

Agenda Item 6.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
200888	10/07/2020	Swallowfield	Swallowfield;

Applicant	J P Winkworth Limited
Site Address	Lambs Farm Business Park, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, RG7 1PQ
Proposal	Full application for the proposed erection of 3 no. buildings (units R1, R2 and R3) for business use (Use Classes B1(a), (b), (c) and B8) with ancillary office space, parking and associated works.
Type	Full
PS Category	18
Officer	Stefan Fludger
Reason for determination by committee	Listed by Councillor Stuart Munro

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 8 July 2020
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>The proposal involves the construction of three new business units within Lambs Farm Business Park. Objections have been received from neighbours which largely relate to the continued expansion of the business park over time, impacts on the local highway network, impact on neighbouring amenity and flooding issues.</p> <p>The proposal would not lead to harm to the character of the Countryside or the wider area and based on a thorough assessment against national and local planning policy, the proposal is acceptable in principle.</p> <p>All other material planning considerations have been assessed and no harm has been found. No objection has been received from the Council's Highways Officer relating to local Highway issues. Issues relating to flood risk are dealt with by condition and no issue has been raised by the Environmental Health Officer relating to increased disturbance. The proposal is recommended for approval.</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside • Wind turbine safeguarding zone • Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone • Sand and gravel extraction • Special Protection Area – 5 km • Groundwater protection zone • Landfill consultation zone • Minerals consultation zone • Nuclear consultation zone • Contaminated land consultation zone • Archaeological Site

RECOMMENDATION

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

A. Conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

1. 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. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered XXXX-RDJWL-R-XX-DR-A-0015 and 0583- RDJWL-R-XX-DR-A-0025, received by the local planning authority on 06/04/2020 and plans numbered 0583-RDJWL-R-XX-DR-A-0016 and 0583-RDJWL-R-XX-DR-A-0027, received by the Local Planning Authority on 15/06/2020. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by 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. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced above damp proof level, 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 building is satisfactory. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.

4. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced above foundation level, a drainage strategy plan shall be submitted, which shows how the business units will connect to the existing drainage system and any additional drainage features which are required. The details shall include:

- A drainage strategy (including SuDS) drawing indicating the location and sizing of all drainage features with pipe connections from the proposed development to the discharge points.
- Details to show that the existing drainage system and any new features are able to cater for the increased runoff, including the following:
 - (i) evidence that infiltration is possible (to BRE 365 standard or similar).
 - (ii) groundwater data confirming seasonal high groundwater levels, including a 40% betterment recommended in terms of runoff
 - (iii) calculations to demonstrate that any SuDS features have been sized to cater for runoff generated by the 1 in 100 year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change.

- (iv) Details to confirm that the base of any SuDS located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.
- (v) Calculations to show how surface water runoff rates will be constrained to existing rates across all of the relevant return periods, i.e. Qbar, Q1, Q30 and Q100 with climate change.
- (vi) Details as to how SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.

The scheme shall be implemented prior to occupation of the building and thereafter managed and maintained in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

5. No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning spaces shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking spaces shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.

Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

6. No building shall be occupied until secure and covered parking for cycles has been provided in accordance with the approved drawing(s)/details. The cycle parking/storage shall be permanently so-retained for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 4 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

7. Prior to first occupation of the business units, details of an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy serving the development shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This strategy should include details relating to on-site infrastructure, installation of charging points and future proofing of the site unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

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: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07 and Appendix 2 and the Council's Parking Standards Study Report (2011).

8. Prior to the installation of any external lighting, a report detailing the lighting scheme and how this will not adversely affect wildlife shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The report shall include the following figures and appendices:
- A layout plan with beam orientation
 - A schedule of equipment
 - Measures to avoid glare
 - An isolux contour map showing light spillage to 1 lux both vertically and horizontally and areas identified as being of importance for commuting and foraging bats.
- The approved lighting plan shall thereafter be implemented as agreed.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation in accordance with para 180 of the NPPF.

Informatives:

1. The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. As an affordable housing development a claim for relief can be made. This is a matter for the developer. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development. For more information see - <http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/developers/cil/cil-processes/>.

EXTENSIVE PLANNING HISTORY – Relevant since 2010		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
F/2012/2535	Proposed erection of new business unit K for use classes B1(b) and B1(c) (light industrial and research and development) and B8 use (storage and distribution) and business unit L for use classes B1(a), B1(b) and B1(c) (offices, light industrial and research and development) with car and lorry parking and ancillary works within existing business park	Approved - 06/03/2013
C/2013/1148	Application for submission of details to comply with conditions 2,4,6,8 &12 of planning consent F/2012/2535. 2. Samples and details of materials. 4. Travel Plan. 6. Surface Water Drainage Scheme. 8. Arboricultural Method Statement. 12. Employment Skills Plan.	Replied - 18/09/2013
F/2013/2472	Proposed erection of an extension to existing unit B.	Approved - 14/02/2014

C/2014/0460	Application for submission of details to comply with conditions 3,4, & 6 of planning consent F/2013/2472. 3. Travel Plan. 4. Secure bicycle parking. 6. Landscape plan.	Replied - 02/12/2014
F/2014/0658	Proposed erection of building for use classes B1 (b) & (c) light industrial and research and development and B8 (storage and distribution) with ancillary office space and car and lorry parking.	Approved – 24/07/2018
C/2014/1848	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent F/2014/0658: 3 Details of external materials 5 Details of cycle parking 6 Travel plan 7 Sustainable drainage system 8 Arborcultural method statement.	Approved – 19/06/2018
F/2014/2653	Proposed erection of building for Use Classes B1 (b) & (c) (light industrial and research and development) and Use Class B8 (storage and distribution) with ancillary office space and car and lorry parking and ancillary works within existing Business Park.	Approved – 21/01/2015
C/2015/0356	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent F/2014/2653: 3. External materials. 5. Cycle Parking. 6. Travel Plan. 7. Sustainable Drainage. 8. Landscaping Scheme.	Replied – 11/03/2015
152528	Full application for the proposed erection of new business unit for use classes B1(b)and(c))(light industrial and research and development) and B8 (storage and dsitribution)use, with ancillary office space as well as car and lorry parking and ancillary works within existing Business park.	Approved – 11/11/2015
153313	Conditions application for the submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 152528 (dated 11/11/15): 3. Samples and details of materials. 6. Cycle Parking. 7. Travel Plan. 8.	Split decision – 01/03/2016

	Sustainable Drainage Scheme. 9. Landscaping Scheme.	
160013	Full planning application for the change of use of existing garage into a office space plus a single storey side extension to form construction of new attached garage.	Approved – 01/03/2018
160512	Full application for the proposed extension of Unit N to provide additional space for Business Use Classes B1(b) & (c) (Light Industrial and Research and Development) and B8 Use (Storage and Distribution) with Ancillary Offices, Car and Lorry Parking and ancillary works within existing Business Park.	Approved – 18/04/2016
161668	Full planning application for the proposed erection of new business unit for use classes B1 (b) and (c) (Light industrial and research and development) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) is with ancillary office space as well as car and lorry parking with ancillary works within existing business park.	Approved – 23/08/2016
162594	Full application for the proposed erection of a new business unit for use class B1(b) and (c) (Light, Industrial, Research and Development) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) use with ancillary office space as well as car and lorry parking with ancillary works adjoining existing Business Park.	Refused- 12/12/2016 – Dismissed at appeal.
162908	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 161668 (23/08/2016). 3. Details of materials for external surfaces. 6. Cycle parking details. 7. Travel Plan. 8. Sustainable Drainage Scheme. 9. Landscaping Scheme.	Split decision – 15/12/2016
172291	Full application for the proposed change of use including Engineering works to provide HGV parking area (Retrospective).	Refused – 23/11/2017
173684	Full application for the proposed erection of new business unit for Use	Approved – 04/05/2018

	Classes B1(b) and (c) (Light Industrial and Research and Development) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) use with ancillary office space as well as car and commercial vehicle parking with ancillary works within existing Business Park.	
180683	Full application for the proposed erection of 2no light industrial/storage units H3 and H4 (use classes B1(a, (B), (c) and B8 with vehicle parking and ancillary works following demolition of existing buildings (part retrospective).	Approved – 21/06/2018
180629	Full application for the proposed erection of replacement stable block.	Refused – 09/05/2018 Appeal withdrawn.
181619	Application for submission of details to comply with following conditions of planning consent 173684 (dated 4/5/18)- 3. External materials 6. Cycle parking 8. Sustainable drainage scheme 9. Landscaping	Split Decision – 06/07/2018
181995	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 173684 (dated 04/5/18)- 5. Travel Plan	Approved – 02/10/2018
181939	Full application for the proposed erection of replacement stable block for private use.	Approved – 06/09/2018
182536	Application for submission of details to comply with condition 9 (Landscaping) of planning consent 173684 (dated 4/5/18).	Approved – 26/10/2018
181986	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 180683 (dated 26/6/18)- 3. External materials 6. Details of cycle parking 8. Sustainable drainage 9. Landscaping	Approved – 22/01/2019
182564	Full planning application for the erection of 2 new B1 (a), (b), (c)/B8 buildings with vehicle parking.	Approved – 03/12/2018
182720	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 181939 (Dated 06/09/2018) 2. External materials 3. Boundary Treatments 4. Drainage Strategy 5. Programme of Archaeology Works	Approved – 20/11/2018

182808	Full planning application for the proposed erection of light industrial units M2 and M3 with vehicle parking and ancillary works within existing Business Park.	Approved – 21/11/2018
182360	Full planning permission for the change of use of land including engineering works to provide HGV parking area for Lambs Farm Business Park. (Part retrospective).	Approved – 14/12/2018
190189	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 182564 (03/12/2018) 3. External Material 4. Drainage Strategy 6. Cycle parking	Approved – 15/03/2019
190882	Application for the submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 182564 (03/12/2018). 7. Travel Plan.	Approved – 08/05/2019
191500	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 182808 for the Full planning application for the proposed erection of light industrial units M2 and M3 with vehicle parking and ancillary works within existing Business Park. Condition 2 relates to approved plans to allow improved access to adjacent units.	Approved – 23/07/2019
200144	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 182360 dated 14/12/2018. Condition 4. Landscaping.	Approved – 23/03/2020

SUMMARY INFORMATION	
For Commercial	
Site Area	0.5 ha
Previous land use(s) and floorspace(s)	Land for HGV Parking. Floorspace N/A
Proposed floorspace of each use	N/A
Change in floorspace (+/-)	+429 m ²
Number of jobs created/lost	16 (estimated).
Existing parking spaces	N/A
Proposed parking spaces	17

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Biodiversity	No objection, subject to conditions.
WBC Planning Policy	No objection, providing there is no unacceptable impact on the character of the Countryside.
WBC Drainage	Request additional information.
WBC Environmental Health	No objection.
WBC Highways	Recommend approval with conditions.
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection.
WBC Public Rights of Way	No comments received
Berkshire Archaeology	No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council: Object to this application for the following reasons:

- The three units would take away parking and turning spaces. The HGV parking and turning area is critical to the use of the site and prevents spillage onto Back Lane.

(Officer note: the applicant has provided a plan which demonstrates that HGV's will be able to park and turn within the site.)

- The proposal may be followed by another attempt to construct new parking in the Countryside.
- The units are densely packed in the business park which leads to an urbanising impact and restricted service areas. This is especially inappropriate on the edge of the business park in this more rural southern location.
- Request a condition requiring a hedge to be planted to the west of the existing service road.

(Officer note: This application must be assessed on its own merits and the Council cannot speculate as to what further applications may be made in the future. The proposal is not considered harmful to the character of the area as addressed in the relevant section of this report. Some landscaping is already present close to the building and no additional landscaping is required).

- The entrance to the business park is inadequate and was last improved in 2009.
- The proposal leads to surface water runoff onto the main road. The drainage system is inadequate.

(Officer note: The Council's Highways Officer has no objection to the use of the existing access, nor have they indicated that they object in terms of impacts on the local or wider highway network. Drainage on the site can be dealt with by condition).

Local Members: Cllr Stuart Munro has listed the application and believes that it represents encroachment into the Countryside.

Neighbours:

12 objections received which state the following:

- The application is on land which was never part of the business park, it was a field which belonged to a neighbour. There will be encroachment into the Countryside. There has been significant development at the business park over time (since 1997) and this needs to be reviewed. The original area of the site was 0.75 hectares but the total floorspace on the site is now 3750 m².
- The inspector examining the Core Strategy in 2010 only identified scope for limited development on the site. In the period 2012 to 2016, around 2300 square metres has been created for business units.
- The proposal is contrary to the decision of an inspector in 2017 (ref:162594). The lorry park on which the proposal sits was recently agricultural land and this has been necessitated by the construction of further business units on the lorry park.
- If the current application is approved, one fifth of the covered space within the business park has been built since 2017. The proposal will create a hard edge to the countryside, almost a kilometre from the entrance and this has an urbanising effect. There is no policy basis to support further development at this site. An inspector has considered this site unsuitable for further employment development. The site is not a core employment area.
- The development would be visible from Lambs Lane and also a nearby public footpath.

(Officer note: It is acknowledged that there has been expansion of the business park over time. The proposal would sit on an existing HGV parking area which was recently approved by the Council. The principle of the development is discussed in detail in the relevant section of this report.)

- There has been an incremental impact on the local road network, environment and local amenity value. There are Highway safety issues at the entrance in Back Lane. There is a school nearby and there are residential properties opposite. The proposal will lead to pollution (water and air) and lead to loss of wildlife. Increased activity will disturb neighbours.
- The application fails to mention the residential properties opposite the entrance to the site on Back Lane. Recent development on the site has led to a significant increase in journeys made to and from the site, leading to increased noise and a deterioration in the amenity value of the area. Photographic evidence of an HGV parked on Back Lane and congestion on the same road.
- The business units will become crowded together and this will create congestion and affect circulation in this part of the site.

(Officer note: The Council's Highways Officer has raised no objection to this incremental increase in business units, including in relation to impact on the nearby road network and a plan has shown that HGV's can still circulate within the site. It is noted that a photograph of an HGV parked on the adjacent road has been submitted, along with photos showing congestion. The entrance to the site is also near a school. However, there are no objections on these grounds and illegal parking be occurring, this is a civil matter).

- The business park cannot be drained by soakaway, surface water flooding already occurs onto the nearby main road and further down the slope. Climate change will make this worse and the proposal involves another area of impermeable surface.

(Officer note: Drainage on the site can be dealt with by condition. It is noted that the proposal would be placed on an existing man-made surface).

- The placement of the units directly adjacent other commercial units will block light from the first floor window and impede the rear facing fire exist route.

(Officer note: The impact of the proposal on light reaching a window of an adjacent commercial unit would not substantiate a reason to refuse this application. The impact of the proposal on the fire escape of a modest neighbouring unit is not a material planning consideration).

APPLICANTS POINTS

- The business park is popular and provides local business with high quality space.
- The business park is well kept and well located. There is strong demand for such employment space.
- The government supports economic growth. The proposed buildings lie within an established Business Park and the proposed development will provide rural employment and contribute to enhancing the rural economy and the local economy as a whole.
- The site is currently well screened and new landscaping has been recently planted. The buildings are designed to reflect the existing character, scale and materials of the Business Park. The external materials are consistent with those used throughout the Business Park.
- Parking for HGV's is retained.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP2	Inclusive Communities
	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 (including countryside)
	CP15	Employment Development
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	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 (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB11	Core Employment Areas
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
	TB24	Designated Heritage Assets
	TB25	Archaeology
Supplementary Documents (SPD)	Planning	BDG Borough Design Guide – Section 4
		DCLG – National Internal Space Standards

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The planning application involves the construction of 3 new business units on an area currently used for HGV parking, within Lambs Farm Business Park. Like other units in the business park, they would be constructed of a brick base, with profiled metal cladding and a pitched roof.
2. The history of the site is important in this case as there have been numerous recent applications. The area upon which it is proposed to construct the units was previously outside the historic boundary of the business park. However, the use of the land for parking of HGV's was approved under permission ref 182360. This required the removal of part of the unauthorised hardstanding and this appears to have been carried out.

Principle of Development:

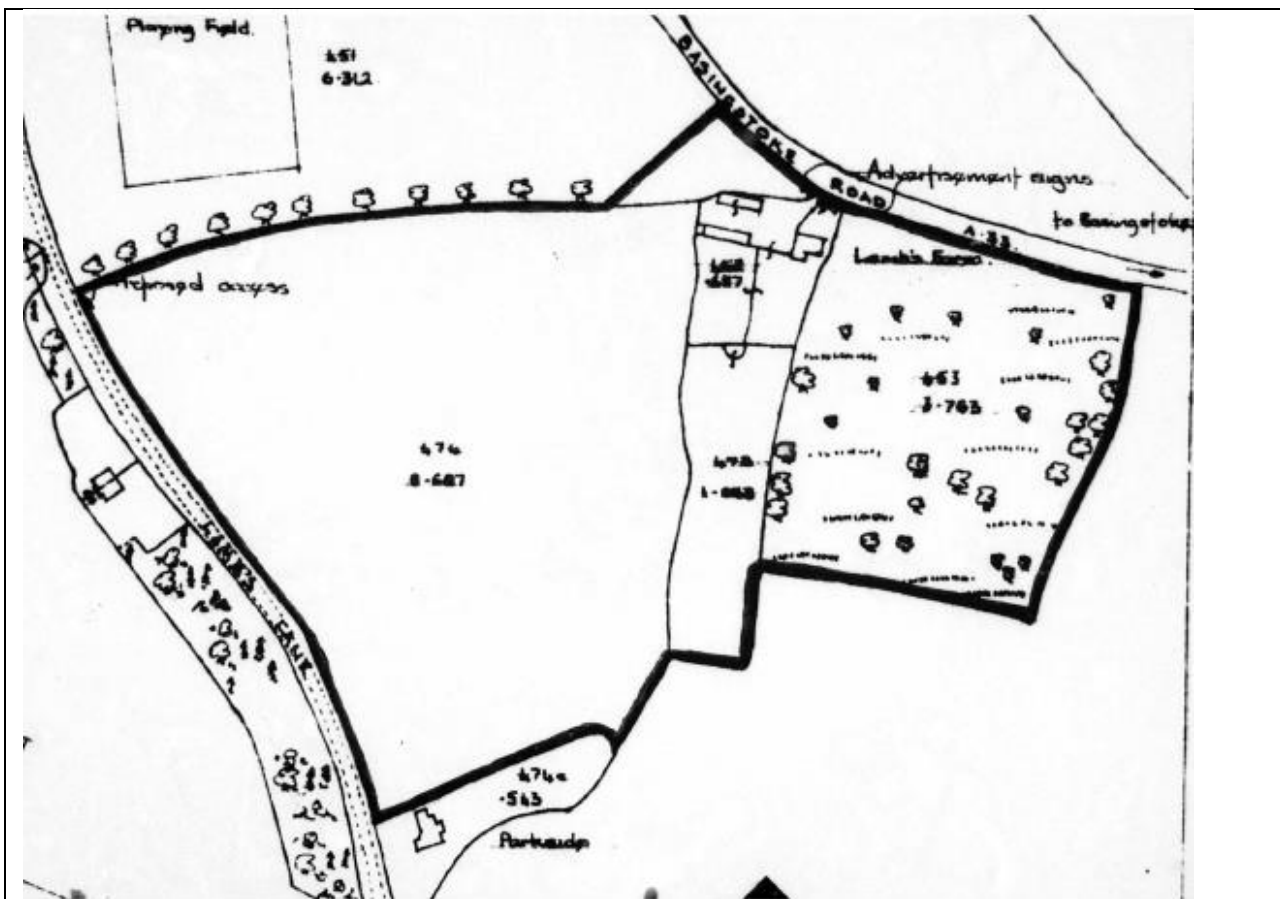
3. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
4. The application site is located to the south of the settlement of Spencers Wood, outside of development limits as defined by Core Strategy policy CP9 and updated by MDD policy CC02. The site is therefore located in the countryside in policy terms and Core Strategy policy CP11 applies. In accordance with CP11, development proposals will not normally be permitted except where one or more of the specified

exceptions apply. The site has an extensive planning history, with a number of planning permissions allowing the growth of the business park over recent years.

5. The proposal relates to the erection of 3 additional business units at Lambs Farm Business Park comprising a total additional floorspace of 465m². The units are to comprise light industrial (B1(a), (b), (c)) and storage (B8) business uses. The proposals would extend the built form of the site southwards into a tarmacked area, which is understood to currently be used for parking of HGVs. Lambs Farm was originally a farmstead within open countryside with associated farm buildings in close proximity to the original farmhouse. Over a number of years these farm buildings have been demolished and rebuilt and diversified for business use creating Lambs Farm Business Park. In recent years the number of units and associated parking has significantly increased on the eastern side of the site.
6. The exception set out in part 1) of CP11, is where development contributes to “diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough”. Any exceptions must also then comply with part 2), that the development should not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion beyond the original buildings, and also part 3), that the development is contained within suitably located buildings that are appropriate for conversion.
7. The key consideration would be whether the proposals contribute to a ‘rural enterprise’, for which no further definition is given in policy or supporting text. Likewise, ‘rural enterprise’ is not specifically defined in national policy, however, as discussed below, the NPPF supports the principle of all types of employment development in countryside locations. Therefore, it would be reasonable to interpret ‘rural enterprise’ as including existing enterprises which are in rural locations, and as such there would be no direct conflict with this aspect of CP11. The Planning Policy Officer has given the following advice:

Compliance or conflict with policy CP11 would then hinge on an assessment of whether the development represents excessive encroachment away from original buildings and whether it is contained within a suitably located building. With regard to encroachment, consideration should be had to the scale of the new units proposed and their location within the site in relation to existing built form and previously developed land. Consideration should also be given to the extent of recent development at the site and whether or not this represents an unreasonable proliferation of development into the countryside away from original buildings. With regard to being contained within an existing building, the proposal clearly does not meet this criterion, however regard should be had in the planning balance to the fact the proposal is on an area of tarmac.

8. The plan below is the earliest plan of the site in the council’s possession (from 1966):



9. The above plan shows that there has been considerable expansion of development into the countryside over time, away from the original buildings (those which were present in 1948 or when they were first built if built since). However, in line with the advice from the Planning Policy Officer, whether new buildings constitute excessive development away from the original buildings will require consideration of the scale of the new units proposed and their location within the site in relation to existing built form and previously developed land. Consideration should also be given to the extent of recent development at the site and whether or not this represents an unreasonable proliferation of development into the countryside away from original buildings.
10. It is noted that there has been significant recent development on the site, including beyond its historic boundaries. It is also noted that an application for a new building in the fields to the west of the site was dismissed by a planning inspector (ref: 162594), for reasons relating to encroachment into the Countryside. However the new buildings are located on existing hardstanding, which was considered acceptable development in the Countryside recently and could at any point be reasonably home to many large HGV's (which have considerable bulk and therefore impact on the Countryside). The proposed new buildings are tucked very close to existing buildings on the site and therefore would be viewed against their existing bulk. The new buildings would not result in an increase in the amount of hardstanding beyond the existing built up envelope and would be entirely contained on existing hardstanding. For these reasons, it is not considered that the buildings would encroach excessively away from the original buildings. The building considered by the inspector would have protruded significantly into the fields to the west of the site and the impact on the countryside would have been more apparent.

11. The application site is not a Core Employment Area (CEA) 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 CEAs and encouraging their continued intensification by supporting development for B uses. The supporting text to Policy TB11 of the MDD confirms that the majority of employment growth will take place within the identified CEAs. However, the Planning Policy Officer has advised that CP15 also has a qualitative element and states that *‘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.*
12. The site is not a CEA and therefore the development plan does not specifically envisage that employment growth will occur in this location, beyond the limited support of policy CP11. However, the Planning Policy Officer has further advised that as the site is currently a viable business park and as it is located in Spencers Wood outside a CEA, it offers an alternative location / site / size of employment land within the Borough. The relatively modest additional floorspace proposed could continue to assist the site in providing for this qualitative aspect of CP15. In any case, the inspector involved in the assessment of application 162594 described policy CP15 as ‘rigid’ and ‘prescriptive’ in its approach compared with the NPPF and therefore only afforded the policy limited weight. The NPF is discussed in more details below.
13. The NPPF is a material consideration in the planning balance. Section 6 of the NPPF relates to building a strong, competitive economy and makes specific reference to supporting a prosperous rural economy. 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;...”*
14. Paragraph 84 further clarifies that:
- “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.**” (Officer emphasis).*
15. The NPPF defines previously developed land (PDL) as *“Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure...”* The Planning Policy Officer is of the view that the application site appears to satisfy this definition, being, as a minimum, within the curtilage of the developed land. It is noted that this land has only been recently developed, however as previously discussed, the construction of hardstanding and its use for parking of HGV’s has already been accepted by the local

planning authority. The proposal may result in an intensification of the use of the business park as a whole, but it would not result in further expansion.

16. The Local Plan Update (LPU) is at a fairly early stage of preparation. At the time of writing, the LPU has limited weight in the decision making process. Notwithstanding, land to the west of Lambs Lane Business Park (reference 5SW013) has been promoted through the Local Plan Update process for B1a, B1b and B8. This is proposed as an extension to the existing business park site. The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) published alongside the Draft Plan provides an assessment of each of the roughly 300 promoted sites. The assessment for site 5SW013 (see HELAA Appendix D page 39) concluded the site to be potentially suitable for development. While considered potentially suitable, the Draft Plan does not propose to allocate site 5SW013 for future development. The current application site is materially different to that assessed through the HELAA, being located to the east of the business park's access road, adjacent to the existing built up area of the site, and therefore its protrusion into open countryside is less pronounced than the promoted site.

17. 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:

a) Is genuinely required to support an existing or new rural business or enterprise;...

18. 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. The Housing Policy officer has indicated that this approach is arguably more permissive than the existing CP11. They have also indicated that there is broadly a need for industrial floorspace over the longer term plan period to 2036, however this is based on evidence not yet tested through Examination in Public and therefore holds limited weight.

19. Overall, the NPPF offers support for all types of employment development within rural locations. The principle of development is supported by national policy subject to there being no unacceptable impacts and when weighed against other national policy aims, principally recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Some limited weight can be given to support of the scheme from the Local Plan Update and other evidence as put forward by the Planning Policy Officer. There has been expansion of the business park in the recent past and there has been considerable expansion when considered against the original buildings, numerous neighbour objections have also been received relating to the incremental expansions at this site. Due to their position within the site and on already developed land, it is not considered that the additional buildings would result in significant harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and therefore the proposal is acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area:

20. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that 'maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment'. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states planning permission will be granted if development is 'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life'

21. MDD policy CC03 outlines states that: Development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved the following criteria within scheme proposals:

a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development

b) Promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways

c) Promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside

d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features

e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

22. MDD TB21 states that:

Proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.

Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

23. The site is located outside the settlement boundary of Spencers Wood within the Countryside therefore Core Strategy Policy CP11 and MDD Local Plan Policy TB21 will apply. Basingstoke Road adjacent to the application site is designated as a Green Route Enhancement Area within the MDD Local Plan. The landscape in which the site is located is identified within the Wokingham District Landscape Character Assessment as being within landscape character area J3 – Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay. The main characteristics of the landscape outside the settlements of Spencers Wood, Shinfield and Three Mile Cross is that of an elevated rural landscape which mainly consists of pasture with the increasing presence of horse-keeping and some arable farmland. Field sizes vary and are usually enclosed by a network of hedgerows and field Oaks. Woodland blocks and copses are also frequent and are often found around traditional farmsteads. The landscape is of a moderate quality and sensitivity with ancient woodlands and historic field boundaries being most sensitive. One of the key issues for this landscape character area is the demand for large scale agricultural buildings (or in

this case business units) leading to the visual intrusion of these elements within the landscape.

24. The site currently consists of HGV parking allowed under planning application 182360 on what was until recently an open paddock used for grazing horses and which has now extended the business park beyond the original defined boundary into a greenfield area to the south. The majority of views towards the application site are from; Basingstoke Road, Lambs Lane, and the footpath to the south of the site, and are restricted by trees and hedgerows growing on the land outside of the application site, although views of the rooftop of the existing buildings from the Mill House to the south at Swallowfield are apparent.
25. The proposed units are 6.7m high and set to the south side of a staggered arrangement of buildings on the SE side of the site that is significant in length. Whereas the new units are slightly shorter. The impact of the buildings will be felt on the east facing side and where they meet the existing building. The positioning of the new buildings creates a triangle of space for additional parking areas and wouldn't be suitable for tree planting, however this is not considered unacceptable due to nearby trees outside the application site and the staggered relationship with the existing buildings. The impact on southerly views will be mitigated by locating the new units hard against the existing so that from the south the view of built form will not significantly change. Screening to the southern boundary of this part of the site has been provided under a recent planning application 200144 which consists of native hedgerow and hedgerow Oaks, although the effectiveness of the screen will take some time to be realised the buildings are not excessive in height.
26. The Trees and Landscapes Officer has not objected to the proposal. Overall it is considered that the new buildings would not lead to harm to the character of the area when viewed against the backdrop of existing buildings. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard.

Residential Amenities:

27. The proposal would be situated a significant distance from neighbours to the south west and even further from neighbours to the east however there are residents closer to the access at Back Lane. The closest residents being The Shieling and Arckley to the west of the access and two dwellings directly opposite. Concerns have been raised by neighbours regarding the cumulative impact of approved developments on the land and the expansion of the business use and increased disturbance from use of the entrance to the site. Neither the Highways Officer nor the Environmental Health Officer have raised any issues relating to these points. Given the distance from neighbours to the development it is not considered that the development would result in unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity.

Access and Movement:

28. 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. CC07 of the MDD Local Plan contains the Borough parking Standards. The NPPF advises at paragraph 109 that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would

be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

29. The Council's Highways Officer does not consider that the proposal would have a significant impact on the highway network. They also consider that the existing, established access road into the business park is suitable to accommodate vehicles associated with the proposed use. While neighbouring objections are taken into consideration and it is acknowledged that there have been incremental increases to the size of the business park, the proposals are therefore acceptable with regards impacts on the highway network and the access is suitable.
30. The applicant has provided tracking drawings which demonstrate that the rest of the HGV parking area will be unaffected. They have also provided a revised parking plan which demonstrates 17 spaces, which are in accordance with the Borough Standards. It is noted that a number of these spaces are currently present and that therefore they are likely to be used for neighbouring units – meaning a loss of parking for some neighbouring units. The Highway's Officer has indicated that due to a lack of parking issues on the site overall and the likelihood that this will effect on-street parking being minimal, they have no objection to the overall level of parking being provided. 2 electric vehicle charging points have also been provided in accordance with the Highways Design Guide. A revised travel plan for the business park has been provided. At the time of writing, this has not yet been reviewed by the relevant consultee within the Council. An update with regards the acceptability of the travel plan will be provided to members at the Planning Committee. Should the travel plan be unacceptable, it would not be unreasonable to require a revised plan by condition and this would be required to make the application acceptable.
31. For the above reasons, the proposal is in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, CP6 of the Core Strategy and CC07 of the MDD Local Plan and is acceptable.

Flooding and Drainage:

32. CC09 of the Core Strategy relates to flood risk. CC10 relates to sustainable drainage. The site is situated in flood zone 1.

CC10 indicates:

All development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner. This must be demonstrated through:

- a) A Flood Risk Assessment, or*
- b) Through a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.*

All development proposals must

- a) Reproduce greenfield runoff characteristics and return run-off rates and volumes back to the original greenfield levels, for greenfield sites and for brownfield sites both run-off rates and volumes be reduced to as near greenfield as practicably possible.*

b) Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), where practicable, which must be of an appropriate design to meet the long term needs of the development and which achieve wider social and environmental benefits

c) Provide clear details of proposed SuDS including the adoption arrangements and how they will be maintained to the satisfaction of the Council [as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)]

d) Not cause adverse impacts to the public sewerage network serving the development where discharging surface water to a public sewer.

33. The NPPF states:

When determining any planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere. Where appropriate, applications should be supported by a site-specific flood-risk assessment. Development should only be allowed in areas at risk of flooding where, in the light of this assessment (and the sequential and exception tests, as applicable) it can be demonstrated that:

a) within the site, the most vulnerable development is located in areas of lowest flood risk, unless there are overriding reasons to prefer a different location;

b) the development is appropriately flood resistant and resilient;

c) it incorporates sustainable drainage systems, unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate;

d) any residual risk can be safely managed; and

e) safe access and escape routes are included where appropriate, as part of an agreed emergency plan.

34. The proposal is located on existing hardstanding. The details submitted with this application indicate that surface water drainage will be accommodated for via the existing drainage system. This consist of soakaways. A number of objections have been received in relation to problems with surface water runoff at this site and it is claimed that soakaways are not sufficient. The Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has indicated that a Surface Water Drainage Strategy is required which should include details of the existing site drainage stating how proposed development would feed into the existing drainage system. Drainage strategy (including SuDS) will need to be shown on a drawing, indicating the location and sizing of all drainage features with pipe connections from the proposed development to the discharge points. These details can be required by condition and such a condition would be required In order that a suitable drainage system is provided in accordance with policy CC10 and the NPPF. While the neighbouring objections are taken into consideration, the condition will require evidence that the proposed/existing system is functional and therefore the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policy, subject to the discussed condition.

Ecology:

35. Policy CP7 of the Core strategy and TB23 of the MDD Local Plan relate to Biodiversity and Development. The application site comprises a business park surrounded by a

hedgerow and intensively farmed agricultural fields. The Council's Ecologist has indicated that the habitat to be affected by the proposals is hardstanding which is of low ecological value. The hedgerow will be retained. The existing building adjacent to the proposed new buildings is largely constructed of metal and is unlikely to host roosting bats. However, the surrounding habitat is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats (and other wildlife) that could be affected by any proposed new lighting strategy. A condition should therefore be set to ensure that any new external lighting proposed does not adversely affect bats or other wildlife. The proposal is therefore in accordance with the relevant policies.

Archaeology:

36. TB25 of the MDD Local Plan relates to Archaeology. Lambs Farm Business Park lies close to and north of a crop mark complex that is considered to indicate the presence of a former medieval settlement. However archaeological monitoring during recent development in and around the Business Park has so far failed to identify any buried remains.
37. Berkshire Archaeology have indicated that as the current proposal lies within an area of existing hard standing, there will have already been some impact on below ground deposits. In view of this, the relatively modest area included within this proposal, and the absence of buried remains from elsewhere within the Business Park, they consider that an archaeological response to this proposal would not be proportionate. No further action is therefore required in relation to this application as regards the buried archaeological heritage and the proposal is in accordance with the relevant policy.

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. **(Delete/amend as appropriate: If impacts upon persons with protected characteristics are identified please seek further guidance. The impacts must be detailed in this section, consideration must be given to potential mitigation and all issues given weight in the planning balance).***

CONCLUSION

The proposal would result in the provision of new business units, outside of settlement limits and in the Countryside. However, the buildings are within an existing business park. While the buildings are outside the historic boundaries of the business park, use of the land for parking of HGV's has been considered acceptable by the Local Planning Authority. Despite neighbour objections and the concerns of Cllr Stuart Munro, it is not considered that the proposal would lead to harm to the character of the Countryside or the wider area and based on a thorough assessment against national and local planning policy, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.

All other material considerations have been addressed, including issues raised by local residents and the Parish Council and no harm has been found, subject to conditions. The proposal is therefore recommended for approval.