

# Agenda Item 47.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
200700	30.09.2020	Wokingham	Emmbrook;

<b>Applicant</b>	Cleanslate Ltd
<b>Site Address</b>	1 Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 2XR
<b>Proposal</b>	Full application for the proposed erection of 14 flats, 6 no. one bedroom flats, 8 no. two bedroom flats, car parking and landscaping, following the demolition of existing buildings.
<b>Type</b>	Full
<b>PS Category</b>	1
<b>Officer</b>	Jeanette Davey
<b>Reason for determination by committee</b>	Major application

<b>FOR CONSIDERATION BY</b>	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 16 December 2020
<b>REPORT PREPARED BY</b>	Assistant Director – Place

<b>SUMMARY</b>
<p>The application site was formerly a builder's merchants, but has been vacant for over 12 months. The site comprises a two storey building, various smaller outbuildings and open areas of hardstanding which served the builders' merchants use.</p> <p>The application proposed the demolition of all structures and the erection of a residential block comprising 14 apartments (6 no. one bedroom flats, 8 no. two bedroom flats) as well as areas of parking and landscaping.</p> <p>The site has not been able to secure a viable alternative commercial use and it is considered that the redevelopment of the site to provide 14 dwellings is an appropriate response to the area, in terms of principle and quantum of development.</p> <p>The building has been designed to take account of existing development adjoining the site boundaries, with no unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity, and to provide appropriate amenity within the development. Enhanced landscaping will also be provided and required by condition.</p> <p>Although concern has been raised in respect of loss of the existing building, it is considered that its retention would make it difficult to secure an alternative user, residential or commercial, that the building is of limited historic interest, has been subject to significant alterations and is not protected. The proposed replacement is considered to be of an appropriate scale and appearance.</p> <p>The site is located within a highly sustainable location and provides an appropriate level of parking. The development would result in fewer vehicular trips than the existing lawful use and would not result in harm to the highway network.</p> <p>There would be a shortfall in affordable housing provision but it is clearly demonstrated that provision of a higher level of provision is not viable in this case. This has been peer reviewed by Council appointed consultants and no objection raised.</p>

The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and completion of a legal agreement. It is subject to further remediation, which will form part of an extensive suite of pre commencement conditions, which includes landscaping, highways, accessibility, materials, construction and drainage details, amongst other matters.

## **PLANNING STATUS**

- Major development location
- Water Utility Consultation Zones
- Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
- Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone
- Affordable Housing Thresholds
- Railways
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones
- Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
- Listed Building Buffer Zone

## **RECOMMENDATION**

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

- A.** Completion of a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to secure provision of affordable housing and an Employment Skills Plan.

If the Agreement is not completed within 3 months of the date of this resolution, Planning Permission will be refused unless the Operational Manager for Development Management in consultation with the Chairman of the Planning Committee agree to a later date.

**B. Conditions and informatives:**

1. Timescale

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

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

2. Approved plans

This permission is in respect of the submitted plans numbered:

S101 Site Location Plan received 16.03.2020

P101M Proposed Site Plan at Roof Level

P102M Proposed Site Plan at Ground Floor Level

P112D Proposed Elevations

P110E Ground and First Floor Plans

P111E Second Floor and Roof Plan

P114B Bicycle and Refuse & Recycling Stores Plans and Elevations

20008-003 Rev B Swept Analysis using a 11.30m refuse vehicle

20008-004 Proposed Access and Associated Visibility Splay

18270 / C101M Coloured Site Layout  
18270 / C102D Coloured Street Scene  
CCL22798 10 Landscape Masterplan

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

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

### 3. External materials

No development shall commence until details of the materials and colours to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the buildings 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. Noise scheme

The dwellings hereby approved shall not be occupied until noise mitigation measures for protecting the proposed dwellings from noise from the road and railway sources have been implemented in full in accordance with a scheme that has submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The noise mitigation measures shall be retained and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To protect future residents from noise from road and rail noise

Relevant policy: MDD Policy CC06.

### 5. Contaminated Land - 1 Submission of Remediation Scheme

A detailed remediation scheme to bring the site to a condition suitable for the intended use by removing unacceptable risks to human health, buildings and other property and the natural and historical environment must be prepared, and is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority. The scheme must include all works to be undertaken, proposed remediation objectives and remediation criteria, timetable of works and site management procedures. The scheme must ensure that the site will not qualify as contaminated land under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 in relation to the intended use of the land after remediation.

Reason: To protect future occupants of the site.

Relevant policy: MDD Policy CC06.

### 6. Contaminated land - 2 Implementation of Approved Remediation Scheme

The approved remediation scheme must be carried out in accordance with its terms prior to the commencement of development other than that required to carry out remediation, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Local Planning Authority must be given two weeks written notification of commencement of the remediation scheme works. Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme, a verification report that demonstrates the effectiveness of the remediation carried out must be produced, and is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect future occupants of the site.

Relevant policy: MDD Policy CC06.

### 7. Contaminated land - 3. Reporting of Unexpected Contamination

In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified it must be reported in writing immediately to the Local Planning Authority. An investigation and risk assessment must be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of condition 1, and where remediation is necessary a remediation scheme must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of condition 6, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect future occupants of the site.

Relevant policy: MDD Policy CC06.

### 8 – Contaminated land – 4 Verification

Following completion of measures identified in the approved remediation scheme a verification report must be prepared, which is subject to the approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority in accordance with condition 7.

Reason: To protect future occupants of the site.

Relevant policy: MDD Policy CC06.

### 9 - Construction Management Plan

No development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan and Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The plan should include the following details:

- a) Phasing of construction
- b) Lorry routing and potential numbers
- c) Types of piling rig and earth moving machinery
- d) Temporary lighting
- e) Parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors
- f) Estimation of the excavated soil and concrete rubble removed from the site
- g) Loading and unloading of plant and materials
- h) Storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development
- i) Erection and maintenance of security hoarding including decorative displays and facilities for public viewing, where appropriate,
- j) Wheel washing facilities,
- k) Measures to control the emission of dust, dirt and other matters during construction,
- l) A scheme for recycling/disposing of waste resulting from demolition and construction works.

The plan shall be implemented and adhered to in full and retained until the development has been constructed. Any deviation from this Statement shall be first agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience and neighbour amenities.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

### 10 - Landscaping details

No development shall commence until full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (furniture, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc).

Soft landscaping details shall include a planting plan, specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable. It must include trees and hedges with adequate space to thrive, and access for maintenance. Trees must be planted with adequate space to thrive and according to current guidance. Tree planting details are required to demonstrate the how the trees will be planted in the different areas across the site, e.g. depending on the site constraints for the particular location, if planted in open ground, street etc. but must include as standard irrigation.

All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority.

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

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.

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

#### 11 - Landscaping management plan

No development shall commence until a landscape management plan (including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved.

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

#### 12 - Details of boundary walls and fences

None of the residential dwellings hereby permitted shall be occupied until details of all boundary treatment(s) are first submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development or phased as agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be maintained in the approved form for so long as the development remains on the site.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and highway safety.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3

#### 13 - Bin storage

None of the residential dwellings hereby permitted shall be occupied until the approved bin storage area has been provided. The storage area shall be permanently so retained and used for no purpose other than the temporary storage of refuse and recyclable materials.

Reason: In the interests of visual and neighbouring amenities and functional development.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC04.

#### 14 – Drainage

No development above damp proof course level shall commence until a SuDS management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development, which shall include the arrangements for adoption by public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the scheme throughout its lifetime, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The Plan should fully detail the access that is required to reach surface water management component for maintenance purposes. It should also include a plan for safe and sustainable removal and disposal of waste periodically arising from drainage system, detailing the materials to be used and standard of work required including method statement. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved scheme and maintained for the life of the development.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a safe development.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3

#### 15 – Heritage

No works shall be undertaken to demolish, including stripping out or works of 1 Barkham Road and associated outbuilding on the site, until the applicant, agent or successor in title has submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme for recording the building in accordance with the methodology set out in Historic England's 'Understanding Historic Building: A Guide to Good Practice' (2016): (<https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-historic-buildings/heag099-understanding-historic-buildings/>) at recording Level 2.

Details are to include a procedure for taking photographic record during the demolition phases. A copy of the final building recording document is to be submitted to Berkshire Archaeology's Heritage Environment Records department. The condition shall only be deemed to be discharge in full once the Local planning Authority has received written confirmation from Berkshire Archaeology of receipt of a copy of the final building recording report.

Reason: In order to maintain a record of the features to be altered/demolished which form part of the historic development of the site.

Relevant policy: MDD Local Plan policy TB24

#### 16 - Renewable energy details

No development shall commence until a scheme for generating 10% of the predicted energy requirement of the development from decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development.

Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05

### 17 - Cycle parking details

No development shall commence until details of the secure and covered bicycle storage for each dwelling, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle storage shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before occupation of the development hereby permitted, and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking 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.

### 18 - Car parking and turning space

None of the residential dwellings hereby permitted shall be occupied until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space 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

### 19 - Visibility splays

None of the residential dwellings hereby permitted shall be occupied until the proposed vehicular access has been formed and provided with visibility splays shown on the approved drawing number 20008-004. The land within the visibility splays shall be cleared of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height and maintained clear of any obstruction exceeding 0.6 metres in height at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience.

Relevant policy:

Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

### 20 - Gates

Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no gates or barriers shall be erected on the access hereby permitted.

Reason: To assist in the integration of the development into character and community of the area and in the interest of highway safety.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD

### 21 - Access surfacing

No building shall be occupied until the vehicular access has been surfaced with a permeable and bonded material across the entire width of the access for a distance of 10 metres measured from the carriageway edge.

Reason: To avoid spillage of loose material onto the highway, in the interests of road safety.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP6.

#### 22 - Access to be provided

No building shall be occupied until the access has been constructed in accordance with the approved plans.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

#### **Informatives:**

##### 1. Section 106 Agreement

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

##### 2. Pre Commencement Conditions

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

##### 3. Demolition Notice

The applicant is reminded that a Demolition Notice may be required to be served on the Council in accordance with current Building Regulations and it is recommended that the Building Control Section be contacted for further advice.

##### 4. 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.

##### 5. Positive & Proactive

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received. This planning application has been the subject of positive and proactive discussions with the applicant in terms of extending the determination period of the application to allow for consideration at the Planning Committee and amended plans being submitted by the applicant to overcome concerns.

##### 6. CIL

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/>.

<b>PLANNING HISTORY</b>		
<b>Application Number</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Decision</b>
06351	Conversion of storerooms into showroom and install new window	GRANTED 04.08.1977
11120	New sliding doors to replace existing doors, raise floor area to level of yard, removal of existing wood staging and mess room	GRANTED 05.07.1979
40658	Demolition of front part of building adjacent to Oxford Road. Refacing of remaining elevation and use of area for storage of building supplies. Change of use of existing building from vacant to shop use.	GRANTED
41681	Erection of new fencing around site	GRANTED
42869	Erection of new boundary fence to replace temporary hoarding	GRANTED

<b>SUMMARY INFORMATION</b>	
Site Area	0.11ha
Existing units	0
Proposed units	14
Existing density – dwellings/hectare	0
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	127dph
Number of affordable units proposed	2
Previous land use	Sui Generis (Builders Merchants)
Proposed parking spaces	14 (unallocated)

<b>CONSULTATION RESPONSES</b>	
Thames Water	No objection
WBC Affordable Housing review	No objection subject to Legal Agreement
WBC Ecology	No objection
WBC Employment skills	No objection subject to Legal Agreement
WBC Drainage	No comments received
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No objection
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Heritage	Object to loss of non designated heritage asset
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to conditions

**REPRESENTATIONS****Town Council:** Objection received relating to:

- Level of affordable housing (*See paras 75-76 below*)
- Air pollution for occupants (*See para 72 below*)
- Lack of green space and landscaping (*See paras 55-56 below*)
- Lack of parking (*See paras 60-61 below*)

**Wokingham Society:** Objection received relating to:

- Preference to retain existing building, any new build must respect character (*See paras 23-36 below*)
- Harm to building line (*see para 58 below*)
- Overdevelopment – building only just meets minimum standards
- Lack of parking and manoeuvring space (*see paras 60-61 below*)
- Issues with access – should be moved to Oxford Road (*see para 63 below*)
- Construction will need to be managed (*see condition 9 above*)

**Local Members:** No comments received**Neighbours:** 2 letters of support (including 1 following reconsultation) and 1 objection:

- Location of access is unsuitable (*see para 63 below*)
- Concern re cars idling along road
- Only 1 electric charging point provided (*Officer note: 2 are provided on amended plans*)
- Has a viability assessment been submitted? (*See paras 75-76 below*)
- This is an excellent plan in keeping with the area
- Developer is considerate to neighbours
- Privacy is acceptable subject to boundary screening
- Application should be approved quickly in the interests of redeveloping the site

**PLANNING POLICY**

National Policy	<b>NPPF</b>	National Planning Policy Framework
	<b>NPPG</b>	National Policy Guidance
		NPPG Historic Environment - updated July 2019
		NPPG Viability – updated Sept 2019
		National Design Guide – MHCLG - Oct 2019
		Building for a Healthy Life – Homes England – July 2020
		Technical Housing Standards – MHCLG – Nationally Described Space Standard - 2015

Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	<b>CP1</b>	Sustainable Development
	<b>CP2</b>	Inclusive Communities
	<b>CP3</b>	General Principles for Development
	<b>CP4</b>	Infrastructure Requirements
	<b>CP5</b>	Housing mix, density and affordability
	<b>CP6</b>	Managing Travel Demand
	<b>CP7</b>	Biodiversity
	<b>CP8</b>	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>CP9</b>	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	<b>CP15</b>	Employment Development
	<b>CP17</b>	Housing Delivery
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	<b>CC01</b>	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	<b>CC02</b>	Development Limits
	<b>CC03</b>	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	<b>CC04</b>	Sustainable Design and Construction
	<b>CC06</b>	Noise
	<b>CC07</b>	Parking
	<b>CC09</b>	Development and Flood Risk
	<b>CC10</b>	Sustainable Drainage
	<b>SAL05</b>	Delivery of Avoidance Measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	<b>TB05</b>	Housing Mix
	<b>TB07</b>	Internal Space Standards
	<b>TB11</b>	Core Employment Areas
	<b>TB12</b>	Employment Skills Plan
	<b>TB21</b>	Landscape Character
	<b>TB23</b>	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	<b>BDG</b>	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List
		Affordable Housing SPD
		Sustainable Design and Construction SPD
		NRM6 of the South East Regional Plan

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

### **Site and Surroundings:**

1. This former Jewson's builders' merchant site is prominent, located on a busy corner plot between Barkham Road and Oxford Road, where it faces Wokingham's railway station and the pedestrian and vehicular crossing of the railway line. As a builders' merchant, the site was considered to be in a 'sui generis' use (one which did not fall in to a particular Use Class). It has now stood empty for well over a year, but the buildings which remain include a two-storey former dwelling, dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and various outbuildings and sheds formerly used for storage and display purposes associated with the commercial use.
2. The existing buildings are between one and two storeys in height. The site frontage is bounded by a brick wall and utilitarian grey railings. There is no soft landscaping on the site other than that which appears to be self-sown. The surfacing is a concrete pad, largely hidden from view by the brick wall.
3. The built character centred around Oxford Road and Barkham Road comprises narrow streets of mostly early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential terraces and semi-detached cottages. The streets create a fine but dense urban grain with a recognisable village character, accentuated by natural elements of tree lined streets and landscaped front and rear gardens. Modern residential development in the area has reflected this terraced character: in Banbury Close, and on corner sites such as Lily Court between Oxford Road and Havelock Road, where the block resembles the established village character but with 2.5 storeys, providing a more spacious appearance in its modern interpretation of an Edwardian terrace.
4. The site lies within the boundaries of the Major Development Location of Wokingham, as defined by CP9 of the Core Strategy and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan.
5. Barkham Road is a Green Route, designated under Policy CC03.
6. The footbridge over the railway line, facing the site, is Listed Grade II.

### **Proposed Development:**

7. The existing buildings are proposed for demolition. They would be replaced by a single building which would be predominantly three storeys in height, turning the corner of Barkham Road and Oxford Road, with frontages to both. Materials include red brick and buff brick detailing. That part of the proposal which adjoins existing dwellings in Oxford Road is proposed to be two storeys and rendered.
8. Other structures would house a bicycle store and the refuse / recycling store. Fourteen unallocated car parking spaces are proposed to the rear, with two being for electric charging vehicles and another as a disabled space. An area for the parking of visitors' bicycles is also shown. Access would be from the existing point on Barkham Road.
9. Of the fourteen flats, six are proposed as 1 bed (2 person) with the remainder being 2 bed (4 person). Two units are proposed for (shared ownership) affordable housing.
10. There would be no communal amenity space provided. Eleven of the fourteen proposed flats would have outdoor space, either via private front gardens or balconies.

**Principle of Development:**

11. The starting point for decision making is the development plan. Section 70[2] of the TCPA 1990 & 38[6] of the PCPA 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The plan-led approach advocated by law is reinforced numerous times throughout the NPPF, including paragraph 12:  
*'The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.'*
12. Policy CC02 of the MDD sets out the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map and therefore replaces the proposals map adopted through the Core Strategy, as per the requirement of policy CP9. Policy CP9 sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to the service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. As the site is within a major development location, the proposal is acceptable in principle.
13. The NPPF's underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development is carried through to the local Development Plan, whose fundamental spatial objective is to steer new development to the sustainable defined settlement limits and ensure that the scale of development reflects the size of the settlement and the services within it.
14. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
15. Policy CP3 of the Borough Council's Core Strategy lists general principles for acceptable development and states that development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the criteria listed. These criteria are assessed in detail in the following sections of this report.
16. Policies CP9 of the Core Strategy and CC02 of the MDD Local Plan establish the settlement limits for the Borough and the countryside. Development proposals are acceptable in principle in this location.

**Sustainable Development:**

17. Sustainability Policies CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy require that development be sustainable, with a reduction in the need for travel and the promotion of sustainable transport. Policy CP4 requires the provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities relative to the scale of the development and Policy CP9 states that the scale of development must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities, services and accessibility at or in the location.
18. The site is on the outside edge of Wokingham Town Centre and is in easy walking distance of a variety of retail and leisure facilities and services. It is also in immediate proximity of bus and train services at Wokingham Railway Station. Provision for the charging of electric cars is provided in two of the parking spaces. The site is therefore located in a highly sustainable location and the scheme provides facilities which enable sustainable travel choices.

**Loss of Employment Use:**

19. Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy seeks to prevent the net loss of floorspace in 'B' Uses (B1 light industrial/R&D/office; B2 general industrial, B8 storage & distribution) within the borough. Whilst the scheme relates to the loss of a 'sui generis' builders' merchants, which is not a 'B' Use, it is an employment generating use and therefore some regard should be had to the aims of the policy in respect of employment-related uses.
20. The site was operated by Jewson's builders' merchants until they moved to a new premises on Molly Millars Lane in October 2019 which allowed them to expand, creating additional jobs, provided improved customers facilities, and better storage, parking and servicing. Prior to Jewson's leaving and the site being purchased by the applicant, a marketing exercise was undertaken from August 2018; however, only two commercial enterprises expressed an interest, both withdrawing because of issues with the site (buildings not fit for purpose and access issues for commercial vehicles because of the level crossing). The site remained available to offers for over 12 months, but the only firm interest for the site since it first became available in 2018 has been for residential purposes.
21. Over the course of the application, officers have questioned the steps undertaken to enable a business use to continue on the site, which result in additional information being submitted by the applicant in this respect. From consideration of the submissions and other information available, the following issues are considered to make continued commercial use impractical:
- The current building is in a very poor state of repair. Whilst some issues are superficial, others, such as rising damp and structural concerns do lend weight to the applicant's submissions that repair and retention would not be economically viable.
  - The building is a mid-1800's converted dwelling and this makes it impractical for retention for most modern commercial enterprises, who would generally require a new building with a different layout i.e. they would require the existing building to be demolished and this would add significantly to the cost of occupying the site.
  - The site is too small to accommodate most builders' merchants – Jewson's new site has double the covered area of this site.
  - There isn't sufficient covered storage for most builders' merchants, and so the site would need a number of extensions, canopies etc, which may not be granted planning permission.
  - Access issues to the site as a result of the level crossing often cause issues for larger deliveries and mean delays accessing the site, making it less attractive than other available premises.
  - Any user, other than a builders' merchants, would require planning permission for a change of use from the current sui generis use. This makes it less attractive than other premises which already have permission in place for commercial uses. It should also be noted that the site does adjoin residential uses and so may not be appropriate for all B class uses.
22. Taking all these factors in to account, it is accepted that there has been sufficient attempt made to secure a business use on site, and that, having failed to secure sufficient interest and considering the constraints, redevelopment of the site for residential purposes presents the most practical alternative, especially given that the site adjoins residential properties.

## Heritage Issues:

23. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. It continues by stating that, in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
24. The Glossary to the NPPF states that a heritage asset includes assets identified by the local planning authority. The Borough Council's Conservation Officer considers the building which currently stands on the site to be a heritage asset of non-designated status.
25. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that there should be no detrimental impact upon important heritage features.
26. The MDD Local Plan is silent on non-designated heritage assets, other than those which are on WBC's List of Buildings of Traditional Local Character or within Areas of Special Character. This site does not fall into either category.
27. The applicant has submitted a heritage statement by Heritage Collective (March 2020) which assesses the effect of any development against the four components of its heritage significance: its archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interests, as defined in the Glossary to the NPPF. Their report considers the architectural and historic merits of the scheme in particular. Paragraph 2.12 of their heritage statement says that Historic England define harm as a change which erodes the significance of a heritage asset. The source is not stated and cannot be traced.
28. The Case Officer for this application has reviewed Historic England documents. Their publication *Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance* was published in April 2008. It defines harm as 'Change for the worse, here primarily referring to the effect of inappropriate interventions on the heritage values of a place'. It goes on to define heritage as 'All inherited resources which people value for reasons beyond mere utility' and it defines Place as 'Any part of the historic environment, of any scale, that has a distinctive identity perceived by people'.
29. The two references to harm are therefore broadly aligned. It is noted that the NPPG entitled 'Historic Environment' does not define harm.
30. Paragraph 3.11 of the heritage statement concludes on changes to the building which have occurred over time. These include the loss of the original roof, loss of windows and doors, changes to the side elevation and changes to the former landscaped gardens. The statement considers that these changes have considerably affected the authenticity and integrity of the building and the structure's potential heritage value. It considers that the two-storey former ancillary building has been significantly altered and is of no particular heritage value in its own right (though the report suggests that it could be considered to make some contribution to the main former dwelling as a historic ancillary element).

31. Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states that, in weighing applications that directly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required, having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset. The NPPF glossary defines significance as being derived not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting, ie the surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced.
32. The Wokingham Society object to the loss of the existing building on the site. They consider that, although it is not listed by Historic England or recorded as a Building of Traditional Local Character, the existing building is of heritage value as an example of the town's Victorian expansion. They state that, whilst new building is of course to be accepted, it is imperative that the local planning authority respects and retains such examples of the town's Victorian period and character. They continue that Victorian buildings (not being listed) are so easily demolished but, once gone, they can never be replaced, the nearby original station building being an example. They consider that every effort should be made to retain the main building and incorporate it into a new design.
33. The Borough Council's Conservation Officer recommends that the application be refused on the grounds that the proposal would result in the loss of a heritage asset of non-designated status. He considers that this results in conflict with Paragraphs 184, 192 and 197 of the NPPF, which refer to irreplaceable resources and to the desirability for new development to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
34. Paragraph 14 of the PPG states that disrepair and damage and their impact on viability can be a material consideration in deciding an application. The author of the submitted heritage statement did not undertake an internal site visit. However, she understands that the building is in a poor state of repair and very highly altered. Her conclusion is that this is commensurate with the building's conversion from dwelling to offices and the high level of external changes that the building has been subjected to over time. Officers have visited the site and inspected the building internally and do agree with that summary.

***Heritage Issues Conclusion:***

35. The fact that the building does not appear on any list as a non-designated heritage asset does not mean that it doesn't have merit, as identified by both the Wokingham Society and the Council's Conservation Officer. However, there are an accumulation of factors leaning towards its demolition, however regrettable, which have to be given weight. These include the extent of the external changes to the building in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the likely state of repair and alteration internally and the setting of the building which, in its own curtilage, has been entirely overlaid with concrete. Aside from the reasonably attractive façade, there is no feature of the building or site that is of particular interest or is worthy of retention. In addition, it is a building without recognised status and its demolition could occur without any intervention by planning regulation. On that basis, it is difficult to require its incorporation into any scheme for the site.
36. Officers agree with the submitted heritage statement that the proposal is not considered to impact on the Grade II listed railway footbridge opposite the site. No objection was received on this basis from the Council's Conservation Officer or from the Wokingham Society.



## **Design, Layout and Character of the Area:**

37. The following policies and guidance are relevant to the consideration of the design and layout of the scheme.

### ***NPPF (2019):***

38. Section 8 of the NPPF promotes healthy and safe communities including, inter alia, the promotion of social interaction and the enabling and supporting of healthy lifestyles, whilst Section 12 seeks to achieve well-designed places and paragraph 124 says that 'Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

39. Paragraph 127 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to the local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

### ***National Design Guide (2019) (NDG):***

40. This forms part of the Government's collection of PPGs and includes the following principles:

41. Paragraph 52 states that well-designed new development includes the consideration of the massing, scale and proportion of, and relationship between, buildings, roofscapes and façade design, such as the degree of symmetry, variety, the pattern and proportion of windows and doors, and their details and light, shade, sunshine and shadows.

42. Paragraph 65 states that built form is determined by good urban design principles that combine layout, form and scale in a way that responds positively to the context.

43. Paragraph 66 states that well-designed places adopt strategies for amenity that support the overall quality of the place, and paragraph 123 states that they provide good quality internal and external environments for their users, promoting health and well-being.

***Building for a Healthy Life (2020) (BHL):***

44. Paragraph 129 of the NDG suggests the use of assessment frameworks such as 'Building for Life 12: The sign of a good place to live' (2015), now known as 'Building for a Healthy Life' (BHL)(2020). It is generally intended as guidance for schemes of ten or more dwellings and is therefore relevant to this proposal. P2 of BHL states:

'As we approached the publication of BHL, Coronavirus (COVID-19) reached our country. The text had been agreed with Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government before any restrictions were imposed.' Publication was postponed to add words that seek to support wellbeing, easily identified by a symbol throughout BHL, and these include the extracts from Pages 32 and 35, below.

45. P32: Offering people access to at least some private outdoor space. This is particularly important for people's mental health and wellbeing, especially when social distancing and travel restrictions are in place.
46. P35: Consider providing apartments and maisonettes with some private outdoor amenity space such as semi-private garden spaces for ground floor homes; balconies and terraces for homes above ground floor.

***WBC Core Strategy (2010):***

47. Policy CP1 of the Borough Council's Core Strategy states that planning proposals should maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment and provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes.
48. Policy CP3 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.

***WBC MDD Local Plan (2014):***

49. Policy TB07 defines minimum requirements for gross internal areas for dwellings, to ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers.
50. The explanatory text to TB07 seeks to promote a high standard of liveability, accessibility and comfort. Sufficient internal space can help to achieve Lifetime Homes Standards, as set out in Policy TB05. It can also help to facilitate home working, to help minimise the need to travel, in line with Core Strategy Policy CP6: Managing Travel Demand.

***WBC Borough Design Guide SPD (2012):***

51. R1 and NR1 require that development contributes positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area, whilst R11 requires a coherent street character in terms of scale, rhythm, proportion and height.
52. In areas with an urban character, for instance Wokingham Town Centre, R16 seeks access to some form of amenity space, preferably in the form of private or communal garden space. For upper floor flat dwellers, it states that it is important to provide private outdoor space in the form of balconies, upper level terraces or winter gardens, so long as they protect the privacy of existing residents, provide some degree of

privacy and benefit from sunlight where possible. It continues that there should normally be enough space for 2-4 chairs and a small table.

**Analysis of the design and layout:**

53. The Wokingham Society considers the impact of the proposal on the local character of the area. They state that the houses on Barkham Road are set well back from the road and that this proposal does not respect the traditional building line of the existing street scene, in the way that the adjacent new houses do which replaced the pub. They state that, as Barkham Road is one of the gateways leading to the original Station Road and the town centre, a sensitive approach to design is required, in order to reflect the town's character. They state that the dimensions of the proposed building are only just above the minimum standard required and, since the applicant wishes this to be a high quality development, they consider that the site will be overdeveloped.

54. The applicant's agent submitted revised plans to seek to address shortcomings in the design and layout of their first submissions. Internally, this includes improvements to the amount of space within each unit, the headroom on the top floor, the room shapes (which had previously included rooms with walls at acute angles) and the space between kitchen units. Externally, the need for outdoor space per unit has been highlighted by the rise of the Covid 19 pandemic, as reflected by the Building for a Healthy Life guidance. The original submission lacked any form of private amenity space for occupiers. The amended submission has now addressed this for eleven of the fourteen units, as detailed in the table below.

Unit	Bed rooms	Flsp (sq.m.)	NDSS	Window aspect	Amenity space
1	2	70.8	50	Double	Private front garden
2	2	77.1	70	Double via Bed 2	Private front garden
3	1	52.4	50	Single	Private front garden
4	2	80	70	Double	Private front garden
5	1	53.3	50	Double	Private front and side garden
6	2	70.8	70	Double via Bed 1 (and Bathrooms)	Balcony off Bedroom 1
7	2	71.6	70	Single	None
8	1	51.3	50	Single	None
9	1	60.7	50	Single	None
10	1	67.5	50	Double	Balcony off Bedroom
11	2	70.8	70	Double via bed 1	Balcony off Bedroom 1
12	2	70.3	70	Double at the front	Balcony off Living Room
13	1	50	50	Single	Balcony off Living Room
14	2	80	70	Double via Bed 2	Balcony off Bedroom 2

55. Some concerns remain, particularly relating to the absence of access to a balcony or private outdoor space for three of the units; however, the proposal complies with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and, as such, it is not possible to forward an objection to the scheme on these grounds.

56. It must also be noted that this is a site very close to the town centre, where full compliance with amenity standards may not always be possible, and that there are opportunities for recreation and outdoor space in close proximity to the site - Barkham

Recreation Ground, Latimer Road is a 150m walk, whilst the facilities at Elm's Field are just over 300m away. It is therefore considered that the scheme affords adequate amenity for occupiers.

57. Turning to details of the design, the original submission included significant elements of blank external walling, a complex and convoluted roof design, the absence of clearly visible entrance points and a conflict of vertical and horizontal emphases on the facades. The result was a contrived and bulky design which resulted in overdevelopment of the site.
58. The revised submission has addressed many of these issues. It is not feasible to sit the building back within the site because it would abut the rear amenity space of adjoining properties, resulting in overbearing and overlooking, and therefore some breach of the building line is accepted, subject to details of landscaping and boundary treatment, which are discussed in further detail below. Whilst some element of flat roof remains, the proposed building is considered to be an appropriate compromise, which is acceptable in design terms and in some respects represents a visual enhancement compared to the current site through removal of the palisade fencing, and more pleasing residential environment, an overall reduction in hardstanding and the implementation of landscaping.
59. In terms of neighbouring amenity, the scheme has been designed so as to avoid cutting the 45-degree line of sight to neighbouring residential units. The separation distances to neighbouring properties exceeds those laid out in the Borough Design Guide. There is therefore no objection in terms of neighbouring amenity.

## **Highways:**

### *Vehicle parking*

60. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards, and would require 12.6 (i.e. 13) parking spaces if unallocated. 14 unallocated spaces are proposed and this is therefore a minor overprovision of parking, but is considered to be in general accordance with the standards and would not be harmful. All spaces meet the required dimensions and adequate manoeuvring is provided.
61. Two of the parking spaces are proposed to provide electric charging points, which is considered to be appropriate. Also in terms of parking provision, it should be noted that the site is located very close to the town centre and its location offers a number of sustainable travel choices including bus and train options.

### *Cycle parking*

62. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum cycle parking standards and Policies P2 and P3 of the Borough Design Guide SPD ensure that it is conveniently located, secure and undercover and provided where it is compatible in the streetscene. Cycle parking is shown in a store to the rear of the site, easily accessed from the flats. The submissions state 14 cycle spaces and show 16 cycle spaces – either is appropriate for the 14 units, but a condition is proposed to ensure that at least 14 spaces are provided and retained.

### *Access*

63. The application proposes that the vehicular access point to Barkham Road would be retained. Highways have confirmed that there is a shortfall in visibility compared to standards (2.4m x 25.1m compared to a standard of 2.4m x 43m), but it does represent significant improvements in terms of visibility compared to the existing situation. Firstly, the scheme removes the 2m high brick wall fronting the site which is a significant barrier to visibility, replaced with a low level wall which drivers can see over, and this is controlled through condition. Secondly, the residential scheme would result in a net reduction in trips compared to the existing use. Using TRICS data, the applicants submit that there would be 10 fewer vehicle movements per day and 8 fewer HGV movements, which is considered to be a benefit in highway safety terms. Highways confirm that the scheme is acceptable on this basis. It is also of note that the access is close to a level crossing which is in regular use throughout the day. It is often the case that vehicles are either queuing or moving slowly along this section of Barkham Road because of the crossing, and that, even when there is no queue, motorists tend to slow at this point as they approach the crossing and sharp left turn beyond. Accordingly, the scheme is considered to offer improvements in highway safety terms and is acceptable.

### *Traffic generation*

64. As above, using TRICS data, the scheme is considered to result in fewer trips on the network overall compared to the existing use (10 fewer vehicle movements per day and 8 fewer HGV movements) and there is therefore no objection in terms of impact upon the network.

### *Construction management*

65. Due to the site location and scale of the development, a framework Construction Management Plan and Construction Management Plan is required by condition. This will detail measures to ensure that there is no disruption to existing traffic movements but will also need to detail measures to protect neighbour amenity.

### **Flooding and Drainage:**

66. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the Drainage Officer has no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions. Thames Water state that, with regard to waste water network and sewage treatment works infrastructure capacity, they would not have any objection to the proposal.

### **Landscape and Trees:**

67. The Tree and Landscape Officer states that, as the site faces the Green Route designated under Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan, frontage landscaping including trees will be required in order for the site to integrate with its surroundings effectively and in order to be compliant with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy. The available space to the front of the proposed building is a key constraint in terms of tree planting, however, there are many fastigate varieties that would be appropriate in this location which would enhance the Green Route. There are no trees on site at present; however, the submissions indicating that at least 9 trees could be planted, including 6 along the frontage which is considered to be a benefit in terms of the aims of the Green Route.

68. The scheme also offers the opportunity to offer improvements to the public realm through removal of the existing unattractive palisade fencing and replacement with low level walls and landscaping along the frontages.

69. There is therefore no objection to the scheme, subject to conditions relating to boundary treatment and a landscaping scheme and the maintenance of the landscape.

**Ecology:**

70. The bat emergence survey report (The Ecology Co-op, May 2020) submitted with the application has been undertaken to an appropriate standard and concludes that the building is unlikely to host roosting bats. There are no other species of concern and the Council's Ecologist has confirmed no objection to the scheme.

**Environmental Health:**

*Noise:*

71. The proposed development is located adjacent to a busy road, opposite a level crossing and railway station and platform. There are therefore potential issues in respect of noise from idling and accelerating cars and trains and the public announcement tannoy at the station. The applicant has submitted an acoustic assessment for the site which shows that noise levels are above the target recommended levels inside with open windows but with good quality double glazed windows closed and with whole house ventilation provided, acceptable internal levels in compliance with BS8233:2014 recommendations can be achieved. The actual glazing and ventilation specifications can be required by condition.

*Air Quality:*

72. Whilst the site is located in close proximity to a level crossing and railway station where idling trains and cars and corresponding pollution would be expected, the local air quality data held shows that recorded levels are actually well within the national air quality objective levels, so air quality is not of concern at the site and no mitigation is required.

*Demolition and Construction Impacts:*

73. There is a risk on adverse impact on local residents due to noise and air quality during the redevelopment of the site. A CEMP condition would ensure appropriate controls are put in place to manage the risks as far as practicable.

*Contaminated Land:*

74. The site has previous commercial use, including use as a Builders' Merchants and the proposed use for residential is a sensitive land use. The applicant has submitted an assessment which includes both a preliminary desk study and site walkover and an intrusive site investigation. The assessment concludes that the site has elevated PAH (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons – a group of chemicals often formed during burning of organic substances) concentrations across the site and will require remediation to be made suitable for use. A remediation scheme should be submitted for approval, to demonstrate how they will remediate the site. Once approved, the remediation should be completed in accordance with the approved scheme. The completion of remediation should be checked and validated and the report submitted to fully discharge the contaminated land conditions. In addition, a condition should be included to cover any unexpected contamination.

**Affordable Housing:**

75. Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy would require the provision of 20% affordable housing, equating to 2.8 units of accommodation. The applicant had originally proposed that no affordable housing be provided. An Economic Viability Assessment (EVA) dated February 2020 was submitted as part of this application. The EVA concluded that, when affordable housing is provided and a S106 contribution is made, the proposed scheme would not strike an adequate balance between landowner returns, developer returns and policy compliance to achieve viability. This assessment was therefore subjected to an independent review by consultants appointed by Wokingham Borough Council. The review concluded that the EVA did not provide sufficiently robust justification for the development not to comply with development plan policies with regard to affordable housing provision and S106 commitments.
76. Following significant discussions between officers and the developer, the amended proposals included the offer of 2.0 units of affordable housing, equating to 14%. The units would be provided on site as shared ownership properties. Whilst this does fall short of a fully policy compliant scheme, it is clear that the level of developer profit is not unreasonable and that the site does have abnormal costs, including site remediation, which must be fully borne by the applicant. As such, the independent review recommends that this level of provision be accepted.

**Sustainable Design/Construction:**

77. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation and R21 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change. Whilst sustainable measures are contained within the Building Regulations, Policy CC05 of the MDD Local Plan encourages renewable energy and decentralised energy networks, with encouragement of decentralised energy systems and a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions for developments of 10+ dwellings, which would be secured by condition.
78. It should also be noted that the scheme promotes sustainable development through provision of electric charging points and bicycle storage provision and is in a highly sustainable location, where walking and use of public transport are good alternatives to the private car.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Special Protection Area (SPA):***Community Infrastructure Levy:*

79. The application is liable for CIL payments because it involves a net increase of 15 new dwellings, payable at a rate of £365/m<sup>2</sup>, index linked.

*Special Protection Area:*

80. This site is entirely in the 5-7km linear mitigation zone. In following the Thames Basin Heaths Joint Strategic Partnership Board Delivery Framework, the proposal is for a maximum of 14 dwellings. It therefore falls below the 50 dwellings threshold to trigger the requirement for mitigation of the additional recreation burden on the SPA with SANG and SAMM contributions.

**Employment Skills:**

81. Policy TB12 of the MDD Local Plan requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an employment skills plan (ESP) with a supporting method statement.
82. ESPs are worked out using the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) benchmarks which are based on the value of construction. This means that, based on the CITB benchmarks, the ESP would be seeking 3 Community Skills Support posts, and 1 job created, or an Employment Skills contribution in lieu of an ESP.

**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.

**CONCLUSION**

The existing redundant builders' merchant has not been able to secure a viable alternative commercial use and it is considered that the redevelopment of the site to provide 14 dwellings is an appropriate response to the area, in terms of principle and quantum of development.

The building has been designed to take account of existing development adjoining the site boundaries, with no unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenity, and to provide appropriate amenity within the development. Enhanced landscaping will also be provided and required by condition.

Although concern has been raised in respect of loss of the existing building, it is considered that its retention would make it difficult to secure an alternative user, residential or commercial, that the building is of limited historic interest, has been subject to significant alterations and is not protected. The proposed replacement is considered to be of an appropriate scale and appearance.

The site is located within a highly sustainable location and provides an appropriate level of parking. The development would result in fewer vehicular trips than the existing lawful use and would not result in harm to the highway network.

There would be a shortfall in affordable housing provision but it is clearly demonstrated that provision of a higher proportion of affordable housing is not viable in this case. This has been peer reviewed by council appointed consultants and no objection raised.

The application is recommended for approval subject to conditions and completion of a legal agreement. It is subject to further remediation, which will form part of an extensive suite of pre commencement conditions, which includes landscaping, highways, accessibility, materials, construction and drainage details, amongst other matters.