

Our ref: 24.094 WBC 09-08-24

09 August 2024

by email only

Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham,
Berkshire
RG40 1BN

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION FOR FULL PLANNING PERMISSION FOR LIQUID NITROGEN STORAGE TANK, PLANT ENCLOSURES, HEAT PUMPS/CHILLERS, PROCESS CHILLERS, EFFLUENT WASTE TANK AND FLUES AT 310 WHARFEDALE ROAD, WINNERSH, WOKINGHAM, RG41 5TP

Planning Portal Reference: PP- 13288486

Overview

This purpose of this Covering Letter is to explain and support an application made on behalf of our client Morgan Lovell for full planning permission for the installation of a plant enclosure, pumps, chillers and flue. The subject property is identified as 310 Wharfedale Road, Winnersh, Wokingham, RG41 5TP.

The letter outlines the context within which the application is made and provides a brief assessment of the main planning considerations, together with a reasoned justification of the merits of the scheme when assessed against relevant local and national planning policy and other material considerations.

310 Wharfedale Road is a purpose-built industrial unit, sitting within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park. Oxford Quantum Circuits have committed to the building; however, the proposed plant works are essential for the successful occupation of the building and business continuity. The proposals are minimal in the wider context of the park and as such their addition will be undiscernible.

Founded in 2017, Oxford Quantum Circuits (OQC) is a global leader in quantum technology. The company already have a nearby presence, being located in Block B on Eskdale Road, also within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park. OQC develops and builds advanced quantum computers utilising superconducting qubits and their patented Coaxmon chip.

OQC's proposed operations in the Winnersh Triangle Business Park, will support the delivery of high-tech, high-skilled economic growth. Their innovative technology and skilled workforce will further attract talented professionals to the area, helping to foster a vibrant

community of technological excellence. They will support the development of future tech professionals. OQC's commitment to sustainability will also promote responsible business practices

The letter concludes that in the context of national and local planning policy, the development of the site and the modest alterations proposed comply with the adopted policies. The planning balance weighs in favour of this sustainable development and should be supported by Wokingham Borough Council. On this basis, it is considered that planning permission should be granted.

For clarity, the application is accompanied by the following plans and documents:

- Application Form
- Location Plan
- Site Plan
- Plan and Elevations

The Site

The subject site is the building identified as 310 Wharfedale Road, Winnersh, located within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park, located to the north of Winnersh but within its settlement development limits. The site is located just south of the A329(M). The site has been in situ since the development of the business park.

The specific application site in which development is proposed is located to the south-west of the commercial building, extending from an area of a former grass verge onto a small part of the hardstanding which sits adjacent to the building.

310 Wharfedale Road is a typical industrial unit, comprising warehouse space and office accommodation. The site has access from the north via Wharfedale Road with the specific application site being located beyond a secure gate that separates the work yard to the south from the employee and visitor access to the north. The work yard runs down the western elevation side of the application site and the site neighbours an additional industrial unit, 300 Wharfedale Road, to the east, occupied by Virgin Media, which is joined to the application building. Beyond the work yard to the west are a series of smaller industrial units, while the application site is well screened by way of trees and vegetation to the south, beyond which are some residential dwellings.

The associated existing building is roughly square in shape, having a predominantly cladded finish.

Proposed Development

Full planning permission is sought for the installation of a nitrogen storage vessel, plant enclosure, pumps, tanks, chillers and associated flue at 310 Wharfedale Road. The proposed additions will be minor in comparison to the rest of the greater application site and will mostly be screened to the public.

The main bulk of the development will occur on the south-western corner of the main building on an area comprising part of a former area of grass verge and extending out onto a small area of hardstanding to its north and west. Within this area, it is proposed that 2 no. compounds will be erected, the first containing heat pumps, chillers, effluent waste tank, process chillers and associated pipework. The second compound will house the Liquid Nitrogen (LN2) tank, with a shower to be placed externally. A small Chemical store will be housed to the south of these compounds abutting the grassed area.

The two compounds will have a modest height of 3m, the largest volumetrically being proposed to extend and therefore joined to the main industrial building on site itself. This compound will project from the application building by 14.5m and have a depth of 7.7m. Plant within this compound will not exceed a height of 3m and will not therefore be visible externally. The second compound housing the LN2 tank will have the same height of 3m but have a length of 4.7m and depth of 6.3m. The LN2 tank itself will rise to an overall height of 5.84m. The tank will be raised by 0.25m resulting from it being mounted upon a Big Foot System to mitigate against potential flood risk.

At the rear of the application building, a modest gas cylinder cage will be installed, while associated extractor fan discharge flues will be erected upon the roof of the industrial building, towards the south-western corner of the main building. The flues will have heights of approximately 2.03m and 3m.

Aside from the addition of the flues, which will modestly increase the overall height to a maximum of 3m, there are no other changes proposed to the appearance of the roof of the main industrial building. As already noted, the flues itself will only protrude slightly by a maximum of 3m and will not be of significance to the overall visual appearance of the application site.

The addition of the LN2 tank, associated pumps, tanks, chillers and flue will enable our client to refurbish and modernise the unit to allow for the occupier to successfully carry out their business operations.

Planning History

Relevant Planning History relating to 310 Wharfedale Road consists of:

120348- Relocation of reception area with new door and canopy, levelling of existing landscaping to create parking to 310 Wharfedale Road, plus internal alterations – Approved

122192 - Application for a non-material amendment to planning consent F/2012/2039 to allow: removal of services plant enclosure from the roof and erection of replacement at ground level; adjustment of proposals for HGV access to warehouse: replacement of ventilation grilles on S and W elevations with windows to match existing; adaptations to external landscaping; new fence and gate – Approved

131983 - Application for submission of details to comply with conditions 4, 6 and 7 of F/2012/2039: 4. Landscaping scheme 6. Hard surfacing works 7. New entrance gates and fencing – Approved

130634 - Change of use to allow the following single or combination of uses: Class B1(b); Class B1(c); Class B2; and Class B8 (with ancillary office use) - Approved

Of particular relevance to the application subject to this covering letter is application reference 122192, which approved plans to remove redundant services including plant enclosure from the roof of the application property. The previous plant enclosure approved to be installed upon the roof of the application property were much larger in scale and would have been much more visible than the proposed flue.

As such it is therefore acceptable for plant and other structures to adorn the roof of this industrial unit and is something to be expected, being of commonplace across the Winnersh Triangle Business Park, owing to the industrial/commercial character of the area.

Planning Policy

Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that in the determination of applications *'The Authority shall have regard to the provisions of a development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material consideration'*. Similarly, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purpose of this application, the relevant part of the development plan comprises the Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019).

Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan (Adopted January 2010)

The following policies of the Core Strategy are considered to be relevant to the proposal:

CP1 – Sustainable development: The council supports development which minimises the effect or improves environmental conditions within the locality.

CP3 – General Principles for development: This policy seeks to promote high quality design principles, whilst seeking to approve applications that make most effective use of land.

CP15 – Employment Development: Development for business, industry or warehousing will be permitted, including the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park

Wokingham Borough Development Plan Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (Adopted February 2014)

The following policies of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan are considered to be relevant to the proposal:

Policy CC01 – Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development: Reflects the governments presumption in favour of sustainable development as outlined in the NPPF.

Policy CC09 – Development and Flood Risk (from all sources): Development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 must take into account the vulnerability of proposed development. In exceptional circumstances, new development in areas of flood risk will be supported where it can be demonstrated that development will be safe for its lifetime; not increase flood risk in any form elsewhere; and incorporate flood reliant and resistant design measures

Policy TB11 – Core Employment Areas: The application site is identified as residing within Core Employment Area of Winnersh Triangle Business Park, as per Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy, where the majority of employment growth will occur.

National Planning Policy

Applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise and, in this respect, the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions. The NPPF was first published on 27 March 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and most recently on 5 September 2023. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development that give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

To promote sustainable development, the NPPF advises that these objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.

Paragraph 11 advises that Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. 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 clear 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."*

Footnote 7, which applies to paragraph 11, part d) i., states:

“The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in the development plans) relating to: habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 181) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 68); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.”

Paragraph 38 states that Local Planning Authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive and creative way, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Paragraph 68 requires Local Planning Authorities to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability.

Paragraph 85 seeks to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, contributing towards building a strong, competitive economy. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Paragraph 119 states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Paragraph 167 seeks to ensure that flood risk is not increased elsewhere by the development and promotes the use of sustainable drainage schemes where appropriate.

Planning Assessment

The key planning issues raised by this proposal are considered to be:

- Principle of Development.
- Design and appearance.
- Amenity of neighbouring uses on the business park
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Overall Planning Balance

Principle of Development

The NPPF states (*paragraph 7*) that the '*purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development*'. Paragraph 11 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this includes '*approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay*'.

As is demonstrated by this Statement, it is clear that the proposals as presented by this application accord with the objectives and policies of the Development Plan, to the extent that they are relevant. Furthermore, the benefits of the proposals outweigh any potential adverse impacts.

The application site is located within the Winnersh Triangle Business Park, defined as a core employment area as per Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy, in which employment development is supported, including for the expansion or intensification of existing uses. National policy as outlined at paragraph 85 of the NPPF further reinforces the desire to support planning applications where proposals allow for businesses to invest, expand and adapt, contributing towards building a strong, competitive economy, noting that the needs of local businesses should be considered.

The proposal would allow OQC to make more efficient use of the application building and allow for the expansion of their business operations, supporting economic growth in the borough of Wokingham.

The client is supporting the refurbishment of the industrial unit to support the expanding operations of OQC, a high-tech quantum solutions firm, utilising state of the art energy generating equipment. The company's presence at the Winnersh Triangle Business Park and in the borough of Wokingham will improve employment opportunities in the longer term and secure millions in investment. The proposal seeks to support the operations of a high-tech company and these goals are in alignment with paragraph 85 of the NPPF.

On the above basis it is considered that the proposal is made in compliance with Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy; Policy TB11 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and Paragraph 85 of the NPPF, and the principle of development should be supported.

Design and Appearance

The majority of the proposed works shall be installed to the south-west of the application building on a former grass verge extending onto an area of hardstanding, as previously outlined. Grouping the plant equipment together, the proposals project no further than 23m away from the main building. The main bulk of the development will relate to 2no. compounds that will be developed partially on and adjacent to the former grass verge.

The first of the two compounds will be attached to the south-western corner of the application building and will project from the building by 14.5m, having a depth of 7.7m and height of 3m. This compound will contain heat pumps/ chillers, process cooling chillers, waste tank and associated piping. None of these components will project higher than the 3m surrounding compound walls and will not therefore be visible from the exterior.

The second compound will contain the LN2 Tank and have a length of 4.7m and depth of 6.3m. The height of the compound will be the same as the other compound at 3m, however the LN2 tank will rise to a height of 5.84m and therefore project above the compound. The LN2 tank will be elevated by 0.25m as it will be mounted upon a Big Foot System to mitigate against the minor flood risk. In relation to the main building on site, these additions are minor additions. The design of the compounds is simple but have been carefully considered to remain in keeping with the prevailing industrial character of the application building and wider Winnersh Triangle Business Park.

The other portion of the portion of the application relates to a gas cylinder cage, located at the rear of the application building and a series of 3 no. flues, to be mounted upon the roof of the application building. The gas cylinder cages are also of nominal scale, having a length of 2.5m, depth of 0.6m and a height of 1.4m. In regard to the flues, these will raise the overall height of the building only slightly. The first of which will have a height of 2.03m, whilst the other pair of flues will each project by 3m on top of the application building.

These additions to the application building are typical of commercial/industrial buildings and would therefore integrate well within the business park. The application site is well screened nevertheless, behind a gated access within the work yard of the site, which is not accessible or visible to the public from viewpoints along Wharfedale Road; and beyond substantial tree coverage from the south, which obscures views from the residential areas beyond the industrial estate to the south. Additionally, viewed in respect of the footprint of the existing building, the proposals are modest, and it is considered that the scheme is in conformity with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Amenity

The overall design of the proposals have been carefully considered to compliment the main building within the application site and the prevailing industrial/commercial character of the Winnersh Triangle Business Park. As a result of the modest heights of much of the proposals, not exceeding 3m in height, the proposals to be installed at ground floor level will not be visible form public viewpoints. The location of the proposed development towards the rear of the application site and beyond a secure gated access also limits the visibility of the LN2 tank that projects above the height of the compound to a height of 5.84m, which is still subservient to the main industrial building on site.

As previously mentioned, the proposals are screened from the highway by way of the secure gated access to the work yard that blocks views from the north into the open space within the site, meanwhile to the south, the site enjoys screening from substantial tree coverage, blocking views from the south from residential development in this direction. As a result of the modest scale of the proposals and the substantial screening this portion of the site enjoys, views will be limited, and it is not considered that the proposals will have any impact upon the amenity of neighbouring uses.

The only addition which may be visible will be the flues which will be erected on top of the existing industrial building, projecting to heights of 2.03m and 3m respectively. The flues will only increase the overall height modestly and are components of buildings that are typically found within industrial estates anyway. It is considered that the addition of the flues will only complement the existing use of the building and be within keeping with the surrounding business park, where such components are commonplace.

Overall, it is therefore considered that the proposals will have a limited impact upon the amenity of neighbouring uses and visually, the application building will be able to accommodate such industrial additions without its character changing substantially. The proposals are of high-quality design and are in keeping with the application building and surrounding business park and the application is therefore in conformity with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Flood Risk Assessment

Flood Risk Assessment being published...

Biodiversity Net Gain

A biodiversity assessment metric has been provided as part of the application. Subject to the standard condition it is readily anticipated that the required habitat compensation and mandatory net gain can be provided through habitat creation on landscaped areas around the site that are currently of low habitat value.

Overall Planning Balance

The proposal has been reviewed in the context of local and national planning policy and the respective weight that must be given to each policy and other material considerations. The proposed development importantly represents sustainable development, making efficient and effective use of land at an existing business park to enable the expansion of the client's business operations, in turn improving the local economy. The proposal aligns with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and accords with the NPPF. On this basis, there is a presumption in favour of approval.

Summary

It has been demonstrated that there would be no adverse impacts of any significance upon matters of importance in respect of design or amenity considerations that might otherwise outweigh the significant benefits that would arise.

The application has been positively prepared and sought to understand and respond to site constraints, in turn minimising and mitigating any potential adverse impacts.

For the reasons set out, the overall planning balance weighs in favour of the application and should be supported by the local planning authority and therefore we request that planning permission is granted without delay.

Yours faithfully

Haydn Lee

**Haydn Lee MPlan (Hons)
Planner**

Enc