

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
200312	22 May 2020	Shinfield	Shinfield South

Applicant	Mr Fleetwood
Site Address	Gravelly Bridge Farm, Grazeley Green Road, Grazeley RG7 1LG
Proposal	Full application for the temporary change of use of the agricultural land to soil and aggregate production with a single storey site office and bunds (retrospective)
Type	Full
Officer	Simon Taylor
Reason for determination by committee	Major application (waste development)

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Thursday 21 May 2020
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>The proposal seeks retrospective approval for the use of 0.27 hectares of agricultural land at the rear of existing buildings at Gravelly Bridge Farm near Grazeley for the sorting of mounds of soil and aggregate for reuse as soil in landscape garden projects and the stones/hardcore for drainage or driveways and patios. It also includes a bund along the western and northern boundaries and a small site office. The application seeks to formalise an unlawful use and seeks approval for a further three years.</p> <p>The application has not been the subject of any resident objections nor has it received any complaints from its past (unlawful) use. There was no in principle objection from Shinfield Parish Council and no interest raised by the ward member.</p> <p>Because it is an industrial use within the countryside, the proposal is contrary to Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and it is located outside of the preferred areas for waste uses as identified in the previous Waste Local Plan for Berkshire and the draft Minerals and Waste Local Plan. However, there is a clear need for such a facility, limited locations where this use could satisfactorily be accommodated and it is broadly in accordance with the waste policies. The bund is a modest change to the landform and the site office is a temporary structure. Environmental enhancement is also proposed as part of additional tree screen planting around the perimeter of the site. On this basis, approval is recommended, subject to conditions specifying its three year temporary nature and the restoration of the land at the completion of this period (Condition 2), seeding of the bunds (Condition 3), limitations to the hours of use (Condition 4), limiting output to 15,000 tonnes per annum (Condition 5) and prohibition of any external lighting, amplification or storage (Conditions 6 and 7).</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside • Within Grazeley Future Development Site • Safety Hazard Area – AWE Burghfield Nuclear Site (Outer Buffer Zone) • Nuclear consultation zone • Groundwater zone 3 • Flood zones 2 and 3 • Nitrate vulnerable zones (Surfacewater: Foundry Brook (West End Brook to M4))

- Grade 3a Agricultural land
- Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (7km zone)
- Bat consultation zone
- Public right of way (along western boundary)
- Archaeological site (across western boundary)
- Minerals consultation zone
- Sand and gravel extraction consultation zone
- Non-classified road

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions and informatives:

1) Approved details

This permission is in respect of the development and use of the land for soil and aggregate production only (with a single storey site office and bunds), as shown on the plan numbered FGS-GBF-APP-01, dated January 2020 and received by the local planning authority on 6 February 2020, the plan numbered FGS-GBF-LAY-01 Rev C, dated April 2020 and received on 30 April 2020 and the plan numbered FGS-GBF-BND-01 Rev A, dated April 2020 and received on 9 April 2020.

The development shall be maintained 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

2) Temporary period and restoration details

The use hereby permitted shall be discontinued and the land restored to its former condition on or before three years from the date of this planning permission. All buildings, bunds, mounds of waste or sorted aggregate, equipment and all other fixed and non-fixed items within the approved area hereby approved shall be removed from the land, and the land shall be restored to its condition before the development took place within 3 months of the conclusion of the temporary permission, in accordance with details on the approved plan numbered FGS-GBF-LAY-02 and dated April 2020.

Reason: To allow the local planning authority an opportunity to assess the long term effect of the use hereby permitted on the countryside.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21.

3) Landscaping and bunds

The bunds, hereby approved, shall be reconstructed in accordance with the approved details and seeded with grass and wildflower within one month of this planning permission and maintained for the life of the development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority. In addition, the bund

along the western boundary of the site shall be reconstructed so that it is graded back to ensure that the piling of soil is no more than 10mm within 8m of the second southernmost tree as depicted on the approved drawing FGS-GBF-LAY-01 Rev B.

Additional tree planting shall be carried out in accordance with the details on the approved plan numbered FGS-GBF-LAY-01 Rev B in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s). Any trees or plants which, within a period of three years from the date of the planting (or within a period of three years of the occupation of the buildings 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.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

4) Hours of use (including operation of machinery)

The waste sorting use hereby permitted shall not operate other than between the hours of 8am-5pm Monday to Friday and 8am–12 midday on Saturday and shall not operate at all on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason: To safeguard residential amenities.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

5) Maximum tonnage

Soil screening within the site is limited to a maximum of 15,000 tonnes per annum.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of residents and minimise impacts upon traffic movements.

Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15, Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CP11 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

6) No external amplification or lighting

No sound amplifying equipment or lighting shall be installed in the premises or affixed to any buildings on the site.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of residents from noise and light.

Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15, Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

7) No external storage

No plant, machinery, vehicles or equipment shall be stored on the site outside of buildings outside of the approved operating hours in Condition 4 except for any such items as shown on the approved drawings.

Reason: In order to safeguard the visual amenities of the countryside.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP11.

Informatives

1) 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.

2) Protected species

This permission does not convey or imply any approval or consent required under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for protected species. The applicant is advised to contact Natural England with regard to any protected species that may be found on the site.

3) 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 and amended plans being submitted by the applicant.

PLANNING HISTORY		
App No.	Description	Decision/Date
1260/1971	New dwelling house	Refused 27 October 1971
39330	Change of use of buildings to light industrial (B1(c) and B2) (retrospective)	Approved 14 October 1992
41266	Change of use of field to use as go-kart track and siting for portacabin	Temp approved 13 October 1993
43649	Change of use of land for use as quad track	Temp approved 22 March 1995
44045	Change of use of agricultural building to class B1(c) industrial unit	Approved 12 July 1995
F/1997/65591	Change of use of outbuilding to residential (retrospective)	Refused 3 August 1998
F/1998/68274	Use of buildings for business and leisure lettings	Approved 20 November 1998
F/1999/69730	Formation of hardstanding (retrospective)	Refused 12 November 1999
F/2000/2466	Formation of hardstanding for commercial vehicles (retrospective)	Refused 8 January 2001
A/01/1058467	Appeal against refusal of F/2000/2466	Dismissed 31 May 2001

F/2006/9482	Change of use from agricultural to sui generis for Model flying Club (north of application site)	Refused 1 February 2007
AG/2008/1262	Insertion of a farm track (prior approval)	Refused 15 August 2008
F/2008/2379	CoU from quad bike track to training area for agricultural and construction equipment	Withdrawn
AG/2008/0630	Insertion of a farm track (prior approval)	Refused 12 May 2008
F/2010/1946	CoU of land from Class B1 to sui generis to operate a waste facility for the screening and crushing of inert waste, to produce secondary aggregate and screening of soil (north of application site)	Not proceeded with 23 September 2010
F/2010/0662		Withdrawn 3 June 2010
F/2013/0644	CoU from miscellaneous use and storage to transfer station for storage of inert secondary aggregate and soil (to the western side of the farm)	Not determined 30 July 2013
A/13/2202216	Appeal against non-determination of F/2013/0644	Withdrawn 22 November 2013
OFF/2015/0368	Conversion of Class B1(a) offices to two dwellings (prior approval)	Refused 9 April 2015
151972	Conversion of existing offices (Use Class B1(a)) to 2 dwellings (Use Class C3)	Refused 9 April 2015
163218	Certificate of existing lawful development for the use of attached annex and part of existing outbuilding (within the curtilage of the Farmhouse) as two self-contained units containing four letting rooms	Approved 31 January 2017
170407	Conversion of unit 9 to two x 1 bed dwellings and one x 2 bed dwellings (part retrospective).	Refused 21 March 2017
173488	Conversion of unit 9 to two x 1 bed dwellings and one x 2 bed dwellings (part retrospective) with private amenity space and car parking	Refused 7 February 2018
192651	Use of land for the parking of HGVs	Approved 4 December 2019

RECENT ENFORCEMENT HISTORY

RFS/2018/084317	Unauthorised works using field as transfer site	No breach. Closed 17 April 2018
RFS/2019/085127	Storage of HGVs	Closed 19 February 2020 following submission of application

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	0.4 hectares with 0.27 hectares operational area
Previous land use	Agriculture
Current land use	Class B2 (waste sorting)
Previous floor space	0m ²
Current floor space	15m ² increase associated with office/mess room
Job creation (current)	9 (2 administrators and 7 drivers/operators)
Previous parking spaces	Nil

Proposed parking spaces	Informal parking only
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CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Policy	No objection, subject to further restoration details by condition. <u>Officer comment:</u> Restoration details have been provided in plan form and this forms part of Condition 2. The site will be returned to its original condition as a paddock.
Waste and Minerals	As there is an identified need for such a facility, no objection is raised, subject to tonnage limits (Condition 5).
WBC Trees and Landscaping	Following a reduction in the scale of the bund, no objection is raised. Potential harm to trees is also considered to be acceptable, as detailed in paragraphs 39-40.
WBC Waste and Recycling	Concerns are raised in relation to the justification for the need for this type of development and the potential for unlawful activities on the site in the future. <u>Officer comment:</u> Discussion at paragraphs 21-25 illustrates that the proposal responds to an identified need. Condition 1 also requires compliance with the approved use and any future unauthorised use would be subject to enforcement action.
WBC Drainage	No objection, subject to drainage and SuDS details by condition. <u>Officer comment:</u> The request for drainage details is considered unnecessary, as detailed in paragraph 53.
WBC Rights of Way	Shinfield Footpath 30 runs directly to the west of the site, but does not appear to be affected.
WBC Env. Health	No objection.
WBC Ecology	
WBC Highways	
WBC Economic Prosperity	No comments received.
Environment Agency	The business operates under a license issued by the Environment Agency and no objection was raised as part of the consultation process.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Shinfield Parish Council	Activities should be limited to processing of local materials within 5 miles. <u>Officer comment:</u> Given the modest nature of the activities, it is considered unnecessary and unjustified (and unenforceable) to impose this restriction.
Ward Member	No comments received.
Neighbours	

APPLICANTS POINTS
The use meets national targets for diverting waste from landfill, increasing the amount of waste recovered for re-use and recycling and meeting the wider objectives of sustainable waste management by managing waste close to the source of the arisings and markets for secondary aggregates.

The surrounding land is being promoted for housing development. This application is for a temporary period of 3 years. This will allow the operator to monitor the operation against the proposed development in the wider area.

The applicant employs 9 staff from the local area. This contributes to the local rural economy, providing an income to the farm owner.

The proposed development meets sustainability criteria including:

- Achieving a diversion rate of 100% from landfill disposal.
- Serving the local needs to reduce vehicle movements.
- Site has excellent access to main road network
- There is a shortfall of sites suitable for manufacturing secondary aggregates
- The site provides a small-scale contribution to local construction projects.
- Reduce reliance on primary aggregates.
- Ensure sustainable use of materials through the supply chain.

The proposal is consistent with national, regional and local planning policy and will contribute to the sustainable development criteria of the NPPF.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
	NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
	NPPW	National Planning Policy for Waste
Core Strategy 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	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
	CP15	Employment Development
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC06	Noise
	CC07	Parking
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB04	Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield
	TB20	Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB25	Archaeology
Waste Local Plan for Berkshire (WLPB)	WLP1	Sustainable Development
	WLP16	Waste Management Development Outside Preferred Areas

(saved policies)	WLP27	Requirements for Acceptable Waste Management Development
	WLP28	Criteria for Exceptions to the Waste Management Strategy
	WLP29	Locations Where There is a Strong Presumption Against Waste Management Development
	WLP30	Assessment Criteria for Waste Management Development Proposals
	WLP31	Information to be Provided with an Application
	WLP33	Securing Environmental Improvements and Other Public Benefits
Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP) (draft only)	M5	Supply of Recycled and Secondary Aggregates
	W1	Sustainable Waste Development Strategy
	W3	Waste Capacity Requirements
	W4	Locations and Sites for Waste Management
	DM1	Sustainable Development
	DM2	Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaption
	DM3	Protection of Habitats and Species
	DM5	Protection of the Countryside
	DM8	Restoration of Minerals and Waste Development
	DM9	Protecting Public Health, Safety and Amenity
	DM10	Water Environment and Flood Risk
	DM11	Sustainable Transport Movements
DM12	High Quality Design of Minerals and Waste Development	
Borough Design Guide SPD (BDG)	Section 7	Non-Residential
	Section 8	Rural and Settlement Edge

PLANNING ISSUES	
Description of Proposal	
1.	The proposal seeks approval to use the land to the north of the existing commercial and industrial buildings and parking area at Gravelly Bridge Farm for the sorting and manufacture of soil and aggregates. It includes two site office structures on the western side of the site and a 1-1.5m high x 3m wide earth bund to the northern and western boundaries. Additional tree planting is also proposed.
2.	Incoming loads are deposited before being loaded into a screening plant to separate into separate mounds of soil and stones/hardcore. The soil is tested to the BS3882 for use in landscape garden projects and stones/hardcore for drainage projects, driveways and patios. The current Environmental Permit allows the site to process up to 75,000 tonnes per annum but the planning statement suggest that the site will manage approximately 10,000 tonnes per annum on a seasonal basis (generally March to September when weather conditions are more favourable).
3.	The application is retrospective, with the exception for a reduction in the scale of the bund, as amended. The planning statement suggests it has operated for about three years and the permission sought is temporary for three further years from the date of any planning permission.

Description of Site

4. The site is located on the northern side of Grazeley Green Road, 200m west of the intersection with MereOak Lane and Bloomfield Hatch Lane. Fronting the road is a collection of mostly single storey agricultural buildings that once formed part of a much larger discontinued dairy farm and have since been converted for a variety of light industrial, commercial and other uses. A small area to the western side has lawful approval for the storage of HGVs, land to the immediate rear is used for the storage of a variety of materials and vehicles, mostly in a haphazard manner. The site to the east is the original farmhouse dwelling. The application site occupies an open field to the rear of these buildings and stored items and as the application is retrospective, is currently used for the storage of soil. Two cabins provide space for an office and mess room, which are positioned immediately alongside several shipping containers that are outside the red line site area.

Principle of Development

5. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

Land use

6. The Planning Statement suggests that soil screening on the site commenced in 2009/10 but only to produce hard core for repairing farm tracks. This is about the same time as the submission of two planning applications in 2010 that were both undetermined (withdrawn and not proceeded with) that related to land further removed to the north of the subject site. A further application for the screening and crushing of inert waste from 2013 was also non-determined with a withdrawn appeal that related to a small parcel of land immediately to the west of the existing commercial buildings.
7. The Planning Statement acknowledges the retrospective nature of the subject application and indicates that operations have been occurring for about three years and that temporary permission is sought for a further three years.
8. The recent approval of a certificate for the parking of HGVs on land to the south of the red line site (application 192651) recognised that HGVs associated with Fleetwood Grab Services had been used for over 10 years but it did not reference anything associated with the subject application.
9. Based on the above planning history, there is no lawful planning permission for the development, whether in this location or anywhere on the farmholding. However, an Environmental Permit allows the site to process up to 75,000 tonnes per annum in the area in question. This is a Standard Rules permit which sets an upper maximum limit but it is proposed that the site will manage approximately 10,000 tonnes per annum with six in and six out HGV movements each day. Operations are curtailed to the warmer and drier months when soil can be kept dry.

Waste development in the Countryside

10. The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in the countryside. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not normally permit development outside of development limits unless it can be considered as a sustainable rural or recreational enterprise, where it does not lead to excessive expansion away from the original building and is contained within a building suitable for conversion. The proposal involves an industrial use which does not strictly satisfy this requirement but Policy CP11 is not viewed as a blanket ban on any development.
11. Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy expects the majority of employment needs to be met within development limits, particularly within defined Core Employment Area. There are certain uses (such as the subject application) that may be less suitable within traditional industrial estates and may be more suitably located in more rural areas. It is also likely that such businesses are driven to more rural locations because of competition for sites within settlement limits.
12. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF also refers to the importance of enabling '*the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas...*' and Paragraph 84) recognises that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements. Paragraph 203 then highlights the importance of a sufficient supply of minerals, and the contribution that substitute, or secondary and recycled minerals waste can make to this supply. The NPPG contains a number of relevant paragraphs under the 'Waste' category, including the use unallocated sites and the demonstrable need for the facility.
13. Movement of waste up the waste hierarchy is also one of the principle tenants of the National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) where the focus is on reduction, then reuse and recycling. Paragraph 1 of the NPPW aims to allow communities to take more responsibility for their own waste (i.e. provide waste management facility locations close to the source of the waste and Paragraph 4 also allows for a consideration of a broad range of locations with priority to (amongst others) redundant agricultural buildings and their curtilages.
14. Wokingham Borough, Bracknell Forest, Reading Borough and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead are currently working to produce a Joint Minerals and Waste Plan which will guide minerals and waste decision-making in the area. The emerging plan is still at focused consultation stage but includes a requirement for further Minerals and Waste sites to be brought forward throughout the plan area.
15. Instead, the Berkshire Waste Local Plan remains relevant, as adopted in 1998. In 2007, the SoS instructed that a number of policies can be saved until such time as a new Waste Plan is adopted, including Chapter 7 (Policies WLP13), Chapter 8 (Policies WLP16 to WLP21), Chapter 9 (Policies WLP23 to WLP25) and Chapter 10 (Policy WLP34) which are intended to define those specific circumstances where waste management development may be acceptable outside the preferred areas identified in the adopted Plan. Chapter 10 (Policy WLP30) provides the basis for assessing proposals in all other circumstances. The Waste Plan also contains a number of retained policies namely WLP28, WLP29 and WLP30 where

they relate to the specific circumstances where waste management development may be acceptable outside the preferred areas.

16. The Direction from the Secretary of State included the following paragraph:

“Following 27 September 2007, the extended policies should be read in context. Where policies were adopted some time ago, it is likely that material considerations, in particular the emergence of new national and regional policy and also new evidence, will be afforded considerable weight in decisions.”

17. WLP16 of the Waste Local Plan identifies sixteen preferred areas for waste management development. The application site is not located within one of these areas but this does not preclude waste management activities. WLP28 also expresses a presumption against such development in this location but nevertheless provides circumstances for development to come forward as an exception, consistent with the NPPF.
18. The form of waste management noted within the application is soil sorting, which involves removal of soil from construction sites and other localities and processing this waste product into soil and aggregates rather than this material being disposed of.
19. The proposal therefore assists in minimising waste and allows for the husbanding of finite primary aggregate reserves by providing an alternative secondary aggregate source for use in the construction industry. It would continue to drive waste up the Waste Hierarchy as supported by the NPPG, the NPPF and NPPW and in accordance with WLP1 of the Waste Local Plan in terms of being sustainable development.
20. Whilst it is strictly contrary to WLP16 and WLP28, there are several drivers in focusing waste development in this location and outside of the preferred areas, including sensitivity to residential noise receptors and availability of land within preferred areas, as recognised in paragraph 84 of the NPPF.
21. Part (i) of WLP28 requires consideration of whether there is a ‘*need to develop land outside the Preferred Areas or other areas defined in the above policies in order to meet the need for waste management facilities as defined by the Plan*’.
22. The Planning Statement accompanying the planning application states that there is a need because the Waste Background Report to the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Draft Plan dated June 2018 confirms that there is currently no permanent capacity in Wokingham for inert waste treatment (and only 18,5000 tonnes per annum capacity within Reading), and 617,992 tonnes per annum capacity of inert construction, demolition and excavation waste will continue to be produced throughout the plan period.
23. There is no dispute with these figures. It is further noted that Annex 4 to the Waste Background Report states that the treatment capacity relied upon is essentially recovery of the material through landfill/mineral working restoration (lower down the hierarchy than the subject application). The permanent treatment capacity

(similar to the subject application) is identified as 242,659 tonnes per annum throughout the Plan period (about 36% of the total arisings).

24. The Waste Background Report also states that aggregate recycling (being the subject application) as considered in the Mineral Background Study shows no permitted sites carrying out aggregate recycling in Wokingham, and that the estimated capacity across the Plan area could be in the region of 10-50,000 tonnes per annum. It also states that the information is not entirely reliable or comprehensive so the level of need is uncertain but in line with the NPPF, sites contributing to recycling should be encouraged ahead of other sites.
25. There is clearly an identified need for the development as required by criterion (i). By extension, it also accords with criteria (ii) in terms of whether '*the need could be more acceptably met elsewhere than on the application site*', as identified in paragraph 20. It would also satisfy criteria (iii) as it would '*overcome or accommodate all constraints deriving from the considerations set out in Policies WLP27 and WLP29 to WLP33*', these being other material planning considerations as outlined elsewhere in this report.
26. Because of this identified need, as the permission is temporary for three years (Condition 2), as the site has been in operation for a number of years without neighbour impact or complaint, and as the temporary permission would continue to support aggregate production in the borough consistent with the majority of the above policies, the principle of the development in this location is supported. This is confirmed in the advice received from the Council's Policy Officer and Waste and Minerals consultant, both of which form the basis of the assessment in the paragraphs above.
27. However, it is also subject to conditions relating to requirements for site restoration and bund management and additional tree planting for the life of the development in Conditions 2 and 3. Condition 4 also controls the hours of use and Condition 5 limits the output of soil screening to 15,000 tonnes per annum. The latter is considered necessary to protect the character of the area against any unreasonable expansion or further encroachment into the countryside (see paragraphs 32-36), maintain neighbour amenity (paragraphs 43-45) and ensure a continued well managed traffic impact (paragraph 47). This is 5,000 tonnes higher than the figure of 10,000 tonnes per annum quoted in the Planning Statement but is appropriate to allow a degree of business expansion if this occurs and correlates sufficiently with the anticipated upper limit of daily vehicle movements.

Character of the Area

28. Paragraph 170(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications 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, and of trees and woodland.*'
29. 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. RD1, NR1 and NR2 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible

with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. More specifically, NR12 requires consideration of boundary treatments.

30. Landscape-wise, 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.
31. The site is located in the countryside in Wokingham District Landscape Character Area I3 'Grazeley Farmed Clay Lowland' it is a landscape of moderate character, condition and sensitivity. Key characteristics include open large-scale irregular fields divided by a mixture of post and wire fences, discontinuous hedgerows and drainage ditches and with remnant lines of mature oaks marking former field boundaries as well as mixed pastoral and arable farmland. The most sensitive characteristics are the pattern of ancient hedgerows, mature oaks, wayside commons and rural lanes, the ancient woodlands, old barns and buildings and rural qualities.
32. Prior to the unlawful commencement of the use, the site comprised open farmland located to the north of a collection of existing buildings in commercial/industrial use. It also included an expanse of externally stored items such as shipping containers, HGVs and other paraphernalia that has gradually encroached away from the immediate curtilage of the buildings to the south, giving an unmanaged and unkempt appearance to an area of approximately 0.8 hectares. Whilst outside of the red line site boundary, it has caused a degree of disorderly impact upon the immediate character of the countryside.
33. The subject application seeks approval for a screening facility, three separate mounds of material, associated heavy equipment (usually only one HGV at a time), a 1-1.5m high soil bund (for a length of 63m) and two small office cabins. This occurs across a 0.27 hectare area of land, extending a further 56m further north from what generally forms the northern extent of the encroachment. As a result, there will be a minor degree of adverse impact upon the character and quality of the countryside.
34. The bunds along the western and northern boundary are intended to partially screen the operations without creating a foreign element within the countryside. They currently extend to a height of about 3m height x 5m width but will be reduced to 1-1.5m height x 3m width as part of revised details. This ensures an appropriate balance between screening the development and maintaining the existing form of the paddocks. It also limits any further expansion of uses away from the original buildings and the bunds themselves will be seeded with grass and wildflower to complement the existing grassed paddocks elsewhere on the farm (see Condition 3). On that aspect, WLP33 of the Waste Local Plan recognises the opportunity to seek environmental improvements and other public benefits both on the site and in the surrounding area. This is also by additional tree planting to the perimeter of the red line site as identified on the approved site plan identified in Condition 1 and as required in Condition 3. At a minimum, these trees are required for life of the temporary permission but there should be no reason for the trees to be maintained beyond the temporary permission.
35. It is also worth recognising that the use is temporary for three years and Condition 2 requires the restoration of the land to its original condition at the end of this

period. Furthermore, Condition 7 also prohibits the storage of any items on the land outside of business hours.

36. Whilst there is an identified degree of harm to the character of the area, the extent of encroachment away from the original buildings is not excessive and it is not permanent and readily reversible (none of the structures or machinery used is fixed to the ground and the bunds are made of soil only). As such, the benefits arising from providing a waste facility with an identified need outweighs the harm posed to the countryside, as conditioned, and no objection is raised on character grounds.

Landscaping and Trees

37. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping.
38. One of the key qualities of this landscape is its open character and far reaching views. More locally, this consists of mature native trees, including Oaks, along the western edge of the site, in close proximity of the proposed bund.
39. There are 14 trees of varying height in close proximity to the western bund. 11 of the trees are located within a 2-2.5m deep drainage culvert or on its western or opposite bank with three trees of varying height and breadth on the eastern side of the culvert on the same side as the bund.
40. As amended to a width of 3m, the bund would be just outside or up to the root protection area of all of the trees, with the exception of one tree where the bund encroaches 1m inside the root protection area. The Council's Trees Officer raises no objection to the proposal subject to Condition 3 requiring that any soil within 8m of this tree being graded back to ensure that the piling of soil is no more than 10mm. In doing so, no objection is raised on landscaping grounds.

Archaeology

41. Policy TB25 of the MDD Local Plan requires the retention of archaeological sites in situ. The site is 50m to the east of a potential archaeological site. Given the adequate separation from the site and as the proposal involves the storage of soil rather than its digging up and/or removal, there are no archaeological implications with the proposal.

Residential Amenities

42. Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. The site is located in a rural setting, with Gravelly Farmhouse (85m to the south east) and Pump House (225m to the north west) being the closest residential receivers.
43. The operating hours are stated as 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 8am to midday on Saturday, with no operations on Sundays or Bank Holidays. These are consistent with normal business hours and are entirely appropriate from a

residential amenity perspective. These hours are outlined in Condition 4 to ensure no further intrusion through expanded hours.

44. The Planning Statement refers to the sorting operations being limited to 10,000 tonnes per annum, which remains modest, both in terms of HGV movements and sorting operations. To ensure it remains modest and does not lead to any undue noise concerns, Condition 5 limits the output to 15,000 tonnes per annum.
45. With the normal business hours of use and the adequate separation to neighbouring properties, it is not envisaged that the proposal would result in undue noise disturbance to surrounding properties. Moreover, the Council's Environmental Health Officer has not objected on these grounds, noting that there have been no recorded complaints from its existing operations.

Access and Movement

Parking

46. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street car and cycle parking standards although the parking requirement is of little relevance to this application given that the proposal relates to an open site with a 15m² site office. Nonetheless, there are two existing site workers and seven drivers and staff parking for nine vehicles can easily be accommodated in an ad hoc manner across the site without impacting upon the surrounding area or existing operations. Furthermore, the adjoining land to the south has a certificate of lawfulness for the parking of HGVs (application 192651) and is within the ownership of the same applicant. The operators of the plant are also HGV drivers and already park within the HGV parking area before operating the HGVs. The Council's Highways Officer is satisfied with this arrangement and there is no requirement for a formal parking plan and on this basis, no objection is raised. Given the site location and the type of activity, it is also felt that allocated cycle parking is unnecessary.

Access and Traffic

47. Access is via the existing access onto Grazeley Green Road, which is of sufficient width with adequate sightlines at the entrance for the formalisation of additional HGV movements to and from the site. The maximum number of daily HGV movements is specified as 12 (6 in and 6 out) and the capacity of the screening facility would not generally allow any more movements than this nor is it likely to result in any backlog of HGVs within the site and certainly not within surrounding roads. This would be reinforced by Condition 5 relating to the maximum output to 15,000 tonnes, which correlates sufficiently with the capacity that would be generated by six daily HGV movements with a maximum load of 15 tonnes each within a seasonal operation (7.5 months) across the calendar year. It would also be within the scope of the Operating Licence and does not raise concern with the Council's Highways Officer. Given the application is retrospective and application 192651 has already granted approval for the storage of HGVs, Grazeley Green Road is already accommodating these movements such that no objection is raised.

Sustainability

48. 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.
49. The site is not sustainably located, with the nearest facilities at Three Mile Cross, which is 1.5km as the crow flies or 2.3km by road to the east. This would ordinarily result in increased dependence upon car usage. However, the business is located amongst 12 other business units, the business is more appropriately located away from built up areas given the sensitive nature of the use and available land in a more sustainable location is unlikely to be available because of competition from more profitable competing land uses. The business also involves the transportation of soil, which relies upon movement of heavy vehicles. On the basis of the above justification, no objection is raised on sustainability grounds.

Ecology

50. 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. The site comprises a plot of agricultural land of bare earth, hardstanding and grassland, all of low ecological value. As noted in paragraphs 39 and 40, a row of trees along the western boundary will be unaffected. As such, the site is unlikely to be used by protected species, including foraging and commuting bats and nesting birds and with no artificial lighting, protected species and priority habitats are unlikely to be affected and there are no objections on ecological grounds.

Waste Storage

51. The proposal specialises in the transfer and sorting of soil and gravel/hardcore. As such, there is no requirement for separate waste storage although the existing office space is sufficient to deal with waste generation from staff members.

Flooding and Drainage

52. Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal represents low vulnerability. However, access is via the existing driveway to Grazeley Green Road, which is within Flood Zones 2 and 3. A Flood Risk Assessment was submitted with the application which noted that the access is existing and there is no proposal to alter the levels within the driveway. Moreover, there is already permission for the storage and movement of HGVs along the driveway and the operation is limited to periods of warmer and drier weather so as to prevent soil becoming muddy. As such, there is no realistic flood risk with relying upon access through Flood Zones 2 and 3. On this basis, and with the Council's Drainage Officer raising no objection, the proposal is acceptable in terms of Policy CC09.
53. Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The Council's Drainage Officer requested additional drainage details. However, as the proposal is retrospective and

predominantly relates to the storage of soil, it does not pose any long term issue in terms of on-site infiltration and is acceptable in terms of Policy CC10.

Environmental Health

54. The site is not listed as potentially contaminated and the retrospective proposal involves the screening of existing soil, often from household sites. It does not include contaminated soil. As such, no objection is raised on contamination grounds.
55. Any other potential environmental impacts, including noise levels and dust prevention, are covered by the environmental permit that is already issued by the Environment Agency.

Atomic Weapons Location

56. Policy TB04 of the MDD allows development in the vicinity of the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield but only where the increase in density can be safely accommodated. The site is within the outer zone, which is 3-5km from the establishment. Policy TB04 states that further details are required where more than 500 people can be accommodated on the site. The business operates with a total of nine staff, which is comfortably below the 500 person threshold. As such, no further issue is raised.

Community Infrastructure Levy

57. The application is not liable for CIL payments because it relates to a commercial operation of less than 100m² in floorspace.

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

58. 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. The subject property is located within 5km of the TBH SPA but the scope of the works are minor whereby there will be no foreseeable impact upon the SPA. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of Policy CP8.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

59. 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 persons with protected characteristics as 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 as a result of the development.

CONCLUSION

60. On the basis of the permission being sought being temporary and when subject to Conditions 2-5, the limited harm posed to the character of the countryside is outweighed by the fact that the retrospective proposal addresses an identified need for waste storage in a manner that is supported by national and local policy.