



**Land at Wyvols Court Farm
Basingstoke Road
Swallowfield
RG7 1WY**

Planning Statement

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On behalf of: Wyvols Court Farm Ltd

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: 251002 – Pre-Application Response

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a detailed planning application, on behalf of Wyvols Court Farm Ltd ('the Applicant'), in respect of 'Land at Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield ('the Site'), within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), as shown on the Site Location Plan (**Drawing Ref: 2506-200 Rev C**).

1.2 The proposed description of development for this detailed application is as follows:

Planning Permission for the erection of 3no. 697 sqm commercial units, comprising use classes B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution), associated landscaping and drainage infrastructure.

1.3 This submission follows a request for pre-application advice, submitted in April 2025. The formal response was issued by WBC on the 28 May 2025 (LPA Ref: 251002), a copy of which is provided at **Appendix 1**. Discussions and advice provided through this pre-application process have informed the proposal subject to this application.

1.4 The Applicant has also undertaken direct engagement with neighbouring residential properties and Swallowfield Parish Council prior to the submission of this application. Details of which are set out in the *Statement of Engagement* which forms part of this application.

1.5 Wyvols Court Farm (WCF) is a diversified farm business with three main activities, these being commercial real estate operations, alongside agricultural and forestry related activities. In terms of existing commercial uses, WCF currently provides approximately 30,000sqft (2,788sqm) of employment space, comprising industrial and storage and distribution uses supporting 120 jobs.

1.6 WCF is an established employment location and through the proposals subject to this application, the intention is to provide for additional floorspace to facilitate the expansion of commercial operations at WCF. In doing so, WCF is responding to the current identified demand from existing tenants and wider strategic shortfalls in employment provision, supporting the continued growth at WCF as a suitable and accessible location for economic development.

1.7 This Planning Statement demonstrates how the proposals constitute suitable development in an established employment area, providing additional commercial floorspace for general industrial (B2) and storage and distribution uses (B8).

1.8 In preparing the proposals subject to this application and in response to the formal pre-application process, the design scheme has evolved and seeks to integrate the proposed units as a logical and coherent extension of existing commercial operations. In doing so, providing a pattern of development that is sensitive and appropriate to its landscape context.

1.9 This Planning Statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** introduces the site, including the wider context and relevant planning history.
- **Section 3** introduces the proposed development.
- **Sections 4 and 5** outlines the relevant planning policy context.
- **Section 6** assesses the proposed development against relevant policies (Planning Assessment).
- **Section 7** undertakes the 'planning balance' and overall conclusion.

1.10 This planning application is supported by a suite of technical reports, surveys and site investigations which demonstrate that the proposals are appropriate and will deliver economic growth in a suitable location, in accordance with the specific policies contained within the Development Plan. The documents which form this application are listed within the supporting *Cover Letter*.

1.11 WCF represents a suitable and appropriate location that can deliver economic development in a manner that is appropriate to its location and in doing so, meeting the objectives of national and local policy, in terms of supporting a prosperous rural economy.

2. Site Context and Planning History

Site Location and Context

- 2.1 The Application Site comprises an area of c. 1.60ha to the west of Swallowfield, adjacent to the Basingstoke Road (B3349) and forms part of the wider landholdings of Wyvols Court Farm (WCF) which extends to 167.26 acres (67.69 hectares), as shown on the Site Location Plan (**Drawing Ref: 2506-200 Rev C**).
- 2.2 To the north of the Application Site is the Wyvols Court Business Centre, to the west and south is open arable land. To the east, the Site runs parallel to the Basingstoke Road (B3349) separated by an extensive vegetated boundary. Beyond the B3349 is a mixture of open/arable land and residential properties leading to the village of Swallowfield.
- 2.3 WCF currently hosts several commercial units, providing approximately 30,000sqft (2,788sqm) of employment space supporting 120 jobs. Existing commercial activities are housed within 9 separate units, predominantly located adjacent to Wyvols Court Farmhouse and Wyvols Court (Units 1 – 6), with 3 units located at ‘Handpost Farm’ (units 11, 12 and 13). The nature of these units and their current occupants (at the time of writing) is set out in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Existing Commercial Units		
Current Occupants	Nature of Business	Unit Number
Rentokil Initial PLC	Tropical plant displays & landscaping	1 & 5
Star Fireworks Ltd	Firework display company	2
Lister Wilder Ltd	Turf & amenity horticulture machinery company	3
Farm Energy & Control Services Ltd	Printed circuit boards for agricultural control systems	4
Commentary Charts Ltd	Football memorabilia charts of big games	6
Thames Valley Region Ltd	Dynorod drain cleaning south east region	11
R3 Environmental Solutions Ltd	Recycling of IT equipment (EA licence held)	12
Bracknell Glass Ltd	PVC windows & doors manufacture	13

- 2.4 WCF has a proven track record in hosting a wide range of commercial businesses alongside ongoing agricultural and forestry activities. In respect of agricultural activities, WCF provides pasture for sheep grazing on a seasonal basis. The total pasture areas within the land holding extends to 33ha (81 acres). The farm's grass leys also currently produce feedstock for an anaerobic digester located off-site at Farley Hill. This involves the whole-crop harvesting of the grass leys twice a year in addition to the grazing enterprise.
- 2.5 The Applicant has recently submitted proposals, through the Prior Approval process, for the construction of an additional agricultural building (Planning Ref: **250065**). The Council confirmed on the 11 February 2025 that Prior Approval is not required.
- 2.6 Ongoing forestry activities relate to the planting, management and processing of willow trees for the production of high-quality timber for test-grade cricket bats, with approximately 2,500 willow trees planted across the WCF landholdings, comprising 12.5ha (31 acres) at various stages of their production cycle.
- 2.7 Prior Approval for the construction of a new forestry building to provide under cover processing space for various stages in the production of cricket bats from trees grown on site has recently been given prior approval (LPA Ref: **250483**).
- 2.8 The recent prior approval process relating to new agricultural and forestry buildings confirms that alongside the successful commercial operations, WCF continues to perform agricultural and forestry functions, demonstrating a successful diversification of uses at WCF.

Highways/Accessibility

- 2.9 The village of Swallowfield is located 750m to the east of the Site. The B3349 Basingstoke Road runs along the eastern frontage and provides a north / south connection between Riseley approximately 1.8km to the south and Three Mile Cross approximately 3.8km to the north. It then merges with the A33 to access Junction 11 of the M4. The B3349 serves as the route into Reading.
- 2.10 The B3349 Basingstoke Road provides a footway along its western side for approximately 77m from the Site access to just south of the priority junction with The Street, where the footway stops and becomes grass verge. A narrow footway runs along the northern side of The Street providing access by foot into Swallowfield. The footway also runs south along the B3349 along the western side for approximately c.220m where a footway is provided on both sides of the carriageway for 120m. At this point it runs along the eastern side of the carriageway all the way into Riseley.
- 2.11 There are no Public Rights of Way that cross through the Site.

- 2.12 The Site is well positioned to connect to the existing footway and cycle network serving Swallowfield and Riseley. There are several existing facilities which are located within acceptable walking distances (2km) and cycling distances (5km) from the site, as set out in the submitted *Transport Statement*.
- 2.13 The nearest bus stop is Swallowfield Grange located on The Street approximately 290m from the existing WCF site access.

Ecology

- 2.14 There are no statutory designations covering any part of the Application Site. The Thames Basin Heaths SPA is located approximately 2.8km to the south-east of the site. Given the nature of the proposals subject to this application, i.e. employment use, the proposals are not likely to increase the recreational pressure on the SPA.
- 2.15 Two national statutory designations are identified within 3km of the Site; the Stanford End Mill and River Loddon SSSI (c. 200m north) and Bramshill SSSI (c. 2.8km south-east), alongside two local statutory designations within 3km of the Site; the Swallowfield Meadow LNR (c. 500m east of the Site) and The Marshes LNR (c. 1.8km south-east).
- 2.16 A total of 14 non-statutory designations are identified within 2km of the Site, comprising both Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Proposed LWS. The River Loddon (Part) LWS is located approximately 420m to the north, with the closest point of the River Loddon approximately 175m west of the Site.
- 2.17 The southern portion of the Site is located within the Loddon Valley South Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA), which extends across the wider landscape surrounding the village of Swallowfield.
- 2.18 Habitats currently present within the Site are generally common and widespread, with the greatest ecological interest associated with WCF boundary vegetation and trees, which are located outside of the application red line area.

Landscape

- 2.19 The Site comprises relatively ordinary countryside, which adjoins an area of existing commercial development. The Site and wider area of WCF is discretely separated from the village of Swallowfield by the Basingstoke Road (B4339). An existing dense belt of mature vegetation along Basingstoke Road, combined with the relatively flat local landform, prevents intervisibility between WCF and existing residential areas.
- 2.20 The Site has open boundaries which are undefined on the ground, the wider area of farmland and commercial development, which comprises the WCF area, is contained from its surroundings by established vegetation particularly along the Basingstoke Road, helping to separate it from the village of Swallowfield and its Conservation Area.

- 2.21 The character of the Site is heavily influenced by commercial development, with its associated traffic including HGVs, which have adversely affected its tranquillity and visual qualities. Despite this, the River Loddon, with its heavily vegetated corridor which lies just west of the Site, is an important landscape feature which contributes to the wider landscape character.
- 2.22 Whilst the Site has relatively open boundaries and is visible from locations and buildings within WCF, it is not easily seen from public viewpoints within the wider area, owing to the dense, mature vegetation to the Basingstoke Road; other intervening vegetation and buildings; and the relatively flat local topography. Views of the new buildings will be similarly restricted and mainly limited to properties and businesses near to or adjoining the Site, including the listed (Grade II) Wyvols Court Business Centre and to motorists passing the Site along Basingstoke Road.
- 2.23 An *Agricultural Land Classification Survey* forms part of this application which confirms the majority of the land within the WCF landholdings, including the Application Site, is Subgrade 3b which does not constitute Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. As such, the proposals will not result in the loss of any BMV agricultural land.

Arboriculture

- 2.24 There are no ancient or veteran trees or ancient woodland within the Application Site. A Tree Preservation Order (TPO-0768-1995) protects a cedar tree which is located beyond the site boundary, within a verge opposite the junction of Basingstoke Road/The Street. Other trees protected by this TPO are located within the grounds of Wyvols Court Business Centre and are all beyond the influence of the proposals subject to this application.
- 2.25 The existing tree stock is predominantly located along the eastern boundary to the site, adjacent to the B4339 Basingstoke Road. To the north of the entrance, a mature Poplar and three early mature Oak trees are contained within a semi-mature woodland. To the south of the Site entrance, three early mature and two mature Oak trees within a semi-mature woodland are located.
- 2.26 Further north, along the eastern boundary, there is a mature Cedar and opposite the Site, to the east and north of the entrance, there is a single mature Oak. To the north of the proposed Unit 8 is a single mature Oak. A mature woodland runs from the eastern boundary to the south-western corner of the redline boundary.

Site Topography

- 2.27 The ground levels in the northern area (where Unit 8 is proposed) has a levels range between c.52.0m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the southwest and 51.0m AOD in the norther east. Within the southern area of the Site (where Units 9 and 10 are proposed) the range is between 53.0m AOD in the southeast corner and 51.5m AOD in the northwest.

Flood Risk and Drainage

2.28 The following watercourses are located within the vicinity of the Site.

- An existing ditch located to the southwest of existing buildings which flows in a generally northern direction towards the River Loddon.
- The River Loddon is located approximately 260m west of the site at its nearest point and is classified as an Environment Agency (EA) 'Main River' and flows in a generally north easterly direction.
- An Ordinary Watercourse is located 410m northeast of the Site which flows from Swallowfield Street before discharging into the River Loddon.
- The Backwater River is located 785m northeast of the Site at its closes point is classed as an EA 'Main River'.

2.29 The Environment Agency (EA) Flood Map for Planning confirms that the Application Site is located within Flood Zone 1, 'Low probability' – Land less than 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability of river or sea flooding. The proposed development is for a commercial end use which is classified as 'Less Vulnerable' development within Annex 3 of the NPPF.

2.30 The EA Flood Risk from Surface Water mapping shows that the Site is not at risk of surface water flooding. In respect of groundwater, the EA Long-Term Flood Risk Mapping identifies the site as being within an area of low risk of groundwater flooding.

2.31 Existing on-site foul and surface water sewer records indicate the presence of an existing foul and surface water drainage network serving the existing units. Thames Water have confirmed that there are no records of historic sewer flooding as a result of surcharging public sewers within the vicinity of the site. Based on the above, the overall risk of sewer flooding is low.

Heritage and Archaeology

2.32 A collection of designated heritage assets can be found within the wider area to Swallowfield, however the only designated asset in proximity to the proposals is the Grade II Listed "Wyvols Court", which is located to the east of the wider land holdings and enclosed by existing buildings at WCF. The Listing details for this heritage asset is as follows:

“SWALLOWFIELD BASINGSTOKE ROAD SU 76 SW (North side) 11/2 Wyvols Court 20.9.84 II House. Early C19. Rendered, slate hipped roofs. Irregular plan. One and 2 storeys with attics. 2 chimneys behind ridge and one to left. Entrance front:- 2 storey centre with one storey wings on either side. Plinth, moulded string cornice to parapet. 5 windows to centre block, outer pairs in 2 storey bows; all sashes with glazing bars and blind boxes. Central arched entrance with overlight margin, half glazed door, flat headed projecting corniced porch on Ionic columns with pilasters behind. One storey wings with panel pilasters, one sash with glazing bars on left, semi-circular headed niche in moulded frame on right. Return front:- to right has 5 bay verandah with cast iron decorative columns and centre bays glazed. To right of this a late C19 projecting top lit billiard room with hipped slate roof, rendered walls and projecting gabled timber porch flanked with semi-circular headed windows with decorative glazing. Interior complete with fittings and game trophies. Listing NGR: SU7211764858”

- 2.33 The Wokingham Borough Council website provides a database of buildings considered to be “Buildings of Traditional Local Character”. Of the buildings listed, none are within or adjacent to the Site.

Noise

- 2.34 The proposals subject to this planning application are supported by a *Noise Impact Assessment* which considers the noise generated, principally by additional HGV traffic associated with the 3 new commercial units. Where appropriate and necessary, mitigation measures to maintain an acceptable noise environment for sensitive receptors is identified and forms part of the proposal.

Air Quality

- 2.35 There are no identified Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within proximity to the Application Site, with the nearest AQMA situated along the M4, roughly 4.5km north of WCF. Air quality considerations are focused on the impact of the development proposed.

Land Contamination / Ground Conditions.

- 2.36 Ground conditions typically comprise a thin veneer of Topsoil/Made Ground over cohesive River Terrace Deposits to depths of 1.45/2.20m+. These deposits are underlain by the Loddon Clay Formation to the completion depths investigated. The risk and ground contamination have also been subject to intrusive investigations which has concluded that the risk of contamination is low.

Planning History

2.37 Relevant planning history is listed as follows:

- **961561** – Temporary change of use of agricultural land to car parking for adjacent office premises. Approved 12/08/1996.
- **980867** – Proposed erection of non-illuminated advertising sign (retrospective). Refused 15/10/1998.
- **021342** – Proposed erection of 21m high monopole with 3 antennas and 3 microwave dishes with one cabinet. Approved 04/04/2002.
- **040586** – Proposed change of use of agricultural building to B1c/B8 use and new access from Basingstoke Road, visibility splay improvements to junction of The Street & Basingstoke Road, stopping up of 2 accesses on to Basingstoke Road and new internal access track. Demolition of 2 farm buildings. Approved 21/04/2004
- **041629** – Proposed change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to B1(c) (light industrial) and B8 (storage) use, new access from Basingstoke Road, visibility splay improvements to junction of The Street & Basingstoke Road, stopping up 2 existing accesses onto Basingstoke Road and new internal access track. Approved 28/07/2004.
- **042239** – Proposed change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to B1 use (industrial), use of building H for ancillary B8 (storage) use, associated alterations, extensions and site works. Approved 01/12/2004.
- **052438** – Proposed change of use of agricultural land to provide improved parking and servicing arrangements for the adjacent permitted employment use and rerouting of private way. Removal of redundant poultry shed. Refused 08/07/2005.
- **050584** – Proposed change of use of agricultural land to provide improved parking and servicing arrangements for employment site and re-routing of private way, Demolition of redundant poultry shed. Approved 25/07/2006.
- **070613** – Change of use of redundant farm buildings to use for purposes within classes B1(c)/B8. Approved 11/07/2007.
- **243150** – Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. agricultural building for storage of farm machinery and products, alongside operations associated with forestry activities including the storage and processing of cricket bat willow. Withdrawn 10/01/2025.

- **250065** – Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. agricultural building for storage of farm machinery, materials and product required for the maintenance of pasture areas. Prior approval not required 07/02/2025.
- **250483** – Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. building for forestry purposes. Prior approval 28/03/2025.
- **251002** – Pre-application advice for the proposed erection of 3no. commercial units.

251002 - Pre-application

- 2.38 Prior to this submission of this application a formal pre-application request was submitted to WBC. This was registered on the 30 April 2025 with the formal response issued on the 27 May 2025 (see **Appendix 1**).
- 2.39 The proposals subject to the pre-application process related to the construction of 3no. commercial (B2/B8) units, with each building having a floor space of 1,459sqm. These units were proposed to be sited to align with an existing track running parallel to the eastern boundary of the site, as shown below.



Pre-application proposals

- 2.40 The pre-application response acknowledges that there is an identified shortfall of B2/B8 floorspace within the Borough (as set out in the WBC Employment Land Needs Review 2023) and that provision of additional employment floorspace would be afforded “notable weight” in the planning balance.
- 2.41 However, concerns were identified through the pre-application process regarding the impact on the character and landscape resulting from the pre-application proposals which, it was concluded, would outweigh the provision of additional B2/B8 floorspace. The pre-application response concluded that:

“Therefore, it is unlikely that the proposed development would receive Officer support as per their current design. Reductions in the scale of the units should be explored, plus alternative sitings closer to units 1-7 to reduce encroachment and create a more uniform and enveloped courtyard group of buildings.”

- 2.42 This has been considered through the proposals subject to this application, with the scale of each building reduced from 1,459sqm to 697sqm. Further, the suggestion of an enveloped courtyard has been established through the proposals, altering the positioning of the units to move them closer to the established buildings on-site.

Public Consultation

- 2.43 Prior to the submission of this application, the Applicant undertook an exercise of engagement with Swallowfield Parish Council and the residents of neighbouring properties. Full details are set out within the *Statement of Engagement*.
- 2.44 As explained in the *Statement of Engagement* the only matter of concern expressed relates to the visual impact of the proposed Unit 9 and the Wyvols House residential property located to the east of the Site on the opposite side of the Basingstoke Road.
- 2.45 In response to this the proposals incorporate appropriate landscape screening and alongside acoustic fencing, which mitigates noise generated by the proposals and ensures that the visual impact of Unit 9 is adequately screened, in addition to the existing substantial vegetation which runs alongside the Basingstoke Road.

3. Proposed Development

- 3.1 As set out within the introduction to this Planning Statement the proposed description of development is as follows:

Planning Permission for the erection of 3no. 697 sqm commercial units, comprising use classes B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution), associated landscaping and drainage infrastructure.

- 3.2 In preparing the proposals subject to this application, careful consideration has been given to the specific circumstances of the Site, as explained in Section 2 of this Planning Statement.
- 3.3 Following the request for pre-application advice, the scheme has been altered to better align with the ambition of WBC, through a significant reduction in the size of the proposed units and the siting of these units to integrate with existing commercial buildings at WCF.
- 3.4 The proposed Site Plan (**Drawing Ref: 2506-230 Rev E**) demonstrates how the proposed units can be accommodated into a natural and contained envelope of development within the Site.
- 3.5 Full design details for the proposed development are set out within the submitted *Design and Access Statement*.
- 3.6 The key principles to the scheme are summarised as follows:
- 3no. commercial units totalling 2,091sqm, comprising 697sqm per unit.
 - New boundary planting to enhance existing site boundaries and create an established boundary between the proposals and wider site.
 - SuDS feature incorporated to the western edge of the proposals, connecting to an existing ditch.
 - Connection to the existing footpath along Basingstoke Road via dedicated pedestrian entrance to the Site.
 - Enhancements to the overall biodiversity value to support gains in excess of the mandatory 10%.
 - Screening of proposed units in the form of a landscape bund and planting at sensitive site boundaries.

Access

- 3.7 Vehicular access to the Site is to remain as existing, via a gated entrance along Basingstoke Road. The gate is set 20.8m from the edge of Basingstoke Road, providing sufficient space to allow for the largest necessary vehicle, a 16.5m HGV, to safely wait off the highway whilst the retractable gate opens.
- 3.8 Details of the existing access arrangements are shown in drawing reference **HD215-SK006 – Existing Site Access Junction Visibility & Swept Path Analysis**, contained as Appendix E within the *Transport Statement* prepared by Abley Letchford.
- 3.9 Further, contained within the *Transport Statement* and demonstrated in drawing reference **HD215-SK-004 – Off-Site Footway Improvement Scheme** at Appendix G, details of the improvements to the footway network along Basingstoke Road are provided. These alterations are situated to the north of the entrance to the Site.
- 3.10 A new footpath entrance to the site will be introduced, connecting to the existing footpath network along the highway via a proposed 2m wide footpath, running adjacent to the entrance track. This will connect to an internal footpath running to the new units, ensuring safe entrance to the site.

Parking

- 3.11 Parking provision is provided in line with WBC standards for B2 land uses as this is the more onerous requirement and ensures that sufficient parking is provided to accommodate the uses proposed. The proposals also make provision for EV charging and disabled parking bays. Dedicated parking spaces for motorcycles alongside secure and covered cycle stores is also provided. Full details of the total parking provision are set out within the *Transport Statement*.

Drainage

Surface Water

- 3.12 The surface water drainage strategy comprises the following measures.

Proposed Unit 8

- 3.13 For Unit 8 the drainage strategy comprises geocellular storage crates providing 156sqm of capacity, which includes allowances based on a 1 in 100 year plus climate change.

- 3.14 For Unit 8 surface water attenuation will be provided within underground geocellular storage crates located beneath the landscaped area immediately north of the proposed unit. The crates will measure 156m² x 0.8m deep with a 95% porosity. Surface water runoff stored within the crate system will discharge via a new 225mm diameter connection to the existing surface water drainage network serving the existing buildings on site. Flows will be restricted to a rate of 0.8l/s via a Hydrobrake or similar flow control device.
- 3.15 Surface water runoff generated within the Unit 8 catchment area to the QBAR runoff rate of 0.8l/s during all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change event. Restricting to a rate of 0.8l/s will provide significant betterment during the 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 year events.

Proposed Units 9 and 10

- 3.16 It is proposed to restrict surface water runoff generated within the Unit 8 catchment area to the QBAR runoff rate of 1.9l/s during all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change event. Restricting to a rate of 1.9l/s will provide significant betterment during the 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 year events.
- 3.17 To achieve this restriction, surface water attenuation will be provided within a SuDS pond located adjacent to Unit 10. The basin will measure 590m² x 1.3m deep and will storage to attenuate for all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change event. The pond has been designed to allow for a 0.5m permanent depth of water for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) purposes.
- 3.18 Surface water runoff stored within the basin will discharge into the existing ditch via a Hydrobrake or similar flow control device that will restrict surface water runoff to a rate of 1.9l/s.

Foul Water

- 3.19 Foul effluent generated by the proposed development will discharge to the existing foul drainage network serving the wider WCF site.

Landscape

- 3.20 In order to respond positively to the concerns expressed through the pre-application process, a *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)* has been prepared which considers the landscape sensitivities of the Site and has informed the proposals subject to this application.
- 3.21 Alongside the LVIA a Landscape Plan (**Drawing Ref: CSA/7728/112 Rev A**) has been produced which sets out a comprehensive landscape strategy and the key landscape principles that underpin the design and masterplanning of the Site. These principles can be summarised as follows:

- Existing vegetation within the wider Wyvols Court Farm area will be retained and existing trees will be carefully protected during the construction phase as appropriate, to avoid any damage.
 - Construction of a landscape bund approximately 1.5m high with 1:3 side slopes which will project southwest across the site as far as the existing belt of oak trees. The bund will be planted with native trees and shrubs, reflecting existing features in the locality which, once established will screen and filter views of the Site from public viewpoints to the north and west as well as contributing to local green infrastructure and biodiversity.
 - New native tree and shrub planting to the northern site boundary, immediately west of the listed Wyvols Court, which will screen and filter views from this building and its setting.
 - New native tree and shrub planting along the southeast boundary, to filter views of the new buildings along the driveway, and from Basingstoke Road.
 - New native thicket, tree and hedge planting to screen any views of the 3m acoustic fence to the southeast of the Site.
 - New landscape planting within the Site boundary area including new specimen trees and shrubs, which will enhance the Site's amenity value and landscape structure, soften and filter views, and contribute to local biodiversity.
- 3.22 As explained within the *LVIA*, the existing context of the site and its relationship with current operations at WCF, alongside the landscaping improvements/enhancements summarised above, will ensure that the proposed development will not result in any unacceptable adverse effects on the local landscape and townscape character or views.

Biodiversity

- 3.23 As set out in the supporting *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* due to the relatively low impact of the proposals and limited extent of the development footprint, restricted to commonly occurring and widespread habitats, no further ecological survey work is proposed.
- 3.24 Mitigation and compensation measures have been incorporated into the design to ensure that the proposals and programme of works have a minimal impact on ecological features.
- 3.25 Enhancement features are proposed with the aim of providing an increase in wildlife opportunities on Site post-development, contributing to the aims of NPPF and local policy.

3.26 As set out within the submitted *Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment - Design Stage* report a net gain in biodiversity in excess of 10% is predicted as a result of the proposed development, based upon provision of on-site habitat enhancement and creation. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool was used to calculate the following outcomes:

- +1.18 Habitat Units (equating to +22.33%)
- +1.68 Hedgerow Units (linear features absent at baseline)
- +0.09 Watercourse Units (equating to +56.54%)
- All relevant trading rules satisfied

3.27 Following any grant of planning permission an application to discharge the Biodiversity Gain Condition would be submitted through completion of a Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Heritage

3.28 This application is supported by a *Heritage Setting Assessment* which identifies heritage assets that may be impacted by the proposals through alteration to their setting and assesses the impact of the proposals on any heritage resources.

3.29 The *Heritage Setting Assessment* identifies the Grade II listed Wyvols Court, located to the north of the Site as a heritage asset which may be impacted by the proposals.

3.30 Wyvols Court is a 19th century house which has been converted into a business centre. A 20th century extension on the south-western side of the original house has been constructed which does not contribute to the significance of this asset. Furthermore, the historic grounds have been altered and includes a 20th century car park which does not contribute to the significance of this asset.

3.31 Views to Wyvols Court from the Application Site are noted, however views to the original 19th century building are limited and are not considered to be key views.

3.32 The proposals will introduce additional commercial buildings to the south-west of Wyvols Court, extending existing commercial development at WCF. The proposals avoid the eastern area of the Site, closest to Wyvols Court and the masterplanning for the development includes screening planting along the northern site boundary.

3.33 The *Heritage Setting Assessment* concludes that the proposed development will result in a negligible (at worst) level of harm which is at the lowermost end of the less than substantial harm spectrum. The proposed development has been designed to ensure that any impacts on heritage assets are minimised and unlikely to justify a basis for refusing this application.

Noise

- 3.34 A *Noise Impact Assessment* has been prepared in support of this application to assess the potential impacts of the proposed development. This notes that the main source of noise from the proposals will be from HGV traffic to and from the site. Traffic data as presented in the *Transport Statement* has been used as the basis for this assessment.
- 3.35 A baseline noise survey was undertaken on Thursday 16 and Friday 17 October 2025 to gather background and ambient noise levels at locations representative of the nearest noise-sensitive receptors to the proposed development site.
- 3.36 To ensure that appropriate noise levels are achieved in respect of noise sensitive receptors, the *Noise Impact Assessment* recommends that two noise acoustic barrier are constructed to the southeast of the site, either side of the existing site entrance.
- 3.37 This will comprise close-boarded fences with a surface mass of at least 10kg/m² and with a minimum height of 3m as is shown on the Site Plan as proposed (**Drawing Ref: 2506-203 E**). The proposed landscaping plan (**Drawing Ref: CSA/7728/112 A**) ensures that the visual prominence of this acoustic fencing is appropriately addressed as part of the wider landscape proposals.

Sustainable Construction

- 3.38 This application is supported by an *Energy Strategy Statement* which details how the proposed commercial units prioritise energy demand reduction through fabric efficiency and then assesses low carbon / renewable options to meeting building regulation and local planning policy targets.
- 3.39 Using Solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps the proposals satisfy planning policy building regulations.

4. Policy Context

Development Plan

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 specifies that the determination of planning applications should be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plans for the consideration of this application comprises:

- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted January 2010)
- Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted February 2014) ("MDD Local Plan")

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy

4.2 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy sets out the Policies to guide development in Wokingham to 2026. Those Policies listed below were identified within the pre-application response for their relevance to the proposals.

- Policy CP1: *Sustainable development*
- Policy CP3: *General Principles for development*
- Policy CP4: *Infrastructure Requirements*
- Policy CP6: *Managing Travel Demand*
- Policy CP7: *Biodiversity*
- Policy CP8: *Thames Basins Heath Special Protection Area*
- Policy CP9: *Scale and location of development proposals*
- Policy CP11: *Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)*
- Policy CP15: *Employment Development*

CP1: Sustainable Development

- 4.3 CP1 requires all development within the borough to enhance the overall sustainability of the area and minimise the impact on the environment. CP1 includes a range of considerations/requirements that will determine how proposals deliver and support the objectives of this policy. This includes, as examples, the requirement for development to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment; to avoid areas of best of most versatile agricultural land; and support opportunities to reduce the need to travel.

CP3: General Principles for development

- 4.4 The objective of CP3 is to ensure that development is of a high standard that can integrate with the character of the area, whilst also achieving sustainable development for the Borough. In support of this objective Policy CP3 sets out a number of requirements that all new development will be expected to comply with. This includes, ensuring development is of an appropriate scale, mass, layout and height etc; does not have unacceptable impacts on the natural environment including the landscape, ecological, heritage and geological features.

CP4: Infrastructure Requirements

- 4.5 CP4 seeks to ensure that planning permission is not granted unless appropriate arrangements are in place to secure any required improvements to infrastructure, which can be secured by planning obligations or conditions if appropriate and justified.

CP6: Managing Travel Demand

- 4.6 The objective of CP6 is to ensure all proposals achieve sustainable development and that the impacts on travel demand are assessed. Proposals which fail to provide for sufficient opportunities for sustainable travel choices or compromise road safety will not be permitted.

CP7: Biodiversity

- 4.7 CP7 is concerned specifically with sites designated for their importance for nature conservation at an international or national level and ensures that proposals which fail to enhance or concern these sites will be resisted.

CP8: Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area

- 4.8 As set out in CP8, development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heath SPA will be required to demonstrate adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects.

CP9: Scale and location of development proposals.

- 4.9 CP9 requires that the scale of any new development must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in that location, together with their accessibility.

CP11: *Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)*

- 4.10 CP11 seeks to ensure that the separate identities of settlements are protected and the quality of the environment maintained when assessing development proposals which are located outside of defined policy limits. To achieve this, CP11 adopts a restrictive approach to development, but recognises that there are exceptions and in the context of the proposals subject to this application (i.e. commercial development), CP11 seeks to ensure that proposals satisfy the following:

- *It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside.*
- *It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.*

Policy CP15: *Employment Development*

- 4.11 CP15 directs the majority of employment development to the Core Employment Areas across the Borough. Elsewhere within the development limits, new employment development is directed to the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in employment use within development limits.
- 4.12 CP15 also establishes that the scope for limited additional employment may be identified through the MDD Local Plan, at Strategic Development Locations and at established retail centres.

The supporting text to CP15 recognises that a good supply and range of sizes, types, and locations of available sites and buildings is a pre-requisite to a thriving economy. In all cases, proposals for employment development are required to include mitigation measures commensurate with the impact of development

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan ("MDD Local Plan")

- 4.13 The MDD Local Plan, adopted February 2014, acts to implement the adopted Core Strategy. Those MDD policies of relevance to the determination of this application are summarised below.

Policy CC01: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 4.14 CC01 replicates the National Planning Policy Framework, paragraphs 11(c) and 11(d) which requires planning applications that accord with the policies in the development plan to be approved without delay.
- 4.15 Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant (most important) policies are out of date, then the Council must grant planning permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, or if specific policies contained within the NPPF indicate that development should be restricted.

Policy CC02: Development Limits

- 4.16 Set within the scale and location requirements established with the Core Strategy, Policy CC02 seeks to resist inappropriate development beyond settlement limits, to protect the character of adjacent countryside and landscape.

Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

- 4.17 Policy CC03 requires development proposals to respond sensitively and appropriately to the context of sites, including their landscape character and specific features, by protecting and retaining key features and where required, mitigating potential impacts arising from new developments.

Policy CC04: Sustainable Design and Construction

- 4.18 All new non-residential development of more than 100sqm (gross) floorspace shall be required to support high quality sustainability design and satisfy prevailing standards for energy efficiency and water resource management.

Policy CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks

- 4.19 Policy CC05 requires non-residential proposals for more than 1,000sqm gross floorspace to deliver a minimum 10% carbon reduction emissions throughout renewable energy or low carbon technology.

Policy CC06: Noise

- 4.20 Proposals must demonstrate how they address noise impacts and protect noise sensitive receptors to ensure an appropriate level of amenity.

Policy CC07: Parking

- 4.21 All development proposals must demonstrate compliance with adopted parking standards to ensure adequate provision is provided for all users.

Policy CC09: *Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)*

- 4.22 Policy CC09 requires that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

Policy CC10: *Sustainable Drainage*

- 4.23 Policy CC10 requires that all proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development, including taking into account climate change, is managed in a sustainable manner.

Policy TB04: *Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield*

- 4.24 Policy TB04 sets out requirements on all new development relative to their proximity to the AWE, defining specific requirements dependent upon the distance of proposed development. The Application Site is located within the 'Outer' consultation zone.

Policy TB11: *Core Employment Areas*

- 4.25 Core Employment Areas, as defined on the Policies Map are locations where the majority of employment growth will occur over the current plan period.

Policy TB12: *Employment Skills Plan*

- 4.26 Proposals for major development should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills plan to show how the proposal provides opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills.

Policy TB21: *Landscape Character*

- 4.27 Policy TB21 requires that development proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape and demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of Landscape Character Assessments.

Policy TB23: *Biodiversity and Development*

- 4.28 Policy TB23 signposts back to CP7 of the Core Strategy and requires new development to provide opportunities to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features. In addition, TB23 seeks to ensure that proposals for biodiversity protection or enhancements form part of a comprehensively designed scheme.

Policy TB24: *Heritage Assets*

- 4.29 This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals conserve and, where possible, enhance the setting and significance of heritage assets.

Neighbourhood Plan

- 4.30 Swallowfield does not have a dedicated neighbourhood plan. However, there is a Village Design Statement, published in 2003 and amended in 2009 which focuses primarily on the aspects of residential design for Swallowfield.

The Wokingham Local Plan Update (2023-2040)

- 4.31 The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU) (2023-2040) was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination on Friday 28 February 2025. Part 1 examination hearings were held in November 2025 and Part 2 is now due to commence from March 2026.
- 4.32 The Policies contained within the LPU do not, at this time, have full development plan status. However, given the advanced stage of the LPU the emerging policies are capable of being material considerations, although the weight of such policies must be limited at this time, in accordance with paragraph 49 of the NPPF (December 2024).
- 4.33 The LPU recognises (paragraph 2.23 to 2.24) that the rural economy includes traditional industries such as agricultural, alongside leisure, industrial and other businesses. It identifies the key opportunities and challenges as being:
- To continue to support and protect a range of employment opportunities across the Borough.
 - Support employment destinations to evolve to meet the changing needs of business.
 - Supporting town and district centres to evolve so they meet the varied needs of residents and remain at the heart of communities.
 - To work with businesses to provide opportunities for residents to gain new skills.
- 4.34 As part of the 'vision' for meeting the needs of the Borough's communities, paragraph 3.3 of the LPU recognises that this means taking account of the evolving needs of employers, both in terms of providing an environment in which businesses can evolve with changing needs and workforce expectations, and in enabling people to work from home.

- 4.35 To sustain successful economic growth, the LPU (paragraph 3.18) recognises that ‘it is not enough just to sit back’ and that new and evolving businesses should be supported within an environment that allows for businesses to adapt to changes in practice and technology. As such, the emphasis is on sustainable economic development, of the right type and in the right place to meet employment needs both within settlement and in rural areas.
- 4.36 Paragraph 4.38 confirms that the LPU will maintain the spatial strategy which focuses employment development to support and protect Core Employment Areas. It goes on to state that *“The plan will also support the rural economy to ensure appropriate rural businesses are able to form and grow.”*
- 4.37 At Paragraph 4.56, it states the following:

“The Council recognises the importance of supporting and enhancing the rural economy and the role it plays in supporting rural communities. The rural area has a wide range of land-based businesses as well as other non-traditional businesses which enhance the prosperity of the rural area. Suitable proposals for rural economic growth, including farm diversification and where the use and scale is appropriate to its location, are supported.”

Emerging LPU Policy SS2: *Spatial Strategy and settlement hierarchy*

- 4.38 Policy SS2 defines the countryside as the area beyond the settlements as presented in the settlement hierarchy and in general terms, Policy SS2 confirms that the ‘countryside’ is not a location where additional development is planned, whilst accepting that some ‘limited’ types of development to support local needs and the rural economy will be supported.

Emerging LPU Policy SS5: *Development in the countryside*

- 4.39 This emerging policy seeks to protect the countryside owing to its intrinsic character and beauty and as part of this, this policy limits the type of developments that would be considered acceptable. This includes developments which support the rural economy in accordance with **LPU Policy ER3**.

Emerging LPU Policy SS8: *Meeting Employment Needs*

- 4.40 Outside Core Employment Areas, town, district and local centres and allocated sites, Policy SS8 states that economic development *“will typically be limited to small scale proposals which satisfy the requirements of Policies **ER3** and **ER4**.”*

Emerging LPU Policy ER3: *Supporting the rural economy*

4.41 This policy confirms that development proposals that contribute to supporting prosperous rural economy will be encouraged. In determining whether such proposals will be supported, Policy ER3 sets out a series of criteria, summarised as follows:

- a. There is a genuine need to support an existing or new business or enterprise.
- b. The scale and nature of the proposed development is appropriate to its rural location.
- c. The re-use or adaptation of existing buildings has been incorporated into the development.
- d. The proposal is of a high quality design that is of a scale which is proportionate to its use and reflects and respects the character of the rural setting.
- e. There would be no significant impacts to the amenity of nearby residents, including matters related to noise, lighting and odour.
- f. Environmental impacts are incorporated into the design.
- g. Traffic generated would be appropriate for the rural road network.

4.42 It is stated, at paragraph 8.17, that this policy approach is intended to support the suitable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas. At paragraph 8.19, it states that larger, more intense employment development would negatively impact on the character of the countryside and adversely affect the rural road network.

4.43 In respect of Policy ER4, a requirement is that development proposals of more than 1,000m² are to be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan.

5. National Policy

- 5.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF – December 2024) sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these should be applied and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 5.2 **Section 2** confirms that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, identifying the three overarching objectives which need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways, these being the economic, social and environmental objectives.
- 5.3 **Paragraph 9** of the Framework confirms that these are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged and that planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions.
- 5.4 **Paragraph 11** establishes both plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This states for decision-taking this means:
- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.*
- 5.5 **Section 4** requires local planning authorities to approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.6 **Paragraphs 40 to 47** recognise the value and positive impact that effective and meaningful pre-application engagement can have in the determination of planning applications.

5.7 **Paragraph 49** requires that planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans in accordance with, the stage of preparation of the emerging plan, the extent to which there are unresolved objections to the relevant policies, and the degree of consistency to the NPPF.

5.8 **Paragraph 88** is clear that planning policies and decisions should, among other requirements, enable:

- The sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings; and
- The development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

5.9 **Paragraph 89** goes on to state that:

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.”

5.10 **Section 8** requires planning policies and decisions to aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which: promote social interaction; are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life; and enable and support healthy lifestyles.

5.11 **Section 9** (Promoting sustainable transport): In assessing applications for development there should be a consideration of the opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes and ensuring that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all uses. Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

5.12 **Section 11** requires planning policies and decisions to promote an effective use of land in meeting the needs for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Local planning authorities should refuse applications which they consider fail to make effective use of land.

5.13 **At Section 12** the Framework recognises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. To achieve this planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments (**paragraph 135**):

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;

e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and

f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

5.14 When assessing planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere (**paragraph 181**).

5.15 **Section 15** requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural environment. Through **Paragraph 187** this should include minimising impacts on, and providing net gains for, biodiversity.

5.16 **Section 16** recognises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Development proposals should undertake a proportionate assessment to describe the significance of any heritage assets identified, including any contribution made by their setting.

5.17 When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage assets, **paragraph 212** confirms that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be).

5.18 **Paragraph 213** confirms that any harm to, or loss, of the significance of designated heritage assets should require clear and convincing justification. Where a proposed development will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal (**paragraph 215**).

6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 It is also the case that Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that, in dealing with proposals for planning permission, regard must be given to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.
- 6.3 This section outlines the key considerations for the determination of this planning application.

Principle of Development

- 6.4 As confirmed through the pre-application response, Wokingham Borough Council currently has a shortfall in B2/B8 floorspace. As part of this application submission an *Economic Assessment* has been produced by Lichfields which summarises the findings of the WBC Employment Land Needs Review (ELNR) (March 2023), concluding that across the period of 2022 to 2040, there will be an 34% under-supply of industrial floorspace, equating to 5,792sqm GIA. As such the proposals subject to this application can assist in addressing the current identified shortfall through the delivery of 3no. 697sqm commercial units at an established and successful employment area.
- 6.5 Furthermore, within the submitted *Economic Assessment* the proposals are considered against the relevant policy context, in terms of adopted and emerging local planning policies and the NPPF. It concludes that the proposals subject to this application can play an important role in further enhancing the employment opportunities within the Borough.
- 6.6 Adopted Policy CP15 aims to promote a balanced local economy by providing for a diverse mix of employment opportunities in terms of size, type, quality, and location. Restricting development to Core Employment Areas runs counter to the objectives of CP15, specifically in terms of providing varied employment opportunities. In turn, the proposal does not go against the existing local policy.
- 6.7 The proposed development also accords with relevant policies contained within the emerging Local Plan – the LPU. It is well related to an existing employment site, is of a proportionate scale to the settlement of Swallowfield and would support the local economy without undermining the role of the Core Employment Areas.
- 6.8 Additionally, the development is in line with national policy which supports local businesses and enhances the rural economy.

- 6.9 Emerging LPU Policy SS8 (Meeting employment needs) confirms that the sustainable growth of employment floorspace will be supported to meet the diverse needs of the local economy.
- 6.10 Emerging LPU Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) confirms that development proposals that contribute towards supporting a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged. This includes proposals where there is genuine need, as acknowledged by WBC within the pre-application responses and where the scale and nature of the proposed development is appropriate to its rural location. Key issues such as environmental improvements, including additional landscaping and biodiversity enhancements should also form part of any proposals.
- 6.11 Proposals should demonstrate that the proposals would not result in any significant adverse impacts to the amenity of nearby residents and that any traffic generated would not be inappropriate for the rural road network.

CP11 Proposals Outside Development Limits

- 6.12 Through the pre-application process it was stated that the first three criteria of Policy CP11 must be met for the development to be considered acceptable in principle, whilst supporting the overall objective of this policy to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The first three criteria are as follows:
- 1) Contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the Borough.
 - 2) Does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development.
 - 3) It is contained within suitable located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement.
- 6.13 In respect of 1) the proposals support an expansion of existing commercial activities at WCF responding positively to demand from existing occupiers and set within the context of a Borough-wide shortfall, which the pre-application response considers should carry “notable weight in the planning balance”. The proposals therefore support economic growth in the rural areas which is an objective of national and local planning policy.
- 6.14 With regards to “excessive expansion/encroachment” (2), the proposals have evolved since the pre-application process, resulting in a significantly reduced scale of development, such that the proposals respond sensitively and appropriately to its setting which, alongside an extensive landscaping regime, results in a pattern of development that is contained, both physically and visually and will function as part of the established commercial area at WCF.

- 6.15 In respect of 3) this policy requirement is unnecessarily restrictive and runs counter to the objectives of the NPPF as it artificially frustrates the ability of established employment locations in rural areas from growing and responding to market demand and therefore support a prosperous rural economy. The introduction of new buildings as proposed, does not automatically undermine the objective of CP11 in terms of protecting the separate identity of settlements and maintaining the quality of the environment. This can still be achieved through sensitively designed development and requires WBC to consider the scheme on its merits against the overarching objective of Policy CP11.
- 6.16 Applying part 3) of CP11 as a blanket restriction on new buildings is also inconsistent with the emerging policy context set out the LPU, specifically Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) which confirms that development proposals that contribute towards supporting a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged.
- 6.17 Moreover, CP15 of the adopted Core Strategy emphasises the importance of ensuring the delivery of a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of employment so as to achieve a more balanced local economy. To apply one criteria of CP11 as a blanket restriction on development, irrespective of any assessment as to whether the overall objective of CP11 has been satisfied, would represent a flawed application of this policy and run counter to wider objectives in terms of supporting the rural economy and economic growth.
- 6.18 Where it can be demonstrated that the proposals subject to this application are consistent with the objective of Policy CP11, in terms of protecting the separate identity of settlements and maintaining the quality of the environment then any conflict with part 3 of this policy should carry limited weight in the decision-making process. This 'conflict' should be weighed in the planning balance and set alongside the benefits of the proposals as set out below.
- 6.19 The principle of supporting a balanced local economy by providing for a diverse mix of employment opportunities in terms of location, size, type and quality is established in the development plan (CP15). At the national level there is a clear emphasis and expectation that the planning system should support local businesses and enhance the rural economy. It is therefore apparent that the proposals subject to this application are capable of being acceptable in principle.
- 6.20 The conflict with a single component of CP15, whilst ensuring compliance with the overall objective of this policy, does not providing a justifiable basis upon which the proposals should be refused simply on matters of principle. To do so would result in an application of policy that is inconsistent with wider local policies and the NPPF.
- 6.21 It is therefore important to consider how the proposals support an appropriate pattern of development that responds appropriately to the existing policy requirements that form the development plan. This is set out below.

Layout and Design

- 6.22 The Application Site sits adjacent to an established employment area and will utilise the existing access that serves WCF. The site is separated from the village of Swallowfield by the B3349 Basingstoke Road. The footprint of the proposed development is contained as logical extension to existing commercial units at WCF. There is no erosion or encroachment that undermines the separate identity of settlements and therefore this objective of CP15 is satisfied.
- 6.23 The second component of the overriding objective CP15 is to maintain the quality of the environment. As an extension to an existing commercial area and utilising existing access off Basingstoke Road, the proposals are appropriate and consistent with adjacent uses.
- 6.24 The proposals are also supported by an extensive and comprehensive landscape strategy which ensures that the quality of the environment is not adversely affected by the introduction of new development. As explained in the submitted *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, the site comprises relatively ordinary country adjacent to an area of existing commercial development and is contained from its surroundings by established vegetation, particularly along the boundary with Basingstoke Road. Moreover, the character of the Site is heavily influenced by commercial development, with its associated traffic including HGVs, which have adversely affected its tranquillity and visual qualities.
- 6.25 The existing context of the site and its relationship with current operations at WCF, alongside the landscaping improvements/enhancements ensures that the proposed development will not result in any unacceptable adverse effects on the local landscape and townscape character or views.
- 6.26 On that basis the proposals do not undermine the objectives of CP11 and are consistent with its objective by maintaining the separate identity of settlements and providing for a pattern of development that does not undermine or downgrade the quality of the environment. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposals are consistent with the objectives of adopted policy CP11.
- 6.27 The proposals support a sustainable pattern of development that is appropriate in its scale and form, providing for additional employment development in a location which is accessible by means other than the private car. The design scheme is sensitive and responds to its landscape setting and character and delivers genuine enhancements in in terms of green infrastructure and biodiversity. As such the proposals are entirely consistent with Core Strategy Policy CP1, and CP9

- 6.28 The submitted *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* and associated Landscape Plan (**Drawing Ref: CSA/7728/112 A**) demonstrates that the proposals will not result in an adverse impact on the landscape character and natural environment and will deliver a comprehensive package of enhancements to ensure the proposals sit comfortably within its landscape setting as an extension to existing operations at WCF.
- 6.29 This application is supported by an *Arboricultural Impact Assessment* which confirms that the impact of the proposals on trees is low. Removal of existing trees is limited to a section of low-quality trees at the site entrance to provide for a 2m wide footway to the south of the existing site access.
- 6.30 New tree and scrub planting will deliver a significant net gain in the tree canopy cover at the site. The construction of the development will also avoid Root Protection Areas.
- 6.31 The proposals therefore accord with the objectives of development plan policies CP1, CP3 and CC03.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Areas

- 6.32 Development plan policy CP8 confirms that development which either alone or in combination is likely to have significant effects on the Thames Basin Heath SPA will be required to provide measures to avoid and mitigate and potential adverse effects.
- 6.33 The Thames Basine Heath SPA is located approximately 2.8km to the south-east of the Site. Given the nature of the proposed development, i.e. employment development, the proposals are not considered likely to result in adverse effects owing to increased recreational pressures on the SPA. Moreover, there are no suitable habitats within the Site supporting populations of the qualifying species for the Thames Basin Heath SPA.
- 6.34 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposals are appropriate and do not necessitate mitigation as set out in development plan policy CP8.

Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE)

- 6.35 Through the pre-application process it was noted that the Application Site is located within the 'Outer' Consultation Zone of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for the Burghfield AWE. Therefore, Policy TB04 needs to be considered.
- 6.36 This 'Outer' zone requires all residential and non-residential development where 500 or more additional people may live and work to demonstrate that they can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of 'Blue Light' services and emergency off-site planning associated with the AWE.

- 6.37 The scale of development proposed will not reach this threshold and, as recognised within the pre-application response, the proposals will not have an adverse impact on the ability to implement the Blue Light Emergency Plan in the event of a nuclear emergency.
- 6.38 Accordingly, there is no conflict with the requirements set out in development plan policy TB04.

Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy

- 6.39 The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 and the end use is classified as 'Less vulnerable' development within Annex 3 of the NPPF. As such the proposals are consistent with the requirements of development plan policy CC09.
- 6.40 Policy CC10 requires that all proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development, including taking into account climate change, is managed in a sustainable manner. The details of the proposed drainage strategy are set out within the submitted *Flood Risk Assessment & Surface Water Drainage Strategy* as part of this application.
- 6.41 To ensure there is no increase in downstream flood risk as a result of the proposed development it is proposed to restrict surface water runoff to the existing QBAR runoff rate during all events up to and including the 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change event. It is proposed to provide attenuation for Units 9 and 10 in the form of a SuDS pond location adjacent to Unit 10. The pond has been designed to provide the full balance of attenuation whilst also providing a permanent depth of water for BNG purposes.
- 6.42 Attenuation for Unit 8 is proposed to be provided by within an attenuation tank which will discharge to the existing private surface water sewer network serving the existing buildings.
- 6.43 Foul effluent generated by the proposed development will discharge to the existing foul drainage network serving the wider WCF site.
- 6.44 Accordingly, the proposed development is located in an area at low risk from all sources of flooding and will implement a drainage strategy that ensures the site is safe from flooding and will not increase the off-site flood risk. In doing so, the proposals are consistent with development plan policies CC04, CC09 and CC10, and the NPPF.

Transport and Access

- 6.45 The proposals utilise the existing access to the highway, with a retractable gate set c.21m from the highway. With the inclusion of a retractable gate, it allows the largest vehicles necessary (a 16.5m HGV) to safely wait off the highway whilst the gate opens. Appendix F of the *Transport Assessment* contains a Swept Path Analysis for each unit, detailing how the largest vehicle allowed per unit can safely manoeuvre around the Site.
- 6.46 No alterations are proposed to the existing vehicle access; however a dedicated pedestrian walkway is to be introduced, 2m in width to the south of the existing vehicular access with a pedestrian gate. Further, a 2m footway is proposed from the Site access north along the eastern side of Basingstoke Road, up to the junction with *The Street*, along with a pedestrian refuge island to the north of this junction. Details of this can be found at Appendix G to the *Transport Assessment*.
- 6.47 The submitted *Transport Statement* demonstrates that the proposed development can suitably and safely accommodate vehicles requiring access to the development. There are no existing accident issues in the vicinity of the site and the existing access to Wyvols Court Farm allows the largest vehicles which require access to turn safely in and out of the junction and has sufficient capacity to accommodate future traffic flows.
- 6.48 The *Transport Statement* shows that the proposed development would generate approximately 25 two-way trips during the AM peak when fully operational, and 16 two-way trips during the PM peak.
- 6.49 Site access visibility is achieved commensurate to the 40mph speed limit of Basingstoke Road. Parking provision is provided in line with WBC standards.
- 6.50 The existing 600 bus service available from the stops on 'The Street' just north of the site access provide a good service for future employees to travel from the centre of Reading to get to the site. The provision of the additional footway connection to be delivered enhances the ability to access existing bus stops.
- 6.51 The analysis within the *Transport Statement* demonstrates that the proposed development accords with the key transport tests as set out in the NPPF. Accordingly, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of highways and transport matters and in accordance with development plan policies CP1, CP3, CP6 and CC07.

Heritage Impacts

- 6.52 As set out in the *Heritage Setting Assessment* the Grade II listed Wyvols Court is located to the north of the Site. The original 19th Century House has been subject to significant change with the 20th century extension and introduction of car parking areas.

- 6.53 The proposals are located to avoid any harm to this asset and through the proposed landscaping regime, screening planting is proposed along the site's northern boundary. Any harm arising from the proposed development is assessed as being negligible at worst and at the lowermost end of the less than substantial harm spectrum.
- 6.54 The proposals are therefore in accordance with development plan policy TB24 and the NPPF. Any harm identified, which in this case is considered 'negligible' needs to be weighed in the overall planning balance.

Biodiversity

- 6.55 The submitted *Preliminary Ecology Appraisal* concludes that there are no overriding constraints to the proposals and as set out in the *Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment*, a net gain in biodiversity in excess of 10% is predicted as a result of the proposed development. Applying the Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool the following net gain outcomes are identified.
- +1.18 Habitat Units (equating to +22.33%)
 - +1.68 Hedgerow Units (linear features absent at baseline)
 - +0.09 Watercourse Units (equating to +56.54%)
 - All relevant trading rules satisfied
- 6.56 Accordingly, it is considered that the proposals are consistent with relevant development plan policies including CP1, CP3 and TB23 and the NPPF.

Noise

- 6.57 As set out in policy CC06, proposals are required to demonstrate how they address noise impacts and protect noise sensitive receptors to ensure an appropriate level of amenity. This application is supported by a *Noise Impact Assessment* which assessed the baseline noise conditions and concludes that with appropriate mitigation, in the form of acoustic fencing, there are no adverse noise impacts on sensitive receptors.
- 6.58 As such the proposals satisfy the requirements of development plan policy CC06.

Economic Development

- 6.59 The proposals supporting the objectives of development plan policy CP15 in terms of ensuring that the economic base for the Borough supports a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of employment so as to achieve a more balanced local economy.

- 6.60 Emerging LPU Policy SS8 (Meeting employment needs) confirms that the sustainable growth of employment floorspace will be supported to meet the diverse needs of the local economy.
- 6.61 Emerging LPU Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) confirms that development proposals that contribute towards supporting a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged. This includes proposals where there is genuine need, as acknowledged by WBC within the pre-application responses and where the scale and nature of the proposed development is appropriate to its rural location.
- 6.62 As Wyvols Court Farm is an existing and successful employment location within Wokingham, it must be considered a suitable location to introduce a reasonable level of expansion in number of units. Occupants of commercial units at WCF are subject to long-term lease agreements, demonstrating the success in attracting and retaining a diverse range of occupiers. Further to this, the client has been informed of interest in the proposed units from prospective tenants, demonstrating the suitability of the location for the expansion of commercial activities. See **Appendix 2**.
- 6.63 As part of the *Economic Assessment* an Employment and Skills Plan is submitted in compliance with the requirements of development plan policy TB12.

Sustainable Construction / Carbon Reduction

- 6.64 In compliance with development plan policies CC04 and CC05 this application is supported by a *Sustainability/Energy Statement* which details how the proposals achieve the required reductions in carbon emissions.
- 6.65 The submitted *Energy Strategy Statements* demonstrates compliance with local planning policy and Building Regulations, where it confirms that after initial demand reduction through fabric efficiency measures, the required carbon reduction can be achieved through the use of Solar PV and air source heat pumps.
- 6.66 The requirements of development plan policies CC04 and CC05 are satisfied.

Planning Obligations / Heads of Terms

- 6.67 Policy CP4 seeks to ensure that planning permission is not granted unless appropriate arrangements are in place to secure any required improvements to infrastructure, which can be secured by planning obligations or conditions if appropriate and justified.
- 6.68 WBC has an adopted Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (February 2015). Commercial development as proposed through this application is not listed within the CIL Charging Schedule and therefore the proposals are not deemed to be liable for CIL.

6.69 Where WBC, through the determination of this application consider that specific planning obligations will be required, these will be negotiated and agreed, subject to any requests satisfying the Regulation 122 test and evidenced through a CIL Compliance Statement.

7. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposals subject to this planning application provide 3no. commercial units, each comprising 697sqm of B2 and B8 uses, which complements existing commercial operations at Wyvols Court Farm. The proposals also provide for a comprehensive landscape strategy and opportunities for significant gains in the biodiversity value of the site.
- 7.2 This planning application is supported by a suite of documents, technical reports and surveys which demonstrate that the proposals respond positively and sensitively to site specific constraints and opportunities, resulting in a high quality and suitable expansion of commercial activities.
- 7.3 Section 6 of this Planning Statement considers the proposals against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, and demonstrates that when read as a whole, the proposed development is in accordance with such policies. Where there is a potential conflict a reasoned and considered response has been provided.
- 7.4 It is acknowledged that there is a degree of conflict with specific criteria set out of CP11, notwithstanding the fact that the proposals do not undermine the specific intent of this policy, this being to protect the separate identity of settlements and the quality of the environment. Any harm arising from this conflict is limited and should be weighed in the planning balance, where the benefits of the proposals are taken into account.

Economic Benefits

- 7.5 It is a common thread in national and local policy that opportunities for economic development and job creation should be supported. As an established employment location Wyvols Court Farm currently hosts commercial activities which supports 120 jobs.
- 7.6 The proposals will support the expansion of this employment area and in doing so, provide genuine economic benefits in terms of construction jobs and permanent jobs once the site is operation.
- 7.7 This application is accompanied by an *Economic Assessment (including Employment & Skills Plan)* produced by Lichfields. At Section 5 to this Assessment, consideration is given to the economic impacts that the proposed development will deliver, such as the estimated provision of 34 FTE jobs per annum, whilst contributing to a 0.45% increase in employment within the skilled trade sector in Wokingham Borough. Further, it is estimated that the total (direct and indirect) Gross Value Added produced over the construction period would total £9.2million per annum.

- 7.8 The economic benefits associated with the proposed development are recognised by WBC in their pre-application response where it acknowledges the current shortfall in the supply of B2/B8 floorspace and considers that the provision of additional floorspace would be afforded “notable weight” in the planning balance.
- 7.9 Concerns identified through the pre-application process regarding the impact on the character and landscape resulting from the pre-application proposals have been addressed through a significant amendment to the proposals.
- 7.10 As explained within this Planning Statement and supporting documents, the proposals respond sensitively and appropriately to the local character and landscape, with significant provision made for landscape planting and mitigation which ensures the proposals are successfully assimilated into the landscape, adjacent to the existing WCF commercial area.

Environmental Benefits

- 7.11 Paragraph 174 of the NPPF emphasises the need for planning policies and decisions to protect the natural environment.
- 7.12 The proposals have responded positively to the concerns expressed through the pre-application process, including a significant reduction in the scale of development, a re-positioning of the proposed units to better align with existing commercial buildings, with the scheme complemented by an extensive landscape strategy which is detailed within the *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* and presented on the Landscape Plan (**Drawing Ref: CSA/7728/112 A**).
- 7.13 There is no impact on existing trees and through the landscape enhancements proposed, the application site will support a significant increase in tree stock and green infrastructure when compared existing conditions.
- 7.14 The proposals also support significant gains in the overall biodiversity value of the Site, achieving in excess of the mandatory 10% gains.
- 7.15 The proposals are supported by a comprehensive drainage strategy which takes into account climate change and ensures that this does not increase the risk of flooding either on or off site.
- 7.16 Providing additional employment floorspace responds to identified need across the Borough and from existing occupiers at Wyvols Court Farm. The scheme will also support the role of function of Swallowfield, providing local employment opportunities which can help to reduce the need to travel further afield for employment. An Employment and Skills Plan will maximise opportunities for local employment.

Social Benefits

- 7.17 Additional employment provision at Swallowfield will complement recent residential development and provide genuine opportunities for residents to access new employment locally. By enhancing the mix of uses at Swallowfield this will support its role and function as a vibrant settlement and community.

Conclusion

- 7.18 In conclusion, the proposals subject to this application accord with the Development Plan when read as a whole and any conflict identified, specifically in terms of development plan policy CP11, is considered limited and outweighed by the benefits of the proposals.
- 7.19 Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy aims to promote a balanced local economy by ensuring a diverse mix of employment opportunities in terms of size, type, quality, and location. Restricting development to Core Employment Areas opposes the policy's goal of providing varied employment opportunities. In turn, the proposal does not go against the existing local policy.
- 7.20 The proposed development also accords with relevant policies contained within the emerging Local Plan. It is well related to an existing employment site, is of a proportionate scale to the settlement of Swallowfield and would support the local economy without undermining the role of the Core Employment Areas.
- 7.21 The proposals are consistent with the objectives at the national level which seeks to support local businesses and enhance the rural economy.
- 7.22 This Planning Statement, when read alongside the suite of supporting documents, demonstrates that the proposed development represents a suitable location to expand commercial business operations at an existing and successful location. Moreover, any harm resulting from the development, does not meet the threshold that would justify a refusal.
- 7.23 Accordingly, it is respectfully concluded that the proposed development is sustainable and that there is a compelling and justifiable case for planning permission to be granted.



APPENDIX 1

Pre-Application Response

LPA Ref: 251002 (27.05.2025)

Date: 27 May 2025
Application: 251002



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Pre-application Advice Response Letter

Application Number: 251002

Site Address: Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield,
Wokingham

Expiry Date: 28 May 2025

Proposal: Pre-application advice for the proposed erection of 3no. commercial units.

Dear James Millard

Thank you for your request for planning advice which was validated on 30 April 2025. This letter will provide advice about your scheme and what you may need to do when submitting a planning application.

At this stage, we have not consulted anyone else about your scheme, such as neighbouring properties, but we would do so if a planning application is submitted. Before you submit a planning application, we recommend that you carry out your own public consultation and provide evidence of this through a Statement of Community Involvement.

We have provided a [frequently asked questions page](#) to answer some of the common queries about planning which will help explain the planning application process.

Site and Surroundings

The application site is a large area of open agricultural land located at Wyvols Court Farm, Swallowfield. The site is accessible via an existing vehicular access off of Basingstoke Road, leading to a split in the road; to the north of the application site is

a modest cluster of several industrial and commercial units, with Wyvols Court Farmhouse immediately north of these units. To the south are 3no. existing commercial/industrial units located at the end of the access road adjacent to the site's eastern frontage.

The site, by reason of its predominantly rural surroundings, is located within the designated Countryside.

Description of Proposal

This pre-application seeks advice for the proposed erection of 3no. commercial units.

Planning Constraints

The following planning constraints have been identified in relation to the site:

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
 Affordable Housing Thresholds
 Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
 Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – White Risk Zone
 Nuclear Consultation Zone – Outer Zone
 Landscape Character Assessment Area
 SSSI Impact Risk Zones
 Local Plan Update Submitted Sites - 5SW023

Site History

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
250483	Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. building for forestry purposes.	Prior Approval Granted 27/03/2025
250065	Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. agricultural building for storage of farm machinery, materials and products required for the maintenance of pasture areas.	Prior approval not required: February 2025
070329	Application for proposed Change of Use from B1(c) and B8 to class B1(c), B8 and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Storage, refurbishment, transfer and recycling (Sui Generis).	Approved: September 2008
070613	Change of use of Redundant Farm Buildings to Use for Purposes Within Classes B1(c)/B8	Approved: July 2007
050584	Proposed change of use of agricultural land to provide improved parking and servicing arrangements for employment site and re-	Approved: July 2006

	routing of private way. Demolition of redundant poultry shed.	
052438	Proposed change of use of agricultural land to provide improved parking and servicing arrangements for the adjacent permitted employment use and rerouting of private way. Removal of redundant poultry shed.	Refused: July 2005
042239	Proposed change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to B1 use (industrial), use of building H for ancillary B8 (storage) use, associated alterations, extensions and site works.	Approved: December 2004
041629	Proposed change of use of redundant agricultural buildings to B1c (light industrial) and B8 (storage) use, new access from Basingstoke Road, visibility splay improvements to junction of The Street & Basingstoke Road, stopping up 2 existing accesses onto Basingstoke Road and new internal access track.	Approved: July 2004
040586	Proposed change of use of agricultural buildings to B1c/B8 use and new access from Basingstoke road, visibility splay improvements to junction of The Street & Basingstoke road, stopping up of 2 accesses onto Basingstoke road and new internal access track. Demolition of 2 farm buildings.	Approved: April 2004
010106	Renewal of temporary permission for parking on agricultural land.	Approved: February 2001
961561	Temporary Change Of Use Of Agricultural Land To Car Parking For Adjacent Office Premises	Approved: August 1996
31387	Erection of Farmhouse	Approved: September 1988
24812	O/L Detached Farmhouse	Refused: January 1986
24811	Refurbishment of existing house; erection of extension and glazed link; demolition of courtyard link.	Refused: January 1986
24809	CoU to Offices	Refused: January 1986 (Allowed at appeal)

21601	CoU part house to office	Refused: July 1984
21606	O/L Farmhouse	Refused: June 1984
21605	O/L Residential Courtyard Development	Refused: June 1984

Assessment of Proposal & Key Issues

Principle of Development:

General:

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

Local Plan Update:

The Council are progressing with their Local Plan Update (LPU) which has now progressed to the Regulation 22 stage. This means that the Council have submitted their LPU to the Secretary of State for review. Initial commentary from the Planning Inspectorate has been received raising several queries and concerns about the soundness of this plan's contents. As such, the application of weight to the policies within it remain limited. LPU policies most relevant to the application site are listed below.

Policy SS5 of the LPU (Development in the Countryside) states that development proposals in the countryside will in general only be supported for the types of development set out below:

- a) The construction of new dwellings which accord with Policy H4: Exceptions sites, Policy H5: Rural workers' dwellings and Policy H10: Traveller sites;
- b) Development proposals for which land is allocated;
- c) Development which supports the rural economy and equestrian uses in accordance with Policy ER3: Supporting the rural economy and Policy DH7: Equestrian development;
- d) Low carbon and renewable energy generation schemes in accordance with Policy CE7: Low carbon and renewable energy generation;
- e) The re-use or conversion of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction which would not require extensive reconstruction;
- f) The replacement, extension or alteration (including sub-division) of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction, and which do not lead to disproportionate increases in scale, form or footprint beyond the original building;
- g) Redevelopment or infilling of previously developed land that does not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside or the rural setting of the village;

- h) Agricultural and forestry development that is demonstrated to be reasonable and proportionate to the need;
- i) Outdoor sports, recreation, leisure and nature conservation development that is demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate for the use;
- j) The provision of essential community facilities which cannot be located within settlement boundaries and are demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the use;
- k) The provision of essential utilities and infrastructure (including development for strategic transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a countryside location), and cemeteries and burial grounds; or
- l) Minerals and waste development in accordance with relevant policies in the minerals and waste local plan.

All development proposals within the countryside must take a landscape led approach to development in accordance with Policy NE5: Landscape and design and, where applicable:

- a) Contribute to and enhance the local, natural and historic environment;
- b) Be of a scale, nature and location within the countryside that is appropriate with regard to its use;
- c) Be sited and designed to minimise visual impact
- d) Not lead to the physical, visual or perceived coalescence of existing settlements either individually or cumulatively;
- e) Not lead to isolated new dwellings;
- f) Not lead to the need for additional buildings;
- g) Maximise opportunities to make the location more sustainable;
- h) Have no unacceptable adverse impacts on highway safety or have a severe residual cumulative impact on network capacity; and
- i) Maximise opportunities to improve public access to the countryside.

Policy SS8 of the LPU (Meeting employment needs) states that the sustainable growth of office and industrial space will be supported to meet the diverse needs of the local economy. The appropriate intensification, redevelopment and upgrading of existing sites and premises will be encouraged and supported to ensure the efficient use of land, help meet future demands and respond to modern business needs. Development proposals for employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas will also be supported by:

- A) Encouraging new employment uses within town, district and local centres, at an appropriate scale to those centres; and
- B) Appropriate intensification, redevelopment and upgrading of existing sites in employment use, to make more efficient use of land, and support meeting future economic needs.

Outside Core Employment Areas, town, district and local centres and allocated sites, economic development will typically be limited to small scale proposals which satisfy the requirements of Policies ER3 and ER4.

Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) states development proposals that contribute towards supporting a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged.

Development proposals for economic development in the countryside will only be supported where:

- a) There is a genuine need to support an existing or new rural business or enterprise;
- b) The scale and nature of the proposed development is appropriate to its rural location;
- c) The reuse or adaptation of existing buildings has been incorporated into the development, and where appropriate buildings which are derelict or offer no opportunity for beneficial use have been removed;
- d) Any conversions, buildings or structures are of a high quality design that is of a scale which is proportionate to its use and reflects and respects the character of the rural setting;
- e) There would be no significant adverse impacts to the amenity of nearby residents, including through odour, noise, lighting or operations;
- f) Environmental improvements are incorporated into the design of the development, for example additional landscaping and biodiversity enhancements; and
- g) Any traffic generated would not be inappropriate for the rural road network.

Development proposals will generally be supported which facilitate the introduction of or improvement to electronic communications networks and digital infrastructure to help support local businesses, including the expansion of full fibre gigabit capable broadband.

With regards to farm diversification, Policy ER3 states that small scale retail development associated with farm shops and horticultural nurseries will be supported where proposals are ancillary to the main use of the farm/nursery and do not cause significant harm to the vitality and viability of retail centres. Development proposals for farm diversification must be accompanied by a comprehensive whole farm diversification plan, which establishes how the proposed changes will assist in retaining the viability of a farm and its agricultural enterprise.

Core Strategy (2010):

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 states, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except in certain circumstances. This criterion is as follows:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements;
 - or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy (Employment Development) states that development for business, industry or warehousing will be permitted, including the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses provided it is within one of the following Core Employment Areas:

- 1) Green Park Business Park, Reading;
- 2) Headley Road East, Woodley;
- 3) Hogwood Industrial Estate, Park Lane, Finchampstead;
- 4) Molly Millars Industrial Estate, Wokingham;
- 5) Ruscombe Business Park, Ruscombe;
- 6) Sutton's Industrial Estate, Earley;
- 7) Thames Valley Business Park, Earley;
- 8) Toutley Industrial Estate, Wokingham; or
- 9) Winnersh Triangle Business Park, Winnersh.

Elsewhere within development limits the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in employment use will be acceptable in principle.

MDD Local Plan:

The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF (supporting a prosperous rural economy) states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and

- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Paragraph 128 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- b) local market conditions and viability;
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting 38 (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) the importance of securing well-designed and beautiful, attractive and healthy places.

Submitted Site:

As part of the preparation of the Council's Local Plan Update (LPU), the application site was put forward for B2/B8 development (submitted site reference: 5SW023). The site's suitability was assessed as part of the Council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2024 and was ultimately removed prior to stage 2c of the assessment. The assessment provides the following summary on its suitability:

"The site is located in the countryside. The site is not well related to any defined settlement, being close to but separate from the settlement of Swallowfield. The location is the site is such that development would not compromise the separation of settlements. The site is undeveloped greenfield land, which is flat in terms of topography. Whilst a belt of trees fronts Basingstoke Road, the site is not visually contained.

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) - the site is situated within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland (I2) landscape character area. Key characteristics include the intensive arable farming in large open fields bounded by hedgerows and fences, rural roads lined with ditches and mature oak trees, and small scale settlements concentrated in Riseley and Swallowfield.

Wokingham Borough Valued Landscape Assessment - the site is situated within the proposed River Loddon Valued Landscape area. The landscape gains much of its identity through the River Loddon and floodplain, and the associated character and ecological value.

Overall, the context of the site is considered inappropriate, being inappropriate in terms of established settlement form and pattern, and landscape character.”

Assessment:

With regards to Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy, the first three criteria of the policy must be met for development to be considered acceptable in principle providing they also achieve the overarching aims of CP11; to maintain the quality of the environment and protect the separate identity of settlements.

Criterion 1 requires development to contribute to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough. The creation of 3no. industrial units within the Countryside, insofar that local policy steers such development towards settlement limits and Core Employment Areas, is not considered to be a sustainable rural enterprise by reason of its conflict with the spatial development plan as a whole.

Turning to Criterion 2, the proposed development would result in the erection of 3no. large, 10 metre tall industrial units with substantial 20 x 72 metre footprints. In total, their footprint would cumulatively total 1,459sqm. These units would be erected on a large open area of greenfield agricultural land to the south of the existing commercial courtyard to the north. Overall, the substantial scales of these footprints, largely owed to their 72 metre depths, would notably encroach development southwards onto an area of land that contributes a large amount of openness to the site's character as it currently appears.

Further to the above, the proposed plans do not consider the additional external areas needed for parking and other paraphernalia. Given the size of the units and intention for additional HGV movements within the site, these additional areas of surfacing would further contribute to the encroachment of development.

The presence of three other units further south of the site are acknowledged (Units 11, 12 and 13), as is the recent approvals given for new forestry and agricultural buildings (Units 14 and 15 on the plans) to the south of the units proposed under this pre-application. With units 14 and 15 yet to be implemented, the level of encroachment is considered more adverse due to the distance between the proposed units and Units 11-13. Should Units 14 and 15 be implemented, the units could more reasonably be seen as a form infill development. This however does not negate their substantial depths currently proposed and the spatial harm they would cause.

Visual viewpoints of the units would be largely limited in the spring/summer months but photos of the site from Basingstoke Road in the Autumn/Winter show legible views through towards the agricultural land. There is therefore some anticipated visual harm expected due to the notable scale of the units.

Overall, in the current context of the application site and the scale of the units proposed, the proposals are considered to result in the excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings, contrary to criterion 2.

With regards to criterion 3, the proposals involve new buildings so does not qualify to be assessed under this criterion.

To summarise on CP11, the proposals fail to comply with the relevant criteria and is therefore considered unacceptable in principle.

The support for rural economies and businesses outlined in paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF are acknowledged. However, the current design of the proposals is not considered to result in the **sustainable** growth of all types of business in rural areas by reason of the environmental harm caused; the proposals would not involve the conversion of existing buildings, nor can it be reasonably argued that 3no. industrial units would be classed as beautiful new buildings. Furthermore, the development is not considered sensitive to its surroundings (an issue raised previously within the Council's Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2024), nor does it involve previously developed land.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council have identified a shortfall of B2/B8 floorspace within the Borough as part of their Employment Land Needs Review 2023. The creation of approximately 4,377sqm of B2/Class E(g) internal floorspace would therefore contribute towards the Council's current shortfall and would be afforded notable weight in a planning balance. That said, it is currently considered that for the reasons raised above, and those raised below in the Character and Landscape sections, the policy conflicts and visual/spatial harm caused by the development would likely outweigh this provision.

Character of the Area:

Policy Context:

Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'

Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond

positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Assessment:

As outlined above, the application site currently contributes to the openness of the application site, with the existing agricultural field view a primary viewpoint as you enter into the site via the vehicle gates. Existing commercial and industrial units on site are generally well set back from the roadside, except for Unit 13 which is visible when travelling northwards on Basingstoke Road.

The creation of 3no. large industrial units, at the scale currently proposed and the additional development not considered such as parking areas etc, would be considered to have a harmful impact on the rural appearance and general openness of Wyvols Court Farm and the prevailing landscape. Views of their form would be apparent from users of Basingstoke Road, especially during the Autumn/Winter months of the year.

The legible gap between the units were discussed as a conscious design choice on the site visit to allow views through towards the open fields and tree lines to the north-west. Discussions around a potential tree line behind the units was discussed. Whilst both elements (and the green material choices for the units) are generally welcomed to offset their visual prominence, the depth of the units proposed would essentially create two 72 metre long dark 'corridors' between the 10 metre tall units. It is likely these areas would be fitted with additional surfacing which would further detract from the site's predominantly open and rural appearance.

Overall, the scale of the units currently proposed poses the largest visual concern to the character of the area. They are substantially larger than the units existing on site and as such appear disproportionate within this sensitive rural landscape. Further consideration must be given to reducing the scale of these units, plus conscious approaches to landscaping, especially in and around areas of land likely to be surfaced for large vehicle turning and parking.

Landscaping and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

Landscape Character:

The site is situated within the Riseley Farmed Clay Lowland (I2) landscape character area as per the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019). Key

characteristics include the intensive arable farming in large open fields bounded by hedgerows and fences, rural roads lined with ditches and mature oak trees, and small scale settlements concentrated in Riseley and Swallowfield.

To maintain the landscape character of the Riseley Open Clay Lowland the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the existing remote rural character of the agricultural landscape. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the rural settlement pattern.

Considering the visual and spatial concerns raised above, the proposed development in its current design would fail to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. The scale and nature of the units proposed would directly conflict with the rural and remote settlement pattern of the area, to the detriment of the landscape's character and appearance.

Arboricultural Matters:

The application site is enclosed by dense vegetation on all boundaries. There are no TPOs within proximity to the proposed development, but there is a notable tree line close to the southern elevation of Unit 10.

It is not anticipated that there would be any adverse harm to the existing vegetation on site by reason of the development's siting, but the construction of these units would need to be carefully reviewed to ensure no harm to existing vegetation through the storage of materials or large delivery vehicles. Furthermore, should any increases in the road width to the track that leads to Units 11-13, these alterations would be in close proximity to the tree belt that lines the site's eastern frontage.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment in accordance with BS5837:2012 will therefore be required with any future planning application. A Landscape Proposals Plan and an Arboricultural Method Statement will also be required at condition but in this case, should be provided with the planning application for expediency and to illustrate efforts to provide suitable replacement planting.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Local Highways Authority (LHA) would have no objection in principle to the proposals for the erection of 4,377sq.m of 3 commercial units. However, a no objection position is subject to the application including suitable information regarding transport matters, agreeing off-site improvements and agreement of conditions controlling the impact of the development. These are required to ensure compliance with the NPPF and Wokingham Local Plan.

The LHA require the application to include a Transport Statement (TS) which includes the information listed below:

Vehicle Access

The TS should include the following details relating to vehicle access:

- A speed survey establishing the 85th percentile of the vehicles passing the site in accordance with DMRB CA185: Vehicle Speed Measurement.
- General arrangement drawing demonstrating access width, corner radii and visibility in accordance with the 40mph speed limit (or the recorded 85th percentile speed, whichever is higher). The visibility splay must only rely on land defined as public highway or land controlled by the applicant.
- Collision Data for the most recently available 5-year period should be analysed within the TS report to establish whether any road safety issues adjacent to the site could be exacerbated by the planning application.
- Swept path analysis which demonstrates a 16.5m long articulated vehicle and a refuse vehicle can ingress and egress the site in a forward gear. The submitted drawing should include vehicle spec. and speed of vehicle tracking.
- Gate setback of 16.5m and gates to open inwards to ensure an articulated lorry can wait clear of the carriageway without obstructing the free flow of traffic on the B3349 Reading Road.

Pedestrian Access Improvements

The LHA require improvements to pedestrian access to the site to ensure employees of the site can travel via bus if they choose. These improvements should be completed via Section 278 agreement with the LHA.

The LHA require the provision of an extended footway on the B3349 Basingstoke Road and a pedestrian refuge island allowing pedestrians to cross to the existing footway.

This improvement would allow employees to walk to the Swallowfield Grange Bus Stops which are 250m walk from the centre of the site. The No. 600 bus provides an hourly service to Mere Oak Park and Ride, St Marys Butts (Reading) and The Bull Inn (Arborfield).

The footway should have a minimum width of 2m. The pedestrian refuge island should be designed in accordance with the guidance provided in LTN 01/07 – Traffic Calming (Department for Transport). The improvement must be provided within land defined as public highway and land controlled by the applicant.

This improvement is required for the application to be considered compliant with the Core Strategy, Local Transport Plan and NPPF.

The WBC Core Strategy (2010) Policy CP6 states that: *'Planning permission will be granted for schemes that provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice and **improve the existing infrastructure network** including road, rail and **public transport**, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists'*

The Third Local Transport Plan (2011 – 2026) states in Policy AT1 that *'We will actively encourage integrating walking and cycling routes and facilities into key destinations including 'retail, leisure and social facilities, public transport interchanges, schools, colleges and other educational facilities and **employment areas**'*

The NPPF Paragraphs 115 – 117 requires that applications for development ensure *‘Sustainable transport modes are prioritised’, ‘Give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements...with **layouts that maximise the catchment for buses**’ and ‘Minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles’.]*

Site Layout

The LHA require the applicant to include swept path analysis which demonstrates suitable turning and unloading areas for each of the proposed units within the site. The turning and loading areas should be designed for a 12m rigid lorry and a 16.5m long articulated lorry.

The LHA require the applicant to provide a pedestrian access strategy which shows pedestrian routes around the site. No internal footways connecting to the B3349 footways are shown on the masterplan provided at preapplication stage and the LHA would expect an internal footway measuring 2.0m wide.

My Journey / Travel Plan Contribution

In lieu of a Workplace Travel Plan, the LHA would accept a Section 106 contribution towards WBCs ‘My Journey’ initiative (<https://www.myjourneywokingham.com/about-my-journey/>).

A contribution of £643 per dwelling has been used elsewhere in the borough; and this should be factored per trip/100sq.m to calculate the contribution for the commercial units proposed at Wyvols Court Farm.

Bus Service Contribution

The LHA require a s106 contribution per trip towards the operation of the No. 600 Bus Service. A contribution amount of £871 per dwelling has been used elsewhere in the borough; and this should be factored per trip/100sq.m to calculate the contribution for the commercial units proposed at Wyvols Court Farm.

Trip Generation

The LHA require that existing trip generation is established by an ATC survey completed over 7 days with the ATC laid across the site access to measure the number of existing vehicle movements per day. Counts of both cars and HGVs should be provided. The survey spec. should be agreed with the LHA in advance and should be completed outside of school holidays.

The LHA require forecast trip generation to be based on survey data of similar B8 sites completed in TRICS. The forecast should be multi-modal and include a forecast of expected HGV movements. The TRICS survey sites should be selected for similar rural locations and in accordance with the principles in the TRICS Good Practice Guide.

The survey sites from TRICS must be agreed with the LHA in advance of the application being submitted.

Car Parking

The LHA require the application to provide on-site car parking in accordance with the WBC Parking Standards for B8 Storage and Distribution, or in accordance with a Parking Accumulation Forecast based on the agreed TRICS Survey sites.

The parking standards are available at the following web location:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/sites/wokingham/files/2023-06/CD10.08.03%20Parking%20Std%20Study%20Report.pdf>

5.8 CLASS B8: STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

User Class	Car Parking Allocation	Cycle Parking Allocation	MTW Parking	Disabled Parking
B8	up to 250m ² = 1 space per 25m ² above 250m ² = 1 space per additional 200m ²	1 LT space per 200m ²	1 space per 20 car parking spaces up to 100 car parking spaces. 1 space per 40 car parking spaces thereafter.	As Table 3.5

Lorry Parking

The LHA require the application to include a suitable no. of lorry parking spaces in accordance with the WBC Parking Standards.

Blue Badge Disabled Parking

The LHA require 5% of car parking spaces to be designed and demarcated for blue badge users, with an additional 1200mm access strip. This is requirement for developments which generate employment within 'Inclusive Mobility' (DfT, 2021).

This requirement is supported by DfT Data released in March 2023 which showed there were 2.57 million blue badge holders (4.6% of the UK population).

Cycle Parking

The LHA require the application to include cycle parking in accordance with the adopted WBC cycle parking standards. The site should provide 1 long stay space per 200msq.m of B8 use (21 spaces for 4,377sq.m). As per the guidance the cycle parking should be covered and secure.

The LHA also require the provision of changing and showering facilities to allow cyclists to shower and change after they have ridden to work.

Agricultural Land:

Policy CP1(7) of the Core Strategy and Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF all state that that best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land should be protected. The primary reasoning is to protect food production in the UK.

Agricultural land is graded between 1 and 5. The principal physical factors influencing grading are climate, site and soil which, together with interactions between them, Gratings of 1, 2 and 3a are the BMV agricultural land that should be retained. Grade 1 land is excellent quality agricultural land with very minor or no limitations to agricultural use. Grade 5 is very poor-quality land, with severe limitations which restrict use to permanent pasture or rough grazing.

The applicant has provided an Agricultural Land Classification which indicates that the agricultural land lost to the units proposed is Grade 3b land, thereby meaning it is not classed as BMV agricultural land. It is therefore not likely an objection will be raised regarding the loss of this land for agricultural purposes, especially in light of the social and economic benefits associated with the units.

Neighbour Amenity:

Loss of Light, Overbearing and Overlooking:

The closest residential property is Wyvols House that is located 60 metres east of the units proposed. There are therefore no concerns on these grounds.

Noise:

There are several residential properties within 60 and 200 metres and due to the nature of the units' use and expected increase in large vehicle movements, careful consideration should be given to the amenities of these dwellinghouses in terms of noise impacts.

Any future application would need to be accompanied by details of the site's operating hours, number of vehicle movements and general noise level outputs from the relevant noise factors to ensure there is no adverse harm to the occupiers of the neighbouring properties.

Ecology:

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.

There is a risk that the proposal could affect protected species and priority habitats and an ecological appraisal (comprising an extended Phase 1 Habitat and Species Scoping Survey, and any phase 2 surveys) would need to be submitted with any application.

Surveys should be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists who are a member of a professional organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and / or are licensed or accredited by Natural England to survey protected species. Some ecological surveys are seasonal, and this should be factored into the project timeframe.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is a standardised technique for environmental audit and involves classifying and if required mapping habitats on and adjacent to the application site. The survey is then 'extended' and any features or habitats that are likely to be of importance for notable or protected species, and or prove to be a constraint to development are investigated further and described.

If the surveys show that the site contains habitats suitable for protected species further surveys for species such as reptiles and bats may need to be carried out.

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted."

Biodiversity Net Gain:

Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the development meets the exception criteria set out in [paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) the [Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#), and [The Environment Act 2021 \(Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2024](#). In the event planning permission is granted, and the exceptions do not apply, paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 grants permission subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" and that development may not begin unless:

- a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Building Sustainability:

Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD require sustainable design and conservation, and R21 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change.

A Sustainability Statement should form part of the Design and Access Statement/Planning Statement and should include measures related to water, drainage, energy and carbon emissions in accordance with Policies CC04 and CC05 of the MDD. It should consider building design that takes advantage of sunlight and uses recycled or sustainable building materials, building insulation, energy efficient and water saving appliances (such as an energy efficient gas powered boiler),

photovoltaic panels, compost facilities and cycle storage as well as water butts and soak-aways for rainwater reuse, permeable car parking surfaces and maximisation of soft landscaping for natural infiltration.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.

The western part of the site is within the flood zones but the eastern part, where the proposed commercial units will be located is within flood zone 1.

WBC Drainage have reviewed the Blue Fox planning statement dated April 2025 and would have no objection to the principle of the development, as represented within the proposed commercial units plan drawing CU1 dated 16/04/2025 (Appendix 5).

WBC Drainage would anticipate seeing a Flood Risk Assessment that addresses the following:

- 1) Calculations indicating the Greenfield runoff rate from the site.
- 2) BRE 365 test results demonstrating whether infiltration is achievable or not.
- 3) Use of SuDS following the SuDS hierarchy, preferably infiltration.
- 4) Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100-year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at Greenfield rates, or preferably better.
- 5) If connection to an existing surface water sewer is proposed, we need to understand why other methods of the SuDS hierarchy cannot be implemented and see confirmation from the utilities supplier that their system has got capacity and the connection is acceptable.
- 6) Groundwater monitoring confirming seasonal high groundwater levels in the area.
- 7) A drainage strategy plan indicating the location and sizing of SuDS features, with the base of any SuDS features located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.
- 8) Details demonstrating how any SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.

Contamination:

The area is listed as potentially contaminated on the Council's inventory.

Therefore, a scheme to deal with any potential contamination of the site should be submitted with any future application. The scheme should include an investigation and assessment to identify the extent of contamination and the measures to be taken to avoid risk when the site is developed.

Atomic Weapons Location:

Policy TB04 of the MDD allows development in the vicinity of the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Burghfield but only where the increase in density can be safely accommodated.

The application site is located within the Outer Zone of the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone for AWE Burghfield.

The threshold for development within the Outer Zone is:

- Any new residential development of 200 dwellings or greater;
- Any re-use or re-classification of an existing development that will lead to a material increase in the size of an existing development (greater than 500 persons);
- Any new non-residential development that could introduce vulnerable groups to the OCZ;
- Any new development, re-use or re-classification of an existing development that could pose an external hazard to the site.

None of these thresholds are likely to be met by the development. Therefore, it is unlikely that the development would have an adverse impact on the ability to implement the Blue Light Emergency Plan in the event of a nuclear emergency.

Employment Skills Plan:

LPU Policy ER4 & MDD Local Plan Policy TB12 state that development proposals for 10 or more dwellings or 1,000m² of non-residential floorspace should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills Plan to show how the proposal provides opportunities for training, apprenticeships or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.

Conclusion:

Overall, the development is considered unacceptable in principle as per CP11 of the Core Strategy and is contrary to the spatial development plan. The scale of the units currently proposed would also be considered to cause harm to the rural character of the area and the general landscape character.

The provision of B8 floorspace at a time where the Council have a shortfall is acknowledged and welcomed but ultimately, the environmental harm to the prevailing Countryside and general failure to maintain the quality of the environment is considered to outweigh the social and economic benefits of the proposals.

Therefore, it is unlikely that the proposed development would receive Officer support as per their current design. Reductions in the scale of the units should be explored, plus alternative sitings closer to units 1-7 to reduce encroachment and create a more uniform and enveloped courtyard group of buildings.

Submitting a Planning Application

Once you are ready to apply, please submit an application through the [Planning Portal](#). Specific documents are set out in the appendices below but refer to the Local Validation List available on the council's [how to apply for planning permission page](#) to assist you with ensuring the plans and documents submitted meet our validation requirements.

Other Guidance

Your development may also require Building Regulation approval to ensure it is built to national safety, design, and environmental standards. The Council's Local Authority Building Control (LABC) service offers a full range of plan approval, inspection, and associated services through an ISO9001 nationally accredited team of qualified building surveyors. These surveyors work closely with the Council's planning department to ensure the appropriate construction of your build. To find out more visit the Council's [Building Control website](#) or call 0300 790 0580 to speak to a member of the team.

If your project requires a dropped kerb on the road in front of your house then you may require consent from the highway authority; further information is available on the Council's [dropped kerbs page](#). Finally, if your project includes 100 sqm or more of new floor area then it is liable for the community infrastructure levy. Refer to the Council's [CIL page](#) for more information.

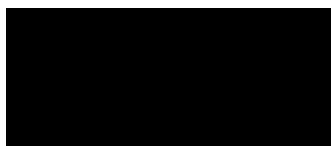
This concludes the pre-application process and I trust that this informal advice is of use to you. Please be aware that it is given without prejudice to any future decision that the Council may take. If you would like further advice, then a new pre-application submission and associated fee will be required.

Yours sincerely,

Kieran Neumann

Planning Officer

Authorised b



Appendix One – Relevant Policies and Guidance

The relevant policies associated with this proposal are as follows:

National Policy Core Strategy 2010 (CS)	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDD Local Plan)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB02 – Development adjoining the Green Belt TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield TB05 – Housing Mix TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB08 – Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards TB09 – Residential Accommodation for Vulnerable Groups TB10 – Traveller Sites TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB12 – Employment Skills Plan TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Swallowfield Village Design Statement

Appendix Two – Validation Requirements

The documents required for validating any future planning application are as follows:

- – required document
- – possibly required document: these may either help determine an application or resolve the need to use a pre-commencement condition

Please note supporting information with regards to what details are required for each document are contained on the following page on the Council's website: [how to apply for planning permission page](#).

Standard Documents

Application form	●
Location Plan (1:1250) and Block Plan (1:500)	●
All plans to metric scale and to show existing and proposed	●
- Floor Plans	
- Elevation Plans	
- Roof Plans	
- Site Layout Plan	
Correct fee (where one is necessary)	●
CIL Form 0	●

Additional Documents

Biodiversity survey and report	●
Design and Access Statement	●
Flood Risk Assessment	●
Tree Survey / Arboricultural Statement	●
Water Course / Drainage Statement	●
Employment Skills Plan	●
Affordable Housing Statement	○
Land Contamination	●

Appendix Three – Legal Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy

If your development requires a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, this will need to be signed and completed prior to determination of any application. Preparing and completing an agreement will be carried out by the Council's legal department and is subject to a separate charge and Land Registry fee.

The CIL charge rate is calculated on the net additional floor space at £365 per square metre. Some exemptions may apply and it is advised to look at the Council's [community infrastructure levy advice page](#). A CIL form is required to make your application valid.



APPENDIX 2

Letters of Support.

- 1. Rentokil Initial**
- 2. Star Fireworks**
- 3. Berry Marquees**



Rentokil Initial

Compass House,
Manor Royal,
Crawley,
West Sussex
RH10 9PY

rentoki-initial.co.uk

7th April 2025

To whom it may concern

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Wyvols Court Farm, Reading

We are a tenant of the above site occupying warehouse and office space in one of the current outbuildings. Our business is expanding our operations in this area and are looking to take on extra space.

We are therefore writing to express our support to the planning submission for the development or extra commercial space on the farm as this would offer a potential solution for us.

We would be happy to supply further information on our requirements if required.

Please contact me if you need any further detail.

Kind Regards,

James Monks

Group Property Director

Rentokil Initial plc (owners of Urban Planters/Palfreymans Ltd)

Note - Subject to Contract and Board Approval



WINNERS

BRITISH FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS
CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS 2013



Fireworks House, Bullbrook Row,
Bracknell, Berkshire, RG12 2NL

Rory Waterer
Owner
Wyvols Court Farm Ltd
Wyvols Court Farm
Basingstoke Road,
Swallowfield
Reading
Berkshire
RG7 1WY

1st April 2025

Dear Rory,

It seems hard to believe that it was fourteen years that we first spoke about taking on Unit 2 at Wyvols Court Farm for our warehousing operations. Over the years our business has grown and developed, as has yours.

As you know, to address future demand for more environmentally friendly alternatives to firework displays, I have recently started a new business that provides drone light shows. Our company Star Symphony Drone Shows www.starsymphony.show is a growing business and will need new, clean and secure storage at which to base and service the fleet of drones and charge the batteries. I think it's a wonderful opportunity to be able to charge the drone batteries using solar power from roof-mounted panels, which makes them even more environmentally friendly than they already are.

I have always found the Farm to be a secure and well-run site, and if you are able to expand your buildings then we would like to be front of the list to take on additional storage.

Yours sincerely,



Andy Hubble
Director

RUNNERS-UP BRITISH FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2007 • **RUNNERS-UP** BRITISH FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2008 • **WINNERS** NORTH OF ENGLAND
FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2008 • **WINNERS** BELVOIR CASTLE FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2010 • **WINNERS** BRITISH FIREWORK CHAMPIONSHIPS 2010

T 0800 7810511

E weddings@starfireworks.co.uk
www.starfireworks.co.uk



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Watch us on... **YouTube**

See our winning firework displays at:
www.youtube.com/starfireworks





Berry Marquees
Units 11 & 12
Crowthorne House
Nine Mile Ride
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 3GA
01784 471410

22nd April 2025

To Whom It May Concern.

Re: proposed commercial warehouse development at Wyvols Court Farm, Swallowfield, Berks, RG7 1WY.

We write to confirm that Berry Marquees, a long-established local company trading for over 20 years, employing 10+ staff, and currently based in Wokingham borough; have shortlisted the subject site above as part of our search to acquire new commercial premises over oncoming months to support our business growth.

We would therefore be supportive of the proposed development and would welcome its delivery in H2 2025 on this basis.

Berry Marquees