commencement. The proposal therefore complies with Policy TB25.

Conclusion

46. The principle of development is supported by national and local policy relating to sustainability and the provision of renewable energy. The proposal is well sited within the existing farm and is of an appropriate scale with no adverse impact on the immediate character of the area or on the wider landscape while supporting a sustainable, rural enterprise.

47. No adverse impact to other material considerations including neighbour amenity and highway safety has been identified, while improvements to the scheme including significant biodiversity enhancements have been secured.

48. This application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions and informatives listed at Appendix 1 below.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

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

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / informatives

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

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

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

2. Approved details – This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered P101 and P110 received by the local planning authority on 21 July 2023. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

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

3. Post-operation – If the use of the development for the generation of electricity ceases, the solar panels and all ancillary infrastructure shall be removed from the site in their entirety.

Reason: To safeguard the landscape and its visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3, CP11 and MDD Local Plan policy TB21.

4. Boundary fence – Prior to the commencement of the development details of a 2 metre high boundary fence on or adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first operation of the development and shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.

Reason: In the interests of neighbour amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

5. Landscaping - Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted, and any existing trees or shrubs to be retained. Details to include a minimum of 6 species of native/existing hedge species, a suitable meadow grass/perennial wild flower mix for the surface beneath the panels and demonstrate there is sufficient space for maintenance between the panels and hedgerows.

Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the installation of the solar panels.

Any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting (or within a period of 5 years of the operation of the development in the case of retained trees and shrubs) die, are removed or become seriously damaged or

diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species or otherwise as approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity and biodiversity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03, TB21 and TB23.

6. *Construction Traffic Management Plan - No works shall commence on site until a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) has been submitted to the LPA and approved in writing. The CTMP should include the details such as routing of construction traffic, full details of the location of wheel washing facilities; details of street sweeping; a detailed green travel plan; cycle parking, traffic management and a detailed construction schedule to include not only construction vehicles but day to day travel of construction workers.*

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

7. *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.

8. *Drainage strategy - No development shall take place until full details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:*

- i) Calculations indicating the existing runoff rate from the site.*
- ii) BRE 365 test results demonstrating whether infiltration is achievable or not.*
- iii). Use of SuDS following the SuDS hierarchy, preferably infiltration.*
- iv) Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at Greenfield rates, or preferably better.*
- v) If connection to an existing surface water sewer is proposed, we need to understand why other methods of the SuDS hierarchy cannot be implemented and see confirmation from the utilities supplier that their system has got capacity and the connection is acceptable.*

vi) A drainage strategy plan indicating the location and sizing of SuDS features, with the base of any SuDS features located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.

vii) Details demonstrating how any SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.

The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the operation of the development and shall be maintained in the approved form for as long as the development remains on the site.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: Section 14 of the NPPF (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

9. *Foundation design – No development or other operations shall commence on site until a ballasted foundation design with no penetration into the ground for the development hereby permitted has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.*

Reason: To safeguard the site's potential likelihood of containing archaeological remains. Relevant Policy: Section 16 of the NPPF (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) and MDD Local Plan policy TB25.

Informatives:

- 1. 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.
- 2. Great Crested Newts** - Great Crested Newts are a protected species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). This site is wholly within a red risk zone according to modelling undertaken to inform a Borough wide licence issued by Natural England. Red zones contain suitable habitat and most important areas for Great Crested Newts. The permission granted does not provide authorisation for development to proceed under the Wokingham Borough Council District Licence for Great Crested Newts. Should any Great Crested Newts or evidence of Great Crested Newts be found prior to or during the development, all works must stop immediately and an ecological consultant contacted for further advice before works can proceed. All contractors working on site should be made aware of the advice and provided with the contact details of a relevant ecological consultant.

3. **Changes to the approved plans** - The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
4. **Discussion** - 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:

- extending the determination period of the application to allow for a glint and glare assessment to be undertaken and submitted for consideration.

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

PLANNING REF : 231524
PROPERTY ADDRESS : The Lodge
: Pinewood Leisure Centre, Old Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Wokingham, RG40 3AQ
SUBMITTED BY : Wokingham Without Parish Council
DATE SUBMITTED : 09/08/2023

COMMENTS:

WWPC have no objection provided that the planning officer is satisfied that the level of visual impact on public viewpoints is acceptable.

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