

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
213975	8 April 2022	Wokingham	Evendons

Applicant	Mr. D. Bolt
Site Address	Indigo House, Mulberry Business Park, Wokingham, RG41 2GY
Proposal	Full application for the proposed removal of the existing roof structure and the erection of a new second floor providing 11 No. 1 & 2 bedroom apartments, together with a cycle & refuse store.
Type	Full
Officer	Andrew Chugg
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 9 March 2022
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

SUMMARY
<p>The principle of converting this office building to residential flats has already been established by the extant prior approval decision 210166. This current application seeks approval to remove the building's roof and create a second floor to accommodate an additional 11 residential units over and above those granted under 182428. If approved, the applicant has advised that both schemes would be implemented simultaneously to deliver a total of 31 flats. The proposal would provide 4 affordable housing units (36%) that would be secured via a legal agreement under s106 and is therefore policy compliant in terms of delivering suitable housing for the borough.</p> <p>In design terms, the proposal would remove the existing shallow pitched roof and replace it with an additional floor that would be set back from the elevations and have a light-weight appearance being surrounded by glazed roof terraces. It would also be lower in height than that of roof ridge of the existing building. The additional floor proposed would not be out of character with the surrounding buildings in the area and would be reflective of other permissions in the area to add additional residential floors as part of office to residential conversions. There would be no impact on existing trees and a condition is recommended to secure a detail soft and hard landscaping scheme. Hence, overall, the proposal would enhance the character of the original building and the surrounding area.</p> <p>Adequate car and cycle parking facilities would be accommodated on site and the proposal would protect the amenities of future occupants within this and other neighbouring buildings. The proposed flats would comply with Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and the proposal would not have an adverse impact on protected species.</p>

PLANNING STATUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Development Location • Core Employment Areas – Molly Millars Industrial Area • Wind turbine safeguarding zone • Farnborough Aerodrome consultation zone

- Sand and gravel extraction
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 7km zone
- Groundwater protection zone
- Landfill consultation zone
- Minerals consultation zone
- Nuclear Consultation Zone – AWE 12km zone
- Contaminated land consultation zone
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Zone
- Water Utility Consultation Zones

RECOMMENDATION

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

A. Completion of a legal agreement to secure four onsite affordable homes consisting of one First Home and three units for social rent

B. Conditions and informatives

Conditions:

1. Full Permission – 3yrs
The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2. Approved details
This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered: 18-085-20A – Location & site plan, 18-085-21 – Elevations – sheet 1, 18-085-22A – Elevations – sheet 2, 18-085-23 – Second floor plan and 18-085-24 – Cycle & refuse storage as received by the local planning authority on 03 December 2021. 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
Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, 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. Noise attenuation measures
No development shall take place until a scheme for protecting the proposed dwellings of the approved development from external noise and internal noise

shall be submitted, for written approval, to the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the noise mitigation measure identified in the approved scheme, have been fully implemented. The noise mitigation measures shall be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To protect future residents from noise from noise from industrial/commercial external sources and internally from the floor below.

Parking to be provided

5. No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking space shall be permanently maintained and remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times.

Reason: To ensure adequate on-site parking provision in the interests of highway safety, convenience and amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Cycle parking to be provided

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 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

Surface Water Drainage

7. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced details of the proposed drainage and existing drainage for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include how the site currently drains and will be drained after conversion with consideration to SuDS. Development should not increase flood risk within site or elsewhere and also employ SuDS Hierarchy.

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.

Landscaping details

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

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

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

Decentralised energy

9. Prior to the commencement of development a scheme for generating 10% of the predicted energy requirement of the development from decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.
Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development.
Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.
10. Prior to occupation of the development hereby approved, detail for the biodiversity enhancements measures outlined in the Potential Roost Assessment report (Greenlink Ecology, ref: 21-1621-Report_MF-KV, September 2021) shall be provided to the local authority for its approval. Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local authority in writing.
Reason: to ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance) and complies with Planning Policies for Wildlife including CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

Informatives:

1. The development accords with the policies contained within the adopted / development plan and there are no material considerations that warrant a different decision being taken.
2. 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 and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.
3. Records indicate a public sewer beneath or in close proximity to the proposed development. In order to protect public sewers and to ensure that Thames Water can gain access to those sewers for future repair and maintenance, approval must be sought from Thames Water where the erection of a building or an extension to a building or underpinning work would be over the line of, or

would come within 3 metres of, a public sewer. Thames Water will usually refuse such approval in respect of the construction of new buildings, but approval may be granted in some cases for extensions to existing buildings. The applicant is advised to contact Thames Water Developer Services on 0845 850 2777 to discuss the options available at this site.

4. 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/>

PLANNING HISTORY		
Indigo House, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road:		
Application Number	Proposal	Decision
210166	Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use from office (Class E(i)) to 30 no. residential dwellings (Class C3)	Approved 12/04/2021
200540	Prior Approval submission for the proposed change of use from office (Class B1) to 54no. residential dwellings (Class C3)	Refused 08.04.2020
193259	Prior Approval submission for a proposed change of use from Office Use (Class B1(a)) to 40no. residential dwellings (Class C3).	Refused 04.02.2020
193281	Prior Approval submission for a proposed change of use from Office Use (Class B1(a)) to 14no. residential dwellings (Class C3)	Refused 04.02.2020
192602	Prior Approval submission for the proposed change of use of existing office building (Use Class B1(a)) to 40no. residential flats (Use Class C3)	Withdrawn 26.11.2019
192688	Prior Approval submission for the proposed change of use of existing office building roof space (use class B1(a)) to 14no. residential flats (Use Class C3)	Withdrawn 26.11.2019
182428	Application for Prior Approval for the proposed change of use from office to 30no. residential dwellings	Approved 30.10.2018

Nigra Building, Mulberry Business Park:		
183174	Full planning application for the changes to fenestration, replacement of existing roof to flat roof together with provision of cycle, refuse stores and car parking.	Approved 18.01.2019
183084	Prior approval submission for the conversion of existing office to 43no residential flats.	Approved 11.01.2019
Rosa Building, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road		
211508	Full planning application for the proposed raising of existing roof of Rosa Building to create 11no. apartments to the second floor.	Presently undetermined
210769	Prior approval submission for proposed change of use of the office building (Use Class E(i)) to 34 no. residential units (Use Class C3).	Approved 29.04.2021
Ilex House, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road		
191907	Prior approval submission for the change of use of the Ground & First Floors from office use (Class B1a) to form 46 Apartments (Class C3).	Approved 03.09.2019
172091	Full application for proposed raising of roof to create a second floor extension for 14 residential flats and the provision of cycling and refuse facilities.	Refused – 30/04/2018 Appeal allowed – 06/03/2019

SUMMARY INFORMATION
<p>Site Area – 0.41 ha Existing units – Nil Proposed units – 11 Existing density – Nil Proposed density – 75.6 DPH (<i>inc. 20 unit conversion scheme 210166</i>). Number of affordable units proposed - 4 Previous land use – Offices Proposed Public Open Space - Nil Existing parking spaces – 86 Proposed parking spaces – 86</p>

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Internal:	
WBC Biodiversity	No objection subject to condition
WBC Drainage	No objection subject to condition
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways	No objection subject to condition
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection subject to condition
External:	
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	No comments to make regarding fire service access or building separation.
Thames Water Utilities Ltd	No objection with regard to waste water network and sewage treatment works. Measures for surface water drainage should follow NPPF advice (details forwarded to the applicant).
Southern Gas Networks	No objection – Details of gas infrastructure network provided (details forwarded to the applicant).
SEE Power Distribution	No objection - Details of high and low voltage mains provided (details forwarded to the applicant).
Cadent Gas	No objection – Details of gas infrastructure network provided (details forwarded to the applicant).

REPRESENTATIONS

Wokingham Town Council:

Would like there to be access to green space for the residents. There is concern, regarding fire regulations, that there is only one central staircase for the whole building.

Local Members: No comments received

Neighbours: One objection received on the following grounds:

- Alternative premises will be needed for existing business occupants.
- The proposal will exacerbate existing traffic problems on Fishponds Road.
- Other office conversions with additional floors at Mulberry Business Park are derelict. These are prime office premises. A better option would be to and build housing.
- How many more flats and apartments are really needed in Wokingham? Neighbouring building already had extra floor added but seem to be slow in residential take up.

APPLICANT'S POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development will make effective use of a previously developed site, in accordance with the NPPF. • The new second floor will be visually attractive, contemporary addition to the existing building. • The proposal will provide much needed new housing, including affordable housing. • The CIL contributions will generate additional investment in the local area. • The new dwellings are located in a sustainable location reducing on the dependency on cars. • The development provides more than adequate car parking & incorporates a number of vehicle charging points to support the transition to electric cars. • The new dwellings will comply with the Technical Space Standards & provide usable private roof terraces. • The development will be energy efficient, with high levels of insulation, PV panels & electric heating.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development
	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP4	Infrastructure Requirements
	CP5	Housing mix, density and affordability
	CP6	Managing Travel Demand
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP8	Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	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
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB05	Housing Mix
	TB07	Internal Space standards

	TB11	Core Employment Areas
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4
		DCLG – National Internal Space Standards

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The application site relates to a two-storey 1980's office building with ancillary car parking and landscaping and is accessed off Fishponds Road (refer to Location Plan at Appendix A and Pic. 1.0 below). The site sits within Mulberry Business Park which was originally developed as a business park with a mix of offices and industrial units. The surrounding buildings are predominantly commercial/office buildings of either two or three storeys in height. However, following the introduction of Class O under the General Permitted Development Order, which allows conversions of offices to residential without the need for full planning permission, several buildings in the immediate area have been the subject of such conversion proposals. Most notably, these include Nigra Building, Rosa House and Ilex House (as outlined in the relevant planning history section of this report above).

Pic. 1.0: Indigo House viewed from within Mulberry Business Park



2. The proposal intends the creation of a new second floor above the existing ground and first floors to provide 11 residential units comprising of 8 no. 1 bedroom flats and 3 no. 2 bedroom flats. Four of these units would be secured via legal agreement under s106 as affordable homes. All the units would be accessed via the existing internal stair core to the building which is located centrally within the building.
3. The additional floor would be achieved by removing the existing shallow pitched roof and replacing it with a recessed additional floor utilising brickwork to match, glazed sections, zinc cladding and a single ply membrane flat roof. The proposed replacement flat roof would have a 1.5m reduction in height compared that of the existing roof ridge (refer to proposed elevations provided at Appendices C and D).
4. The applicant has advised that, if approved, this proposal would be implemented in tandem with the change of use of the building from offices to 30 apartments on the ground and first floors as approved under the prior approval application (210166).

Principle of Development:

5. The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. 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.
6. 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.
7. The site lies within a Major Development Location and while it also sits within a Core Employment Area the principle of the use of this building for residential accommodation has already been established by the extant prior approval application 210966.

Character of the Area:

8. Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character, 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. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. R9 of the Council's Borough Design Guide states that the height of residential buildings should respond to the prevailing heights in the local context, the scale and importance of the space that the building will define and the position of the building line in relation to the street; i.e. how far back the building is from the street frontage.
9. The existing office building includes a shallow pitched roof (refer to Pic. 1.0 above) that is somewhat tired in its appearance. The proposed additional floor would incorporate a 1.0m set-back from the edge of the existing external building envelope thereby avoid appearing as an overly dominant or bulky building. This set-back also helps better articulate the elevations of the building in addition to the proposed use of

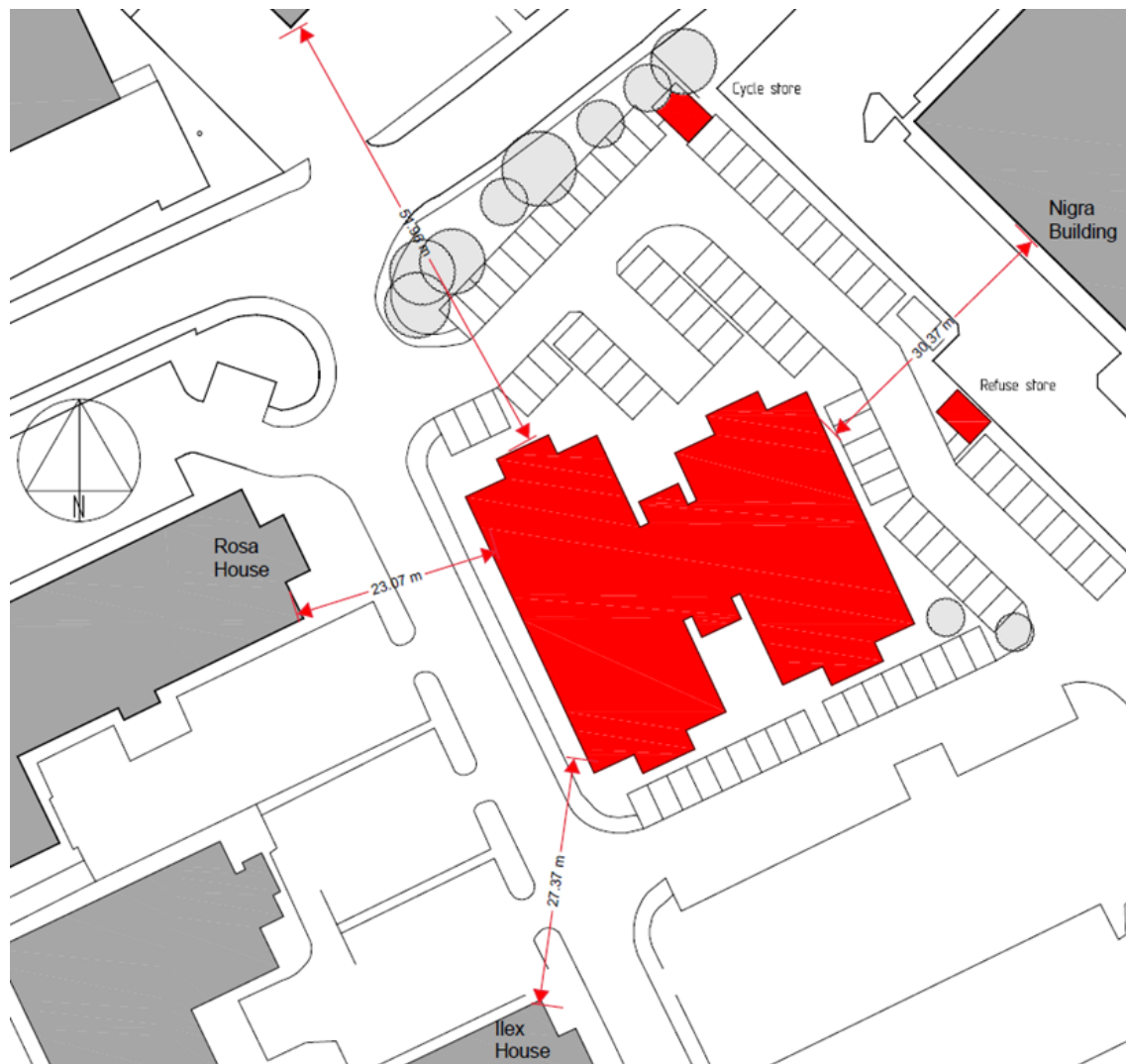
lightweight glazed panels and glazed roof terrace areas (refer to proposed second floor plan at Appendix B) provided around to the edge of the upper floor of the building.

10. Hence, the proposed second floor would provide a holistic replacement roof design for the existing building that would enhance its overall external appearance. The proposal would also be reflective of the mix of differing rooflines in the area which include both flat and shallow pitched versions. The additional resultant bulk at second floor would be tempered by that fact that the overall resultant roof height would be less than that of existing pitched roof and would therefore not appear out of keeping with the overall heights and massing of other buildings in the vicinity of the application site. Therefore, the proposal complies with the above design-based policies and guidance and is acceptable in this respect.

Residential Amenities:

11. Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that development proposals should not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. The Council's Borough Design Guide (BDG) stipulates that a minimum back-to-back distance of 30m should be provided between new flatted developments and 15m back-to-flank for developments over 2 storeys to maintain privacy and limit the sense of enclosure.
12. The proposal would introduce second floor habitable room windows that would face towards the Nigra Building with a back-to-back distance of 30m; and towards Rosa House (currently the subject of planning application 211508 – refer to the Planning History section of this report above) with a back-to-flank distance of 23m. The proposal would retain a 27m distance between Ilex House with windows between the two buildings be very much at an oblique angle (refer to Fig. 1.0 below).
13. These distances would help avoid any significant overlooking between buildings and thereby protect the privacy and amenities of existing or future dwellings in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP3 and guidance within the Council's Borough Design Guide.

14. Fig.1.0: Extract of proposed Site Plan (refer to Appendix A for full plan)



Access and Movement:

15. MDD Local Plan Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards. Core Strategy Policy CP6 requires developments to provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership. P3 of the Borough Design Guide SPD notes that parking spaces should be safe and convenient, close to the dwelling and sited to minimise impact upon safety.

Highway Safety & Traffic Impact:

16. The Council's Highway's Officer raises no concerns with regards to highway safety or traffic impact issues and confirms that the proposal (even when combined with the extant prior approval 210166) would generate less vehicle trips than the use of the site as offices. The objection received regarding a perceived exacerbation of parking problems along Fishponds Road has been considered, however, given that overall vehicle trips would be less than that of the existing use there would be no adverse impact on highway safety or convenience. Therefore, the proposal is acceptable in this respect.

Parking:

17. The site has a total of 86 parking spaces, which would be shared between the 30 apartments on the ground and first floor (as approved under the extant prior approval 210166) and the 11 proposed apartments on the second floor as part of this application. Given the town & fringe location of the site, the proposed dwellings would require no more than 1 parking space per unit. The overall scheme, if approved, would have a total requirement of 41 spaces. The provision of 86 parking spaces would therefore be in excess of the maximum parking standards for studios and 1 and 2-bedroom apartments.
18. Hence, the Council's Highways Officer raises no objection in respect of proposed parking arrangements but has recommended that conditions requiring that car and cycle parking is provided in accordance with the approved plans.

Sustainability:

19. The site is located in a sustainable location within walking distance of the town centre of Wokingham. The site is located approximately 1 mile from Wokingham train station and close to a number of bus stops providing access to the train station and Crowthorne, Reading & Wokingham.

Flooding and Drainage:

20. MMD Local Plan policy CC10 states that all development proposals must 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.
21. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and no increase in the footprint of the building is proposed as part of this application. Hence, the Council's Drainage Officer raises no objection to this proposal but has requested details of the existing site drainage to the site and a drainage strategy drawing, which indicates the location and sizing of all drainage features with pipe connections from the building to the drainage features, is secured via condition if the application is approved.
22. In respect of foul water, this matter would be dealt with by Thames Water or by local sewerage authority and applicant has been advised to check whether there is enough capacity to accommodate 11 new apartments. An informative is also recommended in this respect.
23. Subject to compliance with the above surface water drainage condition, the proposal accords with MDD Local Plan Policy CC10 in respect of flooding and drainage issues.

Landscape and Trees:

24. MDD Local Plan Policy CC03 aims to protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features. Core Strategy Policy CP3 aims to create a sense of place in the way buildings integrate with their surroundings including the use of appropriate landscaping.
25. The site is located within the Wokingham Settlement Area and within the Mulberry Business Park, which has been a core employment area of the town. The Council's Tree & Landscape Officer is aware that in recent years, interest has been shown in reusing the commercial office spaces as residential apartments and has identified

that while the trees and shrubs around the site edges, to Fishponds Road frontage and around the building, have been poorly managed they still contribute to the character of the area.

26. No landscape information, in the form of a Tree Survey or Landscape Strategy, has been submitted to support this application. The submitted Design and Access Statement indicates that no trees would be removed as part of the proposal and that planting areas will be retained as existing.
27. While the Council's Tree & Landscape Officer raises no objection to the application in principle, she has suggested a review of the existing landscaping including the existing trees along Fishponds Road adjacent to the application site in addition to considering whether there is an opportunity to provide for improvements to the existing landscape and potential new amenity space (dealt with in the Amenity Space for Future Occupiers section of this report below) by replacing some of the existing parking spaces around the site with additional soft landscaping.
28. In line with the above comments, a condition is recommended to secure a Tree Condition Survey and full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals for the development. Subject to compliance with the above condition, the proposal would both mitigate the impact of the development and enhance the green infrastructure of site in accordance with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 and MDD Local Plan policy CC03.

Environmental Health:

29. Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity. Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that development proposals should not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.
30. WBC Environmental Health have assessed the application and raise no objection in principle. However, they have advised that the information submitted does not address noise from existing industrial / commercial external sources nor insulation protection from the first floor below for the future residents. As such, they have recommended that a condition is imposed to secure details of noise attenuation measures to protect future residents from excessive noise to comply with Policy CC06.

Amenity Space for Future Occupiers:

31. Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that provide functional amenity space. The Borough Design Guide states that balconies in areas with an urban character may be suitable to compensate for the loss of rear garden space by providing roof terraces, balconies or wintergardens, so long as they do not overlook existing properties.
32. The Wokingham Town Council suggestion that the proposed development include additional green space is noted. However, the site is highly constrained in the respect that the existing building sits largely within an area of hardstanding for car parking within limited soft landscaping provided on the frontage of the site facing Fishponds Road.

33. While there is an overprovision of car parking for the proposal, it is dispersed around the application site meaning that converting some of these spaces to any meaningful outdoor amenity space would be difficult to achieve. Moreover, the extant prior approval (210166) for conversion of the existing building requires no provision of outdoor amenity space making it more difficult in planning terms to justify the requirement new outdoor amenity space for the 11 new units especially given that they would benefit from generous private roof terrace areas (refer to Appendix B) as outlined below:

Proposed roof terrace areas:

- ☐ Plot 1 - 6.5m²
 - ☐ Plot 2 - 42.9m²
 - ☐ Plot 3 - 10.0m²
 - ☐ Plot 4 - 25.8m²
 - ☐ Plot 5 - 22.3m²
 - ☐ Plot 6 - 6.5m²
 - ☐ Plot 7 - 42.9m²
 - ☐ Plot 8 - 9.9m²
 - ☐ Plot 9 - 9.9m²
 - ☐ Plot 10 - 75.6m²
 - ☐ Plot 11 - 6.5m²
34. In addition, Leslie Sears Playing Ground located to the south of the application site is a 15min walk from the application site which would provide future occupants with public outdoor open space.
35. Hence, in this instance, a combination of all the above factors means that an adequate arrangement of private and communal open space would be provided for the development in accordance with Policy CP3 and with guidance contained within the Council's Borough Design Guide.

Internal Space Standards:

36. Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the Borough Design Guide SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. The Technical housing standards – Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) set out minimum internal floor areas.
37. Table 1.0 below demonstrates that the proposal meets all the NDSS requirements; the right-hand (green) column shows respectively by how much each flat exceeds the minimum standard. In summary, all the units proposed meet the following floorspace criteria and demonstrate:
- GIA above the NDSS standard
 - Single room width over and above NDSS standard
 - Single room floor space over and above NDSS standard
 - Double room width over and above NDSS standard
 - Double room floor space over and above NDSS standard

Table 1.0: Gross Internal Floorspace comparison (Proposed units and NDSS)

Plot no	House Type	House Details			Proposed	National Standards	Difference
Unit#		Floors	Beds	Person	GIA sqm	GIA sqm	GIA sqm
1	Flat	1	1	2	52.7	50	+2.7
2	Flat	1	2	4	76.7	70	+6.7
3	Flat	1	1	2	50.3	50	+0.3
4	Flat	1	1	2	58.9	50	+8.9
5	Flat	1	1	2	60.6	50	+0.6
6	Flat	1	1	2	50.6	50	+0.6
7	Flat	1	2	4	74.1	70	+4.1
8	Flat	1	1	2	50.0	50	+0.0
9	Flat	1	1	2	50.0	50	+0.0
10	Flat	1	2	4	75.2	70	+5.2
11	Flat	1	1	2	50.8	50	+0.8

n.b. the areas given above exclude the proposed roof terraces as referred to in the Amenity Space for Future Occupiers section of this report (see above).

Ecology:

38. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. Policy CP7 states that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The NPPF paragraph 174 is clear that the local planning authority should seek biodiversity net gain wherever possible through development.
39. The submitted bat survey found no evidence of use of the existing building and trees for roosting by bats and no potential access points for bats have been identified. The Council's Ecologist therefore agrees that the building can be classified as having negligible potential and there is no need for any follow-up surveys and that the local planning authority can be confident that the proposed development will not adversely affect the local bat population.
40. In terms of biodiversity net gain, the site predominately has a sealed surface with only a few shrubs and urban trees present and its baseline value would therefore be very low in ecological terms. Hence, the Council's Ecologist has advised that it would be reasonable and proportionate to not seek submission of a Defra metric calculator in this instance.
41. However, Section 6.2 of the submitted ecological report makes recommendations for ecological enhancements – 6 wall mounted bird boxes installed on a variety of aspects and the Council's Ecologist recommends that these species enhancements are secured via condition to enhance biodiversity in line with guidance contained within the NPPF.

Sustainable Design/Construction:

42. Policy CC05 states that on proposals of 10 dwellings or more, planning permission will only be granted for proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
43. The applicant has advised that all apartments would feature large areas of glazing to provide natural daylight & ventilation and in relation to energy efficiency measures and the conservation of fuel and power, the proposed apartments would be highly

insulated and would incorporate other measures, including smart heating controls, low energy light fittings and low water use WC's. The applicant has also advised that 4 unallocated parking spaces will be designated as electric vehicle charging points the ongoing maintenance of which would be the responsibility of the appointed management company.

44. While the application has not been supported by a detailed Sustainability Statement or Energy Statement, the applicant has agreed to a condition to deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology for this development in accordance with Policy CC05.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Special Protection Area (SPA) & Affordable Housing:

Community Infrastructure Levy:

45. The application is liable for CIL payments because it involves a net increase of 11 new dwellings, payable at a rate of £365/m², index linked.

Special Protection Area:

46. The application site falls outside of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 5KM zone and hence does not trigger a requirement for an Appropriate Assessment for an avoidance strategy under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Affordable Housing:

47. Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan and the Affordable Housing SPD specify an affordable housing rate of 20% for any development involving five dwellings or more on previously developed land with a total area of 0.16 hectares or more within development limits.
48. The threshold for requiring affordable housing relates to planning applications of 5 dwellings or more or residential sites of 0.16 hectares or larger. The site exceeds this threshold and therefore there is a requirement for the provision of affordable housing. The Council's Housing Officer has advised that to meet the requirements of Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy, a minimum of 30% of the total number of units (net) should be provided as affordable housing. This equates to 3.3 units in this instance.
49. Following negotiations with the applicant, they have agreed to provide four onsite affordable homes consisting of 1 First Home and 3 affordable units for social rent which would be secured via a legal agreement under s106.

Timing of development:

50. In addition to the above, a clause has been included in the draft legal agreement to ensure that the development would be implemented 'in tandem' with the office-to-residential conversion prior approval permission 210166. This would ensure a holistic development is achieved and protected the amenities of future residents within the flats.

Employment Skills:

51. Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD, requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an employment skills plan (ESP) with a supporting method statement.

52. The Council's Employment Skills Officer has been consulted on this proposal and advises that it falls below the threshold of 1000 SQM. Hence, no ESP or contribution in lieu of an ESP is required in this instance.

CONCLUSION:

53. The principle of converting this office building to residential flats is already established and the application would provide 11 good quality flats with a policy compliant percentage of affordable housing on site. The proposal would enhance the appearance of the building and additional improvements to soft landscaping measures would be secured via condition. The residential amenity of future occupants in the host building and neighbouring buildings would be protected and adequate car and cycle parking facilities would be provided. As such, the proposal represents a suitable brownfield redevelopment proposal that would be policy compliant subject to adherence to the recommended conditions and obligations in the draft s106 legal agreement.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)
<i>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.</i>