# Agenda Item 118.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
213587	15/03/2023	Wargrave	Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe

Applicant	C/O Avison Young, Bristol	
Site Address	Strowdes, Upper Culham Lane, Remenham, RG10 8NU	
Proposal	Proposed erection of 1no. detached dwelling with associated landscaping	
Туре	Full	
Officer	Stefan Fludger	
Reason for determination by committee	Major application	

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 10 May 2023	
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth	
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL subject to conditions, informatives and the signing of a \$106 agreement, to include:  • An Integrated Estate Management Plan within the blue line for the combined Strowdes estate incorporating the following provisions:  • Description and evaluation of features to be managed • Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management. • Aims and objectives of management • Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives • Prescriptions for management actions • Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period). • Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures • Improvement works and ongoing maintenance of the two bat barns on site • Creation and implementation of the woodland management plan, including: • Retain and protect the original parkland woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump • Carry out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue • Management works to the clumps and to the Chiltern woodlands to bring them back to health in keeping with the park and Chiltern landscape. • Provision of barn owl boxes	

# Details to be submitted for approval.

- Details of tree planting including full species, name and size
- Details of the proposed meadow grassland, including enhancement to lowland calcareous grassland, including on the chalk slopes including specification, areas and wildflower species, including amalgamation of these areas to create extensive areas of meadow grassland, especially on the steeper slopes.
- Earthworks and level changes including finished heights of the mounds, extent and their formation
- Size, form and profile of Ha-Ha
- Details of new water features including lakes, ponds and water canals, including detail of the lining and ongoing management of Ponds 1 and 2
- An Employment Skills Plan (ESP) or Employment Skills Contribution (ESC)

## **SUMMARY**

This application is before Planning Committee because it constitutes major development which is recommended for approval.

It is for a single dwelling within the Park Place Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden. It is for a scheme which has not changed in design, position or layout to that which was approved in 2017. For various reasons, a material commencement was not made following the previous permission and, as a result, a new application has had to be submitted. Two connected applications are also under consideration: one, for estate management buildings, at this same Committee and the other, for a gatehouse, under delegated powers. Both were also approved in identical design, position and layout in 2018.

The main change to national policy in the intervening period has been that relating to ecology matters and to local guidance relating to Tree and Landscape matters. Berkshire Gardens Trust were not previously consulted as the representative of The Gardens Trust (who were consulted). As such, the comments of these three consultees have been relayed in full, below.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

App. no.	Proposal	Decision
O/2008/1353	Outline application for the demolition of 8 dwellings and erection of 5 new dwellings. Change of use of 3 dwellings to form 2 boathouses and guest accommodation. Conversion of 2 dwellings to form 1 dwelling. Alterations to the barns and the bungalow to form a single residential unit plus alterations and extensions to existing buildings.	GRANTED 09.12.2008

(Conway Park House) GRAN	TED
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	(Bell House)  (Bell House)  (Bell House)  (GRAN)  20.12.2  (Idlings to serve as estate fices and stores with alterations to access an ancillary to Strowdes)  (D97 revoked this permission orey staff residential units, y shed / parking and gement store / office, at Bell and gement store / office,

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION		
Proposed units Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	One 1 house in 80 hectares (plus ancillary staff accommodation)	
Number of affordable units proposed Previous land use Existing parking spaces Proposed parking spaces	None Parkland None 75 spaces at the Gatehouse plus ample provision within the east courtyard of the dwelling	
CONSTRAINTS	Green Belt	

Countryside

Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden (RPG)

Ancient Woodland Veteran Trees

**CONSULTATION RESPONSES** 

WBC Ecology No objection subject to conditions and a

S106 agreement for an IEMP

WBC Trees and Landscape No objection subject to conditions and a

S106 agreement for an IEMP

WBC Highways No objection, subject to condition

Historic England As this is a resubmission of a planning perm

ission granted in 2018 (173097) I attach our previous advice on this proposal for your information. Our advice remains the same. No

objection on heritage grounds.

Berkshire Gardens Trust No objection subject to suitable provisions

within the S106 for the IEMP.

WBC Employment Skills Plan No objection, subject to an ESP or ESC

secured through a S106.

WBC Built Heritage No objection, subject to conditions.

Berkshire Archaeology No objection, subject to condition.

WBC Drainage No objection. Location is in flood zone 1.

The submitted location Plan identified the location of soakaway. LLFA also received Surface water strategy which shows connections to geo cellular soakway and

catchpit.

WBC Environmental Health No objection

Thames Water No objection, subject to the imposition of an

Informative

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

## Wargrave Parish Council:

No objection. A condition is requested requiring the submission of a traffic management plan during the construction phase, to take into consideration the impact upon the surrounding roads of construction traffic.

#### Remenham Parish Council:

Happy to leave the matter with the Case Officer but asks that the development and light pollution should not be seen from any public highway.

Wargrave Parish Council: Recommend a traffic management plan for construction.

Local Members: No comments received.

**Neighbours:** No comments received.

## **PLANNING POLICY**

National Planning Policy Framework National Design Guide National Planning Practice Guidance

# Core Strategy (CS)

CP1 – Sustainable Development

CP3 - General Principles for Development

CP6 - Managing Travel Demand

CP7 – Biodiversity

CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals

CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)

CP12 - Green Belt

# MDD Local Plan (MDDLP)

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC02 - Development Limits

CC03 - Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction

TB01 – Development within the Green Belt

TB21 – Landscape Character

TB22 - Sites of Urban Landscape Value

TB23 – Biodiversity and Development

TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets

TB25 - Archaeology

#### Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Wargrave Parish Design Statement

## **PLANNING ISSUES**

# Site and Surroundings:

- 1. The application site measures about 198 acres (80 hectares) in size. It is within the open countryside and within a Grade II\* Registered Park and Garden (RPG) listed by Historic England as 'Park Place, and Temple Combe'. It is also within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The northern part of the site is predominantly level; the southern half falls steeply down towards the river. The overall site is bounded by Culham Lane, Kentons Lane, Wargrave Road, the River Thames and, along the western boundary, by other tree-lined Estates within the RPG.
- 2. Many of the planning reports and plans submitted with this application are those submitted for the same site under previous reference numbers, where the permissions that were granted have expired without a material commencement. Planning policy at national and local levels has not changed in any manner which affects determination on planning grounds. However, the change to ecology requirements has resulted in a delay in determination, whilst additional surveys were undertaken.
- 3. The Architectural Statement of October 2017 advises that this area of the estate has, over the last 50 years, variously been used for agriculture (pasture and arable crops), a stud farm, a golf course and various dwellings, together with their gardens. The submission states that the whole had been left to decay. The last ten years (now fifteen) has seen a restoration of the Grade II\* parkland, the restoration of listed buildings and monuments, the removal of inappropriate uses and associated buildings, the improvement of ecological habitats, and archaeological recording. This process has been partially monitored by Wokingham Borough Council and Historic England, within various parameters agreed by those two organisations and by Natural England and the Environment Agency, and through the adoption of an Integrated Estate Management Plan (IEMP) and Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) for the estate, via a S106.

## **Description of Development:**

4. The proposal is to create a single substantial replacement mansion, the principle of which was established in the Outline permission of 2008 and endorsed in various subsequent permissions. The proposed scheme under this reference number and the proposals for the estate management buildings (ref no 213610) and gatehouse (ref no 213588) are identical to those previously approved under ref nos. 173097, 173098 and 173100.

#### **Background**

5. The Design and Access Statement of October 2017 gives the background to the origins of this scheme. Due to the passage of time since the outline approval granted in 2008 and various changes to proposals within the RPG, it is worth relaying:

After consideration and negotiation, it was agreed with Wokingham Borough Council (and the other consultees) and recorded under O/2008/1353 that, inter alia, the following should happen:

- The Grade II\* registered parkland and wildlife habitats should be enhanced and restored as per the amended Conservation Plan (as managed and controlled by an Integrated Environmental Management Plan (IEMP) and Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) mechanism).
- The amount of built volume in the Green Belt be reduced (poor quality, modern additions and interventions be removed, and well-conceived new buildings be introduced).

The other given parameters not to be breached included: an agreed total volume, agreed suitable development plots, agreed number of dwellings and a requirement for an archaeological watching brief.

All of the above parameters have been agreed and implemented over the last nearly 10 years (as written in 2017 / now about 15 years).

One of the outcomes was the consent to replace the "lost mansion" which is the subject of this planning application. The lost mansion was known as Temple Combe House, built in the late 1800s and lost in the 1960s.

When acquired, the whole ownership of 500 acres (220 ha) was known as "Park Place Estate". Following the successful refurbishment, and sale, of the Park Place mansion and

grounds totalling 200 acres (80 ha), the balance (or second phase) become known as Conway Park Estate (after General Conway who virtually rebuilt the estate in the late 18thC).

Two subsequent developments were the sale of Aspect West (now known as Malmesbury, granted permission as a polo field facility) and the development of Hamilton (previously known as Pillar Lodge) which left the substantial balance of the estate (now known as Strowdes) with a proposal to development it as one large estate.

This notion follows both the original concept of "an estate within an estate" which dates back to the late 19thC, and the various recent planning consents on this area of the park, which combine to form an estate comprising a main house and ancillary accommodation.

This proposed replacement mansion has until recently been known as "Conway" but is now to be known as "Strowdes" (after Richard de la Strowde and his family who first created the estate in the mid 13thC and continued to live there for some 200 years).

6. For completeness of understanding of ongoing development in the RPG, it is relevant to add that this summary from the agent omits one main geographical area of the RPG which was not included in the acquisition of the 500 acres (220 hectares) and so was not included in the agreements made under O/2008/1353. It comprises the final part of the Grade II\* 'Park Place, and Temple Combe' Historic England listing. That part of the site includes a modest house known as Templecombe, for which an application for a new dwelling to replace the existing was approved by Planning Committee in January 2023 (ref no 223108), subject to the signing of a S106 agreement relating to the drawing up and implementation of a Conservation

Management Strategy on the site (a revised term for the IEMP, as preferred by The Gardens Trust, a statutory consultee). Templecombe was built in about 1964 as a direct replacement for Charles Easton's 'lost' mansion known as Temple Combe House, demolished c. 1963. The outcome is that there are, effectively, two dwellings which are replacements for the 'estate within an estate': one approved in January 2023 called Templecombe and the other approved in 2017 called Strowdes, with the principal of a dwelling within the Strowdes Estate having been agreed in the outline permission of 2008.

7. Also, additional land within the RPG has been purchased and incorporated into the former Park Place Estate since the original 2008 permission was granted.

# **Ancillary Development**

- 8. Two small parts of the Strowdes Estate are outside of the RPG, but immediately adjoin it. They are within the same ownership and enclosed by the same public highways. Both have had approval for development ancillary to this main house, secured either through a S106 agreement or condition. They are:
  - Bell House, located in the very southern corner of the estate, where Wargrave Road meets Kentons Lane, accessed from Kentons Lane. This received planning permission in December 2016 for staff accommodation ancillary to Strowdes under PA ref 152499, and
  - Hatchgate and Kentons, located on the east side of the Estate and accessed from Kentons Lane. This received planning permission in April 2018 for estate management buildings and a gardener's cottage under PA ref 173100.

The 2017 S106 and condition ensured that the work at each could not be commenced until the main dwelling was substantially complete. As such, work has not commenced on either scheme.

## The Design Concept

- 9. The submitted Architectural Statement considers that the design concept has been driven by the characteristics of the Grade II\* RPG and the desire to create a single dwelling at its heart with smaller ancillary buildings along the perimeter of the site (those submitted under ref nos 213588 and 213610, the latter being determined under delegated powers). It states that the design shall not dominate the estate but rather create a harmonic balance between architecture and its surrounding landscape. It describes the design as a composition of simple rectangular volumes: a 3-storey central block with front and back portico and two single-storey side wings that will frame the arrival courtyard, located at the end of a tree-lined access road.
- 10. It also states that the proposed dwelling subject of this application would be effectively concealed from view due to the combination of sunken roads at Wargrave Road and Kentons Lane, mature hedges, trees around the boundaries of the site and the steeply sloping site on its southern half. It will stand at the end of a long avenue of trees, interpretive of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century carriage driveways which intersect the Estate. Access to the main house will be from Culham Lane which has now been implemented, is a shared access with 'Hamilton', and was the original main entrance to Aspect Park Golf Club car park and clubhouse.

- 11. The driveway linking the entrance to the proposed new house essentially follows existing driveways.
- 12. The dwelling is described by the Design and Access Statement as mostly two-storey above ground, with a hidden basement and a smaller set back top floor comprising the master bedroom suite. Facades would be predominantly stone-clad in natural pale-coloured stone, with windows and doors framed using stone and metal reveal profiles. The roof is proposed to be flat and concealed behind parapets.
- 13. The proposal is physically larger, but the overall built volume is less than previously agreed in 2008 and 2016. It is described as being in the tradition of a historic Palladian country house but a pared down, modernist interpretation rather than a pastiche. The proposal envisages the use of very high-quality materials and workmanship. By building Strowdes, a substantial replacement house in this location, the pre-eminence of this site and its important position within the larger Estate can be re-established. The layout is designed to maximise long views out of the property whilst preserving privacy.

# The Landscaping Concept

- 14. Landscaping is described as including a grazed parkland towards the entrance, an enhanced existing formal parkland with established specimen trees, and an area of private garden around the perimeter of the house, including a formal garden surrounded by formal canals drawn tightly around the house.
- 15. The Design and Access Statement of October 2017 stated the following:

The influences of the landscape garden movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> century have created the parkland gardens, which extend right up to the house. The main grounds will be an enhanced and restored parkland: an area picking up the themes of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century (small field patterns with hedges) and 18th century pastures, to include an area of deer park.

Established hedges and woodland provide the site with privacy and seclusion. This will be considerably reinforced by further planting using semi mature native species planted in formal avenues, running roughly north / south either side of the house.

The landscaping approach proposed will continue the restricted palette of materials used to date: the types of fencing, the construction and forms of tracks, paths, driveways etc will reinforce the main Park Place Estate style and coherent feel already agreed and now established in previous phases.

The proposed replacement mansion would reconnect with, and give new relevance to, the restored and enhanced building groups at the riverside, and at the former Culham Park farm (gatehouse); Hatchgate / Kentons (Estate Management Buildings); and Bell House (staff accommodation).

# **Ecological Matters**

16. The Summary to the 2021 Ecological Update advises that the IEMP sets out the management actions for woodland, grassland, other wildlife habitats, equine activities and the protection of features of archaeological and cultural heritage interest, including listed buildings and structures. The CMS elaborates on the IEMP. All aspects of the IEMP and CMS have been fulfilled, apart from annual Conservation Liaison Management Group (CMLG) meetings, which were required as part of the S106 agreement. This has been the case across the RPG: WBC's records indicate that annual CMLG meetings have only occurred in 2013, 2014 and 2017.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHEME

# **Principle of Development:**

- 17. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLP). Policy CC01 of the MDDLP 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.
- 18. Notwithstanding the locational constraints, the principle of development of a single dwelling in this location has already been established under the overarching masterplan for the site: O/2008/1353. Two Reserved Matters applications were subsequently submitted and approved in 2010 and 2011 for a single dwelling in the location of the current proposal (RM/2010/1237 and RM/2011/2274). These were unimplemented and are no longer extant. Planning permission granted for a single large dwelling at this site under PA ref 160131 had its permission revoked by a S106 agreement under PA ref 173097.
- 19. Development for new dwellings within the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate within NPPF policy. Notwithstanding this, development for new dwellings may be acceptable where Very Special Circumstances (VSC) outweigh the material harm caused by the development. In this instance, VSC exist due to the approach agreed within the masterplan for the estate as a whole. It outlined the overall net loss in dwellings and built form across the estate, the removal of unsympathetic buildings and the restoration of the parkland. The removal of buildings was secured under the outline application, ref O/2008/1353.
- 20. The location of the proposed dwelling has previously been appraised and is considered to be in a 'sensitive and exposed position' above the Thames Valley. However, the principle of development has been considered acceptable previously and this remains the case: the specific design, placement and orientation of the building must be assessed in terms of its impact on the character of the area, on the Registered Historic Park and Garden (RPG) and on the Green Belt, as well as whether or not the volume proposed is within the requirements and the spirit of Outline approval O/2008/1353. The outline application agreed the parameters of the volume of proposed development across the site in relation to the volume of the buildings to be demolished. The current applications (213587, 213588 and 213610) are identical to those granted in April 2018 (173097, 173098 and 173100).

#### **Traded Volume:**

21. With each of the applications made on the whole of the Park Place Estate (which exceeds the area subject of this application), an indicative table is provided, demonstrating the traded volume of buildings altered or demolished against that of consented and proposed development. This approach was accepted as an appropriate means of restoring the Estate and RPG whilst improving the built form within the Green Belt.

	Cubic Metres
Outline Development Total	52677
Additional land purchase total	12944
Total original volume	65671
Minimum acceptable loss of volume	-9970
Proposed overall volume	40043
Total reduction in volume against agreed loss	-18771

- 22. Following further purchases of buildings and land enlarging the estate, the total volume of buildings has increased since the original purchase of the estate. However, the built form has been reduced overall through different proposals. The original volume of buildings prior to the restoration of the parkland, Park Place mansion, Hamilton mansion and the structures associated with the polo pitch development in the north of the site was some 65,671 cubic metres of built form (52,677 with the original purchase and a further 12,994 purchased later). The proposed mansion has a proposed volume of 10,800 cubic metres. However, this is still significantly lower than that of the 'pre-development' built form, with the combined total volume of redevelopment over the entire site having a volume of 40,043 cubic metres: some 25,629 cubic metres less than what was once on the site.
- 23. Overall, the proposed trade-off of volume is considered acceptable and within the spirit of the original project and permission that was granted. Notwithstanding this, the character and appearance of the proposal and its impact on the landscape and all other material planning considerations need to be assessed.

# **Ancillary buildings: Relationship with Park Place:**

- 24. The outline consent of 2008 accounted for the provision of ancillary buildings in association with the formation of the new dwellings, as prescribed in the decision notice. The proposed estate management buildings would be ancillary to the consented Strowdes mansion and in the location of a series of stable buildings, the planning consent for which has since expired. The established trade-off of the volume of buildings removed through their inappropriate nature and the erection of buildings in support of the approved use has been long-established. Subject to the estate management buildings being permanently ancillary (ensured through a S106), the principle of these ancillary buildings to a residential property is considered acceptable, given that it is within the curtilage of the Strowdes mansion.
- 25. Notwithstanding the volume issues, the use of estate management buildings would only be acceptable should they be associated with a host dwelling to which the buildings are ancillary. A S106 has been agreed in principle by the applicants which ensures that the estate buildings are not to be sold, leased or disposed of separately

from the dwelling or the site. The proposal therefore ensures that the buildings are ancillary to the main dwelling at Strowdes and can never become independent planning units. The introduction of buildings to help with the running of an estate such as this is common, and the ancillary nature is assured through the legal agreement.

Overall, the development would have an acceptable impact on the character of the countryside, the setting of the Green Belt and it would not be out of keeping with the estate as a whole, but instead enhances the individual and special character of the estate as a whole. It is therefore considered acceptable, subject to conditions and the sealing of a S106.

# Impact on the Character of the Area:

27. Due to the status of the site as a Registered Park and Garden, the most important considerations in terms of the impact on the character of the area are from, the Berkshire Gardens Trust, WBC Ecology and WBC Trees and Landscape. These are considered in turn. Historic England have no objection to the proposal.

#### Berkshire Gardens Trust:

28. At our site visit it was suggested by the Project Manager that he included the current proposals for the staff quarters, tunnel to the river side and development by the river at this stage so that all proposed developments could be looked at together and in context. I heartedly support this. (Officer note: These have not been included).

BGT were not involved in the earlier applications and the proposals for the estate are quite complex so at this stage we are not fully up to date with them or their status in planning terms. We agreed that I would write to highlight BGT's main concerns, although we recognise that they may be overridden by the existing permissions.

Key documents include the IEMP and the LUC Conservation Plan Edition 1, which includes work carried out by Lovejoy on the visual sensitivity of the Green Belt and Park, 2005 which was prepared for Park Place Estates & Aspect Park Ltd is also helpful.

LUC Figure 8 Index of Openness shows the site in three bands of sensitivity to change (levels range from highest at 1 to lowest at 5): the most southerly is in level 2, the central belt above is in level 1 with the northernmost part in level 4, except for the area proposed for the new house which is in level 3. I understand the visibility of the site was considered carefully in 2018 in siting and designing the proposed buildings.

The Key Significance and Objectives from this document of relevance for 'Area I' Strowdes are:

- Parts of this area are highly visible from the Thames River valley, and provide excellent views across the open agricultural landscape
- Three woodland clumps of mixed native species and several mature specimen parkland trees exist within the agricultural landscape, known as Garden Clump, Pit Clump and Pond Clump. Of these Pond Clump is the oldest, with

- part of it dating from before the 1815 Estate Plan. These still exist as features of the historic landscape
- An avenue of Cedar trees crosses the agricultural landscape. First shown as an avenue on the 1900 OS plan, the alignment originally stretched in an arc from Kenton's Lodge through Pond Clump, into the open field beyond: this avenue remains in part
- The agricultural land formed an important buffer between the 18th-century designed
  - landscape and adjoining land uses to the south
- Recommends bringing woodland clumps back into active management to ensure future regeneration. Retaining and protecting the woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump
- Carrying out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue. Planting new specified trees in accordance with the 2nd edition O.S.

The IEMP has similar requirements for Area I:

- Retain and protect the original parkland woodland in Garden Clump, Pond Clump and Pit Clump
- Carry out arboricultural works to prolong the life of the remaining neglected cedar trees in the avenue
- Management works to the clumps and to the Chiltern woodlands to bring them back to health in keeping with the park and Chiltern landscape.

The following are notes on my observations, based on the submissions from the applicant to date, which I hope you will find helpful.

- The proposed locations for the new house, estate house and gate house fit in with the pattern of development in the Park and I understand has been designed to minimise any visual impact
- The current proposals show new woodland planting next to Garden Clump and Pit Clump. The purpose of these areas is not clear but they would result in the loss in the form and pattern of these two clumps, blending them into more amorphous woodland planting.
- Placing large houses on the cusp of the hillside, where well designed, is a feature of the Park and gives these properties wonderful views to the SE. These new woodland blocks would narrow the view.
- The current scheme does not include proposals to restore the cedar avenue which has lost some of its trees. This did not eventually lead anywhere but the trees follow a shallow ridgeline creating a partial distinctive feature on an intermediate skyline when viewed from the west (and also possibly from the South Oxfordshire side of the Thames).
- The open mix of pasture, clumps and perimeter woodland is very visible from the south and Templecombe
- The details of the proposed tunnel under the Wargrave Road are of concern in particular the deep cut needed on the east side and the portals which ideally need to be understated (Case Officer: These have not been included in this application)
- The Planning Statement omits any reference to NPPF 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- The Heritage Impact Assessment October 2021 does not include any analysis
  of the impact of either the built form or the landscape proposals on the heritage
  of the site or of the significance of its assets
- HE has no objection to the proposed development on the grounds that the current proposals would not have a greater impact on the significance of the registered park than the consented ones, and state that while the site (known as Strowdes) forms part of the grade II\* registered Park Place Estate it has always been agricultural land rather than part of the landscaped park. The site is therefore of limited significance in itself. The HE entry for Park Place does include 'Areas of open parkland', many containing clumps and specimen trees, are enclosed by belts of trees and woodland and 'The north-east section', incorporated in the C19, has been overlaid by a golf course (late C20), the remainder being a mixture of arable and pasture. However, Strowdes is clearly an important part of the setting of the landscape park, confirmed with the intervisibility between the Templecombe and Hamilton estates and the typical arable pasture with wooded boundaries setting
- References are made to mounding which seems to be to avoid taking material off site as part of the cut and fill for the buildings and tunnel where a considerable amount of material will have to be excavated. Some existing mounding is out of keeping with the gentle chalk slopes so it is important that this artificial landform is not repeated elsewhere.

My initial thoughts are that the other landscape proposals by Christopher Bradley-Hole for around the buildings, the avenues, the ha-ha, the perimeter woodland planting, the ponds on the northern part, and the lavender field would not result in harm to the historic landscape.

#### Conclusion:

29. The issues raised by BGT have been addressed with the proposal for an Integrated Estate Management Plan, to be secured through a S106 agreement.

# **Ecological Matters:**

- 30. The Council's Ecology Officer has responded to consultation on the newly submitted documents. For three reasons, his comments are conveyed in full detail:
  - o The application has been held in abeyance awaiting these surveys
  - His subject area is that affected by changes in policy, particularly with reference to paragraphs 174 and 180 of the NPPF, with a clearer expectation that development should contribute to biodiversity net gain and that development that results in significant harm to the environment should be refused
  - The content of his comments, about which Members should be aware, as follows:

Further ecological information has been submitted in the form of:

- An Ecological Addendum Report (ACD Environmental, Ref, PR123977, November 2022).
- Survey Condition Sheets in Excel format for a Defra metric 3.1, and
- A Defra metic 3.1 calculator referenced for application 213610 dated 5 October 2022.

It appears as if the wrong Defra metric calculator has been uploaded for this application. It is possible to glean a fair bit of information on biodiversity net gain from the Ecological Addendum Report and Survey Condition Sheets but for completeness I recommend that the correct calculator is uploaded to the application file.

# Biodiversity Net Gain

The Ecological Addendum Report (EAR) considers the main habitat on-site (within the red line boundary) to be 'other neutral grassland' in poor condition. I think this is a reasonable assessment. Table 4 of the EAR indicates that the development proposal will result in a net loss of biodiversity habitat units on-site.

It is proposed that an overall biodiversity net gain for this application can be achieved via off-site (but within the blue line) enhancement. Paragraph 3.7 of the EAR proposes to enhance 1.68ha off semi-improved grassland to lowland calcareous grassland. Lowland calcareous grassland is appropriate for the local geology and is a rare habitat of principal importance in Wokingham Borough so its creation/restoration and ongoing sympathetic management would be a significant benefit.

The area 1.68ha does not tally with the area and location shown in Appendix 5 of the EAR. The location indicated in Appendix 5 of the EAR is sub-optimal for enhancement to lowland calcareous grassland when compared to the Landscape Masterplan because this location is proposed to be planted with a number of trees including the non-native species, Quercus ilex.

Whilst there is some doubt about the suitability and size of the area indicated in Appendix 5, I do accept that it is possible to make such an enhancement of such a scale within the blue line and in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan. The final detail of the grassland enhancement could be resolved through revision and agreement of a detailed Integrated Estate Management Plan (IEMP). I therefore recommend that, if permission is granted, a planning obligation is secured to seek submission and approval of a revised IEMP with this specific enhancement measure as a set objective.

I note that sections 5 and 6 of the EAR provide some proposals for chalk grassland creation/restoration. I am not convinced that the green hay seeding will be sufficient on its own as a method for restoration as the lower meadows are identified as being in a degraded state. The application of a bespoke seed mix and or planting of wildflower plugs will be needed for successful enhancement. I am of the opinion that the density of plug planting needs to be higher. Paragraph 6.1 indicates a plug planting density of 0.03 plugs per m2 whereas I would expect planting to be in the realm of 10-20 times as dense.

The species proposed for wildflower plugs in paragraph 6.2 are appropriate but the list is missing some key species that I think need to be included to meet the target enhancement. I recommend that the following species also need to be included for the introduction (at a minimum for species diversity):

- Agrimony Agrimonia eupatoria
- Eyebright Euphrasia nemorosa
- Horseshoe vetch Hippocrepis comosa
- Common bird's-foot trefoil Lotus corniculatus

- · Sainfoin Onobrychis viciifolia
- Marjoram Origanum vulgare
- Salad burnet Sanguisorba minor
- Common thyme Thymus polytrichus
- Dark Mullein Verbascum nigrum

However, I accept that this sort of detail can be resolved through revision and agreement of the IEMP.

# Landscape Masterplan

As I understand it, this application does not seek approval of the Landscape Masterplan for the site within the blue line. If the Landscape Masterplan is a matter for approval then I do not recommend approval of the design set out in Drawing No. 051\_1101 (dated 18 October 2017) because this seeks to create a new pond in the location of a small parcel of ancient woodland, Pit Clump. On the ecological evidence so far presented, it would be more appropriate to create such a pond in a nearby location but beyond a 15m buffer of this ancient woodland.

The submitted EAR has provided a response on my questions regarding the restored pond near Pond Clump ancient woodland (referred to as Pond 1 in the EAR). The survey conducted by ACD Environmental in August identified more aquatic vegetation than I could see from a visit in the winter months. However, I maintain that the pond liner is showing signs of degradation and I am not convinced that it will be viable for much longer. I accept that some form of liner is required to prevent rapid infiltration of water (as explained in paragraph 8.6) and I accept that it would be possible for a replacement liner to be installed. I recommend that maintenance of this pond, and 'Pond 2' as identified in paragraph 8.9, should be included as a set objective in the IEMP for this site. My recommendation would be for the replacement liner to be a bentonite clay liner instead of plastic. Not only does this style of liner have a longer lifespan but it also more closely matches the traditional approach of creating a pond in a chalk landscape using puddled clay.

The submitted EAR has provided more information regarding the estate lakes in section 9, perhaps in response to my question as to how they will retain water. Unfortunately, the additional information does not answer the key question of their design, which is still to be determined. Clearly, from the previous section paragraph 8.6, the applicant's ecologist is aware that these lakes will not be viable unless they are lined. It seems strange that this is not a core consideration set out in section 9. Again, I would recommend that the best way for these to be lined is with a bentonite clay lining. It would then be possible to create the profile and substrate variation proposed in section 9 over the top of the liner. I accept that this kind of detail and the ongoing management prescription in line with paragraph 9.8 could be resolved in the IEMP.

## Amphibians and Reptiles

Section 10 of the EAR provides a fresh consideration of the potential impact of the development proposal on amphibians and reptiles. Absence of Great Crested Newt or any of the widespread reptile species has not been demonstrated through survey effort. Instead, it has been proposed that the risk to these protected species could be adequately mitigated during construction through reasonable avoidance measures.

I am inclined to agree that this is an acceptable approach. As a detailed mitigation strategy of reasonable avoidance measures is not yet set out, I recommend that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) condition is applied to secure detail and implantation of the mitigation measures.

#### Bats

The EAR has provided an update on the condition of the two bat barns on site. It is somewhat surprising that the applicant has not been given key hand over Information for these bat barns as I think they are related to a development licence for the site. However, I accept that the applicant is proposing to do the right thing by recommending work to make the barns more suitable for bats and bring them back up to spec. I recommend that the improvement works set out in paragraph 12.14 and ongoing maintenance of these barns should be a set objective of the revised IEMP for the site.

#### Barn Owls

ACD Environmental have identified use of the site by Barn Owls and made recommendations to install Barn Owl boxes on site. The site is suitable to support nesting Barn Owls with good quality foraging habitat surrounding. The Wokingham Biodiversity Action Plan does have a target to see a net increase of Barn Owl box provision across the Borough in order to provide a key feature in the landscape to support this Schedule 1 species. If Barn Owl boxes were to be provided on site as a result of this development then this should be seen as a biodiversity benefit. As the detail of the Barn Owl box provision could be resolved as an item within the IEMP, I recommend that this should be the preferred mechanism to secure this species enhancement.

#### Other

Additional information has been provided in the submissions and Ecology Officer's response in relation to other protected species sensitive to persecution, but this has been redacted from public view.

The proposed condition relates to Construction Environmental Management Plans (Biodiversity) and the Ecology Officer's recommendations for the revised IEMP would be included in the proposed S106 agreement.

#### Conclusion

The proposals put forward by the Ecology Officer are satisfactory solutions to the seek to address the additional requirements put forward in the revised NPPF.

#### Tree and Landscape Matters:

Similarly, the Tree and Landscape Officer requested additional information in the light of local-level changes to published documents, and has responded as follows:

Further information has been submitted to support this application as previously requested in my comments dated 7th February 2022, including:

- Landscape Visual Appraisal rev 02 (November 2022)
- o Tree and Woodland Appraisal Report (November 2022)
- Revised Tree Protection Scheme rev.02 (17.11.22)

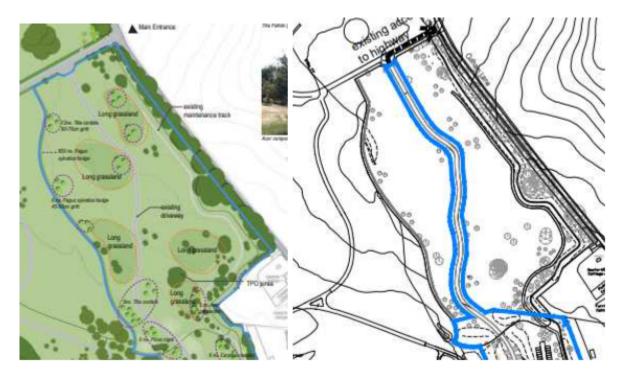
The Landscape Visual Appraisal considers the information within the revised Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment dated November 2019 and the draft Valued Landscapes Topic Paper dated January 2020. I have no objection to the information submitted within this document and do not disagree with the conclusion.

Tree & Woodland Quality, Survey and Appraisal Report has been provided which identifies the trees and woodlands within the Strowdes Estate as well as a number of recommendations regarding future tree planting and woodland management. I have no objection to the recommendations in this report.

A Revised Tree Protection Scheme by Fulford-Dobson Associates provided high level tree protection for the trees in close proximity to the proposed development, however, we will require more detailed information relating to the tree protection and the proposed estate buildings (this will be requested as part of my comments on 213610).

It has been agreed that the red line of the application will remain as submitted, with the land edged blue indicating the wider parts of the estate. The Landscape Masterplan submitted includes the whole of the Strowdes Estate which is edged in blue with the residential curtilages of the main house, estate management buildings and gatehouse outlined in red. A landscape condition will be required for the details of the landscape proposals in the curtilage of the dwelling, but also will need to Include all areas of the wider site outlined in blue.

With regards to land edged in blue, there appears to be a discrepancy between the wider Strowdes estate as shown on the Landscape Masterplan drawing and the location plan showing the area edged in blue for this application and the gatehouse, which only show the access to the house and gatehouse edged in blue. The land either on side of the access road on the location plan drawing does not appear to be within the applicant's ownership or in the ownership of the associated company. Please can this be clarified by the applicant. See extracts from drawings as a comparison below.



The following additional landscape details will be required either through a landscape condition or S106 agreement:

- Details of tree planting including full species name and size.
- Obetails of the proposed meadow grassland on the chalk slopes including specification and areas. It is suggested that some consideration should be given to the amalgamation of these areas to create extensive areas of this meadow grassland especially on the steeper slopes. This would not only simplify management proposals but also assist the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain within the site.
  - Earthworks and level changes including finished heights of the mounds, extent and their formation.
  - Size, form and profile of Ha-Ha.
  - Details of new water features including lakes, ponds and water canals.

It is important that some sort of mechanism is included within any approval for an updated Integrated Estate Management Plan which will need to be reviewed and updated to take account of landscape and ecological changes, and the additional land which is now included in the Strowdes Estate previously outside the IEMP area.

#### Conclusion

31. The proposals put forward by the Tree and Landscape Officer are satisfactory solutions to the seek to address the additional requirements put forward in updated local-level guidance.

# **Highways and Parking Provision**

32. CP6 of the Core Strategy relates to highway impacts and CC07 of the MDD Local Plan relates to parking. The proposed development would not result in any undue impact on the road network. There are no highway safety issues that would result from the proposed development and ample parking would be provided within the site. No objection is therefore raised by the Council's Highways Officer regarding highway access, highway safety or parking. It is noted that Wargrave Parish Council have

requested a traffic management plan to deal with construction traffic. The Highways Officer has indicated that such a condition is required and this therefore satisfies the comments from the Parish Council.

# Archaeology:

33. Berkshire Archaeology have highlighted that there is potential for archaeological deposits on the site and have recommended a condition requiring approval of a phased scheme of archaeological works. It is considered that this is reasonable and necessary and is acceptable.

## Drainage:

34. The applicant has submitted drainage strategy drawings and supporting documentation which the Council's Drainage Engineer is content with. However, no maintenance plan has been provided, along with the package of treatment required. This can be required by condition.

# **Neighbouring Amenity:**

35. There are no neighbours in close proximity to the site that would be impacted by the proposal in terms of privacy, overbearing issues, or loss of light.

#### Conclusion

36. The proposal is a re-submission of a scheme which was not implemented and the permission subsequently lapsed. Subject to a legal agreement which requires a formal estate management plan to be completed (which in particular relates to heritage, landscape and ecological issues and addresses evolutions in policy requirements since the approval of the first application), the proposal is again acceptable and recommended for approval.

# The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010)

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

## **APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / informatives**

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

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

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

2. Approved Plans – This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered:

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0001 Issue P01
P-H-001-XX-003 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-005 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-010 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-020 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-030 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-040 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-045 REV 00
P-H-001-XX-060 REV 00
P-H-003-XX-010 REV 00
P-H-004-XX-010 REV 00
P-H-003-XX-020 REV 00
P-H-004-XX-020 REV 00
P-H-004-XX-030 REV 00
P-H-004-XX-040 REV 00
P-H-007-XX-010 REV 00
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Proposed Landscape Masterplan 051\_1101 (APART FROM THE PROPOSED POND IN THE LOCATION OF 'PIT CLUMP', WHICH IS NOT APPROVED)

Surface Water Strategy sheet 1 – 2170453-EW-00-L00-DR-C-1000 REV P1 Surface Water Strategy sheet 2 – 2170453-EW-00-L00-DR-C-1001 REV P1

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. Archaeology - No development, including any demolition or ground works, shall take place until the applicant or their agents or successors in title have secured the implementation of a phased scheme of archaeological works (which may comprise more than one phase of works) in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the planning authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme approved pursuant to this condition.

Reason: The site lies within an area of archaeological potential. The condition will ensure that any archaeological remains within the site are adequately investigated

and recorded in order to advance our understanding of the significance of any buried remains to be lost and in the interest of protecting the archaeological heritage of the Borough.

- 4. Construction Methods Statement No development shall take place, including any works of demolition, until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the construction period. The Statement shall provide for:
  - a) details of construction access
  - b) details of the haul routes to be used to access the development;
  - c) the parking of vehicles of site operatives and visitors,
  - d) loading and unloading of plant and materials,
  - e) storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development,
  - f) details of turning area for delivery and construction vehicles,
  - g) details of measures to prevent mud from vehicles leaving the site during construction:
  - h) appointment of a Construction Liaison Officer and appropriate monitoring and review mechanisms.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area.

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

Reason: In order to ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07 and Appendix 2 and the Council's

Parking Standards Study Report (2011).

- 6. Drainage Before the development is commenced above slab level, full details of a drainage system for the site shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include:
  - A maintenance management plan for the SuDS features throughout the lifetime of the development, as well as who will be responsible for the maintenance.
  - Details of the package treatment proposed and conformation from the EA regarding the environmental permit.

Reason: To prevent increased risk of surface water runoff.

- 7. CEMP: Biodiversity No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:
  - a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
  - b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
  - c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
  - d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features
  - e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
  - f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
  - g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW or similarly competent person.
  - h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal is in accordance with ODPM circular 2006/05 guidance on protected species and local plan policies CP7 and TB23.

- 8. Detailed Landscaping No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works (in accordance with the Landscape Masterplan 051\_1101) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. The details shall include, as appropriate:
  - a) scheme drawings
  - b) proposed levels, contours and mounding including construction of Ha- Ha and amphitheatre
  - c) profiles and construction details of ponds and lakes
  - d) soft landscaping details including planting plans, schedules of plants, noting species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate
  - e) a Landscape Specification document covering soft landscaping (including site preparation, cultivation, plant handling and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment) and hard landscaping including all construction works such as paths, bridges and retaining walls
  - f) hard landscaping materials including samples
  - g) minor artefacts and structures including specifications for the product and installation.
  - h) all boundary treatments, and other means of enclosure or controlling access such as gates, bollards and vehicle restraint systems, which shall include consideration of ecological permeability
  - i) measures required for ecological mitigation and biodiversity net gain.
  - j) Profile and construction details of pool and watercourse

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.

9. Protection of Trees – No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the Revised Tree Protection Scheme by Fulford-Dobson Associates Ltd and dated 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme), unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that the development is being carried out of trees shrubs or hedges growing within or adjacent to the site which are of amenity value to the area, and to allow for verification by the local planning authority that the necessary measures are in place before development and other works commence Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21

10. Before the development is commenced above slab level, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the buildings shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out 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.

11. Lighting – Prior to their installation, details of a lighting scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local Planning Authority. The submitted details shall include measures to minimise sky glow and light spillage to neighbouring properties. Such details as may be approved shall be implemented in full before the first use of the development and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area.

12. No trees, shrubs or hedges within the site which are shown as being retained on the approved plans shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To secure the protection throughout the time that development is being carried out, of trees, shrubs and hedges growing within the site which are of amenity value to the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

13. No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18;00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National holidays,

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy Policies CP1 and C)P3 and managing development delivery Local Plan CC06.

14. Prior to commencement of the tunnel, full details, including section drawings, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The tunnel shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt, as there is lack of adequate detail on the plans received.

15. Parking to be provided - 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

# **APPENDIX 2 - Parish Council Comments**

PLANNING REF : 213587

PROPERTY ADDRESS : Council Office

: Pavilion, Recreation Road, Wargrave, Wokingham

: RG10 8BG

SUBMITTED BY : Wargrave Parish Council

DATE SUBMITTED : 14/12/2021

#### COMMENTS:

Wargrave Parish Council had NO OBJECTION to this application. A condition is requested requiring the submission of a traffic management plan during the construction phase to take into consideration the impact upon the surrounding narrow roads of construction traffic.