



Planning

Planning Design and Access Statement

Client:

Ex-Army Builders

Site Address

Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield, RG7

1TBerection of replacement buildings for equipment storage and a site office in association with a forestry business

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CIL | Enforcement | Land Promotion | Planning | Sequential Tests | Viability

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the erection of replacement buildings for equipment storage and a site office in association with a forestry business at Robin Lodge Nursery, Part Lane, Swallowfield, RG7 1TB.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents and plans:
- 1:1250 Site Location Plan
 - Existing Site Plan
 - Existing Floor Plans and Elevations
 - Proposed Site Plan
 - Proposed Floorplan and Elevation of Unit B
 - Flood Risk Assessment, prepared by Geosmart.
 - Development Tree Report and appendices
 - Provisional Environmental Assessment (including Phase 1 Bat Survey)
 - Reptile Presence/Absence Survey

- Acoustic Assessment, prepared by ACA.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The 0.4-hectare site is located to the south of Swallowfield in Berkshire. The site is bounded by residential development to the north and north-west, Part Lane to the east, commercial units to the south, and an undeveloped field to the south-west. The site currently comprises buildings associated with forestry purposes.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref: 28884 – Dwelling House (agricultural holding) – Refused 5 November 1987
- 3.2 Application Ref: 41262 – Solid fuel and bottled gas storage packing and distilling depot and concrete slab production – Refused 29 November 1993, part approved at appeal
- 3.3 Application Ref: F/1999/70618 – Dwelling House – Refused 22 November 1999
- 3.4 Application Ref: F/2002/6388 – Dwelling House – Refused 28 May 2002
- 3.5 Application Ref: F/2005/5021 – Change of Use of market garden to hardstanding for five gypsy caravans with parking – Refused 19 August 2005
- 3.6 Application Ref: CLE/2014/1902 – Mobile home (at Oakleigh Farm) (certificate of lawfulness) – Approved 23 July 2015
- 3.7 Application Ref: 173339 – Siting of a forestry building for storage of machinery and wood (prior approval) – Approved 5 December 2017
- 3.8 Application Ref: 181365 – Forestry prior approval application for the erection of an open sided building with a corrugated steel roof for the storage of wood and machinery – Approved 20 July 2018
- 3.9 Application Ref: 222047 – Full application for the proposed erection of 3 no. buildings and open log store with associated parking, access and landscaping, plus the formation of a bund to north and east boundary, following removal of 1 no. mobile home and demolition of existing buildings – Refused 12 October 2022

- 3.10 Application Ref: 231233 - Full application for the proposed erection of 2no. buildings and open log store with associated parking, access and landscaping, plus the formation of an earth bund and acoustic screen around wood chipper, following demolition of existing green houses and mobile home. Refused by Wokingham Borough Council 30th August 2023. Dismissed at Appeal on 28th November 2024 (Application Ref: APP/X0360/W/24/3339803).
- 3.11 Application Ref: 250373 - Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of boundary treatment. Approved 15th April 2025.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 Regarding the requirements of Making an Application NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.2 **Use and Amount:** This application seeks approval for the erection of replacement buildings for equipment storage and a site office, associated with a forestry business.

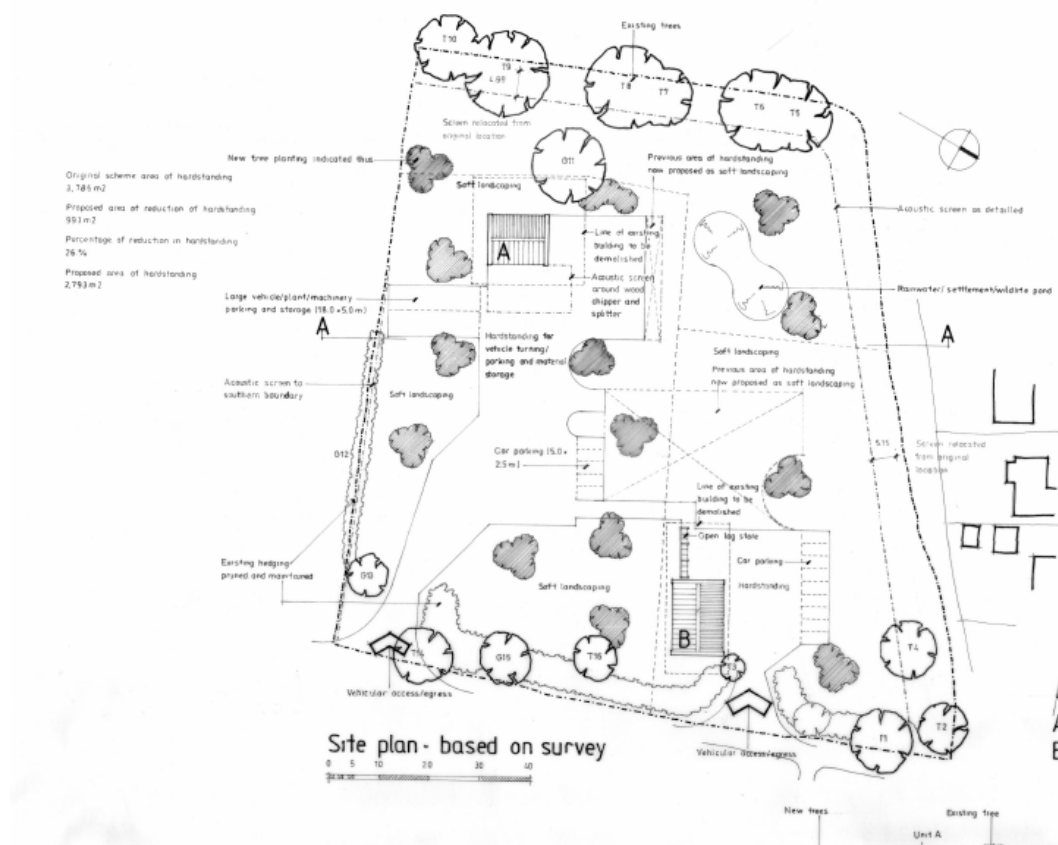


Figure 1: Site Plan

- 4.3 The proposed development will include a warehouse (Unit A) for the storage of plant, machinery, tools, and timber, alongside a multi-functional unit (Unit B) which will contain offices, staff amenities (canteen, toilets, showers, and locker area), and a reception and

store area. The development will also incorporate associated hardstanding, car parking facilities, a wildlife pond, and the grass seeding of the southern boundary to enhance biodiversity.

- 4.4 The proposal represents a revision of a previously submitted application (Planning Ref: 231233), following feedback from the Planning Inspector (APP/X0360/W/24/3339803) and professional advice. The key changes in this revised application include a 20% reduction in the area of hardstanding, the removal of a bund along the boundary, and an increase in the floor height of Building B. These changes have been made to reduce the environmental impact of the development and better integrate it with the surrounding landscape.
- 4.5 In addition, the application includes the repositioning of a fence approved under Planning Ref: 250373. This relocation aims to improve biodiversity on the site, further supporting the applicant's commitment to enhancing the local ecosystem.
- 4.6 The site will continue to be used for essential forestry operations, including logging, chopping, chipping, storage, and parking of forestry plant and machinery, such as chippers. The proposed buildings and infrastructure are designed to support these activities efficiently, while maintaining a high standard of environmental and operational sustainability.
- 4.7 **Layout and Scale:** The replacement buildings will be in a similar location to the existing buildings on site.
- 4.8 **Landscaping:** All of the proposed site improvements have no direct tree impacts, the trees selected for removal are of poor or unsafe condition and not viable for retention.

- 4.9 New planting is proposed around the site and can easily be accommodated within the boundary. The proposed landscaping can be controlled via condition if required.
- 4.10 **Appearance:** The proposed buildings will match the character of the area in terms of architecture and design and has been positioned specifically to ensure there is minimal impact on the site and the surrounding area.
- 4.11 The replacement buildings will be smaller than what presently exists, ensuring that the appearance of the buildings in this location are reduced.
- 4.12 **Access & Parking:** The existing accesses on to Part Lane will continue to be used and no changes are proposed to the accesses.
- 4.13 Internal vehicular and pedestrian accesses are shown on the proposed site plan.
- 4.14 The proposed layout will provide two parking spaces for large vehicles and 14 regular car parking spaces.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 The relevant national and local policies are set out below.

National Policy

5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration to the application.

5.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should “promote an effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.

5.4 Paragraph 85 says 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 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.

5.5 Paragraph 131 identifies 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”, whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to “outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in

an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”

- 5.6 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that “well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use” (para 109).

Development Plan

- 5.7 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.8 The development plan comprises the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2023), and the partially revoked South East Plan (Policy NRM6 only).

Core Strategy (2010)

- 5.9 The relevant¹ policies are:
- **Policy CP1 (Sustainable development)** states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.
 - **Policy CP3 (General Principles for development)** says that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height,

¹ The relevant policies were identified by officers for planning application 231233.

materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

- **Policy CP4 (Infrastructure Requirements)** says that planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes are agreed.
- **Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand)** outlines seven aspects of planning schemes, relating to sustainable travel, that the council is supportive of.
- **Policy CP7 (Biodiversity)** says that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.
- **Policy CP8 (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area)** says that development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.
- **Policy CP9 (Scale and Location of Development Proposals)** says that the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.

- **Policy CP11 (Proposals outside development limits including countryside)** constrains development in the countryside and sets out criteria when its acceptable.

The exception criteria are:

- 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 (Employment Development)** says that provision will be made for a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of premises and sites in order to meet incubator/start up, move on, expansion and investment accommodation needs and having regard to the needs of specific sectors of the business community.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD)

5.10 The key² policies are:

- **Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)** 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.
- **Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping)** says development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved key criteria within scheme proposals.
- **Policy CC04 (Sustainable Design and Construction)** sets out criteria for development above 100 sqm. The policy says that all development, including conversions, alterations and extensions shall incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.
- **Policy CC05 (Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks)** says that local opportunities to contribute towards decentralised energy supply from renewable and low-carbon technologies will be encouraged.
- **Policy CC06 (Noise)** says that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive

² This is based on a review from the Officer report for planning application 231233. The list excludes Policy TB05 and TB06 as these relate to residential development.

receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts in line with Appendix 1 of the MDD. The Policy sets out requirements where there is an adverse effect (Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level to Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level).

- **Policy CC07 (Parking)** says that planning permission will only be granted where the proposal demonstrates how the proposed parking provision meets the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD and that that the new scheme retains an appropriate overall level of off-street parking.
- **Policy CC09 (Development and Flood Risk)** says that development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 must take into account the vulnerability of proposed development. The policy confirms that the sequential test is not required for minor development and conversions.
- **Policy CC10 (Sustainable Drainage)** states that all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner. This must be demonstrated through a Flood Risk Assessment or a Surface Water Drainage Strategy.
- **Policy TB04 (Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield)** says that development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of “Blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

- **Policy TB12 (Employment Skills Plan)** states that proposals for major development should be accompanied by an Employment and Skills plan to show how the proposal accords opportunities for training, apprenticeship or other vocational initiatives to develop local employability skills required by developers, contractors or end users of the proposal.
- **Policy TB20 (Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use)** says that planning permission will only be granted for commercial development proposals throughout the Borough that demonstrate:
 - a. There is no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses in terms of noise, fumes and disturbance
 - b. There is no significant impact on highway safety
 - c. There is no significant adverse visual impact
 - d. There is no significant adverse environmental impact
- **Policy TB21 (Landscape Character)** states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.
- **Policy TB25 (Archaeology)** says that where development is likely to affect an area of high archaeological potential or an area which is likely to contain archaeological remains, the presumption is that appropriate measures shall be taken to protect remains by preservation in situ. Where this is not practical, applicants shall provide for excavation, recording and archiving of the remains.

Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2023)

- **Policy M2 (Safeguarding sand and gravel resources)** says that non-minerals development in the Minerals Safeguarding Area may be permitted if it can be demonstrated through the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment, that the option of prior extraction has been fully considered as part of an application, and:
 - a. Prior extraction, where practical and environmentally feasible, is maximised, taking into account site constraints and phasing of development; or
 - b. It can be demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or
 - c. It would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location, with regard to other policies in the wider Local Plans.
- **Policy M4 (Locations for sand and gravel extraction)** sets out policies relating to the extraction of sand and gravel.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 5.11 Wokingham Borough Council has adopted additional planning guidance which are relevant matters in planning terms. Key documents include the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List, Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document and the Swallowfield Village Design Statement (2009).

Emerging Local Plan

- 5.12 Wokingham Borough Council submitted their emerging local plan to central Government on the 28th February 2025.
- 5.13 Given the status of the local plan **limited weight** is assigned to the document at this time. This proposal is assessed against the current development plan.

6. Policy Assessment

- 6.1 This section analyses the suitability of the redevelopment of the marina in the context of local and national planning policy.
- 6.2 **Principle of Development:** The Spatial Vision for Wokingham Borough which is contained within the Core Strategy recognises that activities related to forestry outside of the settlements help to support the rural economy.
- 6.3 Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that 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 unless they meet specific criteria. Those relevant to these proposals are set out below:

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

- 6.4 The proposals relate to the existing forestry business on site and therefore contributes to a sustainable rural enterprise. This was confirmed and formalised as part of application ref: 173339 and was tested at a Planning Appeal where the Planning Inspector said:

"...I do find the appellant's evidence to be quite compelling in this regard. In particular, it seems to me that the Council already acknowledged that the site was in forestry use by granting two prior approvals for forestry related buildings. Furthermore, the appellant has also provided some aerial photography which does appear to show forestry related activities occurring on site. Therefore, while it was clear from my visit that the site is not currently in use for any purpose, it does seem that the most recent lawful use of the site was for forestry... As such, I am satisfied that the proposal would conform with Part 1 of LP Policy CP11."

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

6.5 In Planning Appeal APP/X0360/W/24/3339803, the Inspector noted that there were limited views inside the site (Paragraph 11) but he highlighted the following concerns with the proposals. These were:

- The amount of hardstanding would be excessive and have an urbanising affect on the site (Paragraph 9).
- The presence of bunds would look highly incongruous and unnatural in the landscape (Paragraph 10).

6.6 The applicant has taken on board these comments and removed the bunds and reduced the gravel area by 20%. This eliminates conflict with LP Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, as well as Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, 2014 (the MDD).

6.7 In response to concerns, the applicant has reduced the impact of the proposal during successive applications.

- The replacement buildings will be situated in the same location as what currently exists on the site.
- Following the previous application, the overall hardstanding on the site has been significantly reduced to ensure that there is an appropriate level of development on the site whilst respecting the countryside location.

6.8 As per point 1 of the policy, the proposed development relates to a rural enterprise which is acceptable in a countryside location. it is therefore deemed appropriate in this regard.

1) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement;

- 6.9 The replacement buildings seek to improve the quality and efficiency of the buildings, ensuring that they can be utilised fully for the forestry use on site. The improvements in design and size of the buildings meet criterion 3 as set out above as it also enables the improvement of the site as a whole through its proper management.
- 6.10 Due to the nature of the business, this type of site is required for the parking of large vehicles and machinery. The location of the site adjacent to the settlement boundary is ideal in size and location in order to facilitate this type of business. This type of business could not be accommodated in a town centre location and due to the nature of the proposals would need to be accommodated in this type of countryside location.
- 6.11 It has therefore been demonstrated that the proposed redevelopment of the site is acceptable in principle, and it helps to contribute to a diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough.
- 6.12 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** There will be no impact on the countryside over what currently exists on the site. In any case, the redevelopment will actually improve the site's appearance in its surrounding context due to the reduction in the size of buildings and increased landscaping.
- 6.13 **Noise:** In line with Policy CC06 (Noise) an updated Acoustic Assessment has now been prepared and submitted alongside this application to demonstrate that the proposed development will not result in an adverse noise impact on adjoining residential properties.
- 6.14 The report confirms that a scheme of noise mitigation measures has been proposed that will ensure noise from the proposals achieves the requirements of Wokingham District Council and will not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby occupants.

- 6.15 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that development proposals should seek (inter alia) to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment; minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment; and avoid areas where pollution (including noise) may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers. Policy CC06 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts.
- 6.16 A sound level survey was carried out between the 31st January – 1st February 2023. Representative background sound levels were measured at LA90 43dB during operating times of the facility between 07:00 – 17:00 hours.
- 6.17 It has been demonstrated within the Acoustic Assessment that noise from the proposed industrial and commercial noise sources at the site will not be disturbing or detrimental to the amenity of any nearby residential occupants and complies with guidance within relevant British standards.
- 6.18 The proposed development is therefore deemed to be in accordance with local and national planning policy and is therefore appropriate for this location.
- 6.19 **Trees and Landscaping:** 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.
- 6.20 A Development Tree Report has been prepared and submitted alongside this application.

- 6.21 The only possible tree impact is towards T3 a small Ash by the entrance with advancing Ash Dieback infection. T4 is an early mature Field maple with old saw felling cuts in the main stem, rendering it unsafe. G11 is a small group of goat Willows starting to collapse and growing out of a dilapidated greenhouse.
- 6.22 The replacement of the green houses with new buildings, and alterations to the remaining site have no possible tree impacts.
- 6.23 All the proposed site improvements have no direct tree impacts, the trees selected for removal are of poor or unsafe condition and not viable for retention.
- 6.24 There is the potential for new planting and landscaping at the site and this improve the amenity of the site as well as lead to a net increase in tree numbers and species diversity.
- 6.25 The trees on the boundary of the site will be retained and a 2.0m high earth bund on the boundary will be grass seeded to further increase the level of screening around the site.
- 6.26 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with Policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan.
- 6.27 **Transport and Parking:** The proposed development is not expected to result in a material impact on the operation of the local highway network.
- 6.28 It is therefore considered that the proposals accord with Core Strategy Policy CP6 relating to transport and there are therefore no highway impact or road safety reasons why planning permission should be prevented or refused.

6.29 The previous application stated that two EV charging points are required on site, which, if required, can be secured via planning condition.

6.30 AWE Emergency Planning Zone: Policy TB04 of the MDD states that Development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of “Blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

6.31 The site is located within the 12km Major Nuclear Site Zone. As the application is not for a major hazard facility or residential development, the development is consistent with Policy TB04.

6.32 Minerals Safeguarding Area: Although the constraints map confirms that part of the Site is within a Minerals Safeguarding Area, it is not considered necessary to undertake a Minerals Resource Assessment in this instance. This is for the following reasons:

- Prior extraction is not appropriate in this case because the proposal concerns the refurbishment of an existing property.
- The site relates to a plot area of less than 3 ha and so is below this size threshold and therefore it is not considered commercially viable or suitable for prior extraction and removal.
- Previous applications didn’t require a Minerals Safeguarding Report.

6.33 **Flooding and Drainage:** In response to APP/X0360/W/24/3339803, the plans have been updated and an updated Flood Risk Assessment has been prepared. This document has been prepared by Geosmart and submitted alongside this application. Given that the site has an

established use for Forestry the sequential test and the exemption test are not required.

- 6.34 In line with Policy CC09, the updated FRA takes into account all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.
- 6.35 The updated FRA makes six recommendations, which will all be implemented by the applicant. A key aspect of the proposals is the desire for the measures to be agreed in perpetuity, and this can be controlled by the council, if required through the use of planning conditions.
- 6.36 A key change from the previous application is that Building B has been amended. Finished Floor Levels (FFL) of Building B will be set at least 0.9 m above surrounding ground levels and ground levels should aim to slope away from the buildings. Ground levels will also be designed to channel any overland flows from off-Site away from the development and Site drainage systems.
- 6.37 The Flood Risk Assessment meets the criteria of Policy CC09; Furthermore it is expected that the Environment Agency will be supportive of the revised plans.
- 6.38 To meet Policy CC10, which states that all development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development including taking into account climate change is managed in a sustainable manner, a Sustainable Drainage Strategy (SuDS) will be developed for the Site, for effective management of surface water runoff over the lifetime of the proposed development. If required this can be agreed by condition.

- 6.39 The updated Flood Risk Assessment therefore demonstrates the proposed development could be drained in a sustainable manner, commensurate with local and national policy.
- 6.40 **Ecology:** Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan states that planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they
- a) *Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing*
 - b) *Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation*
 - c) *Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.*
- 6.41 A Provisional Environmental Assessment, including a Phase 1 Bat Survey has been prepared and submitted with this application.
- 6.42 The site has no potential to support roosting bats and a Phase 2 bat survey is not recommended.
- 6.43 A Reptile Presence/Absence Survey has been undertaken. No reptiles or amphibians were found on site. Although Slow worms are absent, grass snakes are much more mobile and can disperse over wide areas, so given the proximity to a stream and adjacent farms which could support manure heaps in which they could breed, a precautionary approach should be taken during ground clearance, and if any snakes are found they should be relocated off site on the strip over the stream.

- 6.44 Finally, in respect of Biodiversity Net Gain, a report and metric has been produced by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy evidencing a 37.57% increase is possible.
- 6.45 The Planning Inspector confirmed that the would not adversely affect protected species and would enhance biodiversity. It would therefore conform with LP Policies CP3 and CP7, as well as MDD Policy TB23, the relevant aspects of which seek to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- 6.46 **Construction Environmental Management Plan:** If required the applicant can agree to a planning condition which requires the creation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan.
- 6.47 **Heritage:** The site lies approximately 245 metres south of Swallowfield Conservation Area, is of a similar distance away from Swallowfield Park that lies to the east. Given the separating distances and intervening development, the proposal would have no impact on the setting or views of the conservation area. Similarly, given the intervening landscape and development that exists between the site and Swallowfield Park it is not thought its setting or views from it would be harmed. It is however thought prudent should permission be granted to include a landscape/boundary treatment condition covering the roadside frontage to ensure it would be visually sympathetic to the area.
- 6.48 The Built Heritage Officer confirmed that there is no objection to the proposal from a heritage stance as part of the previous application.
- 6.49 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is acceptable in this regard.
- 6.50 **Special Protection Area:** The site is located approximately 2.1 km away from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA).

The forestry use and proposed development on site will have no effect on the SPA and as such no avoidance and mitigation measures are required.

- 6.51 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The forestry use is not CIL liable. The relevant forms have been completed and submitted with the application.

7. Conclusion

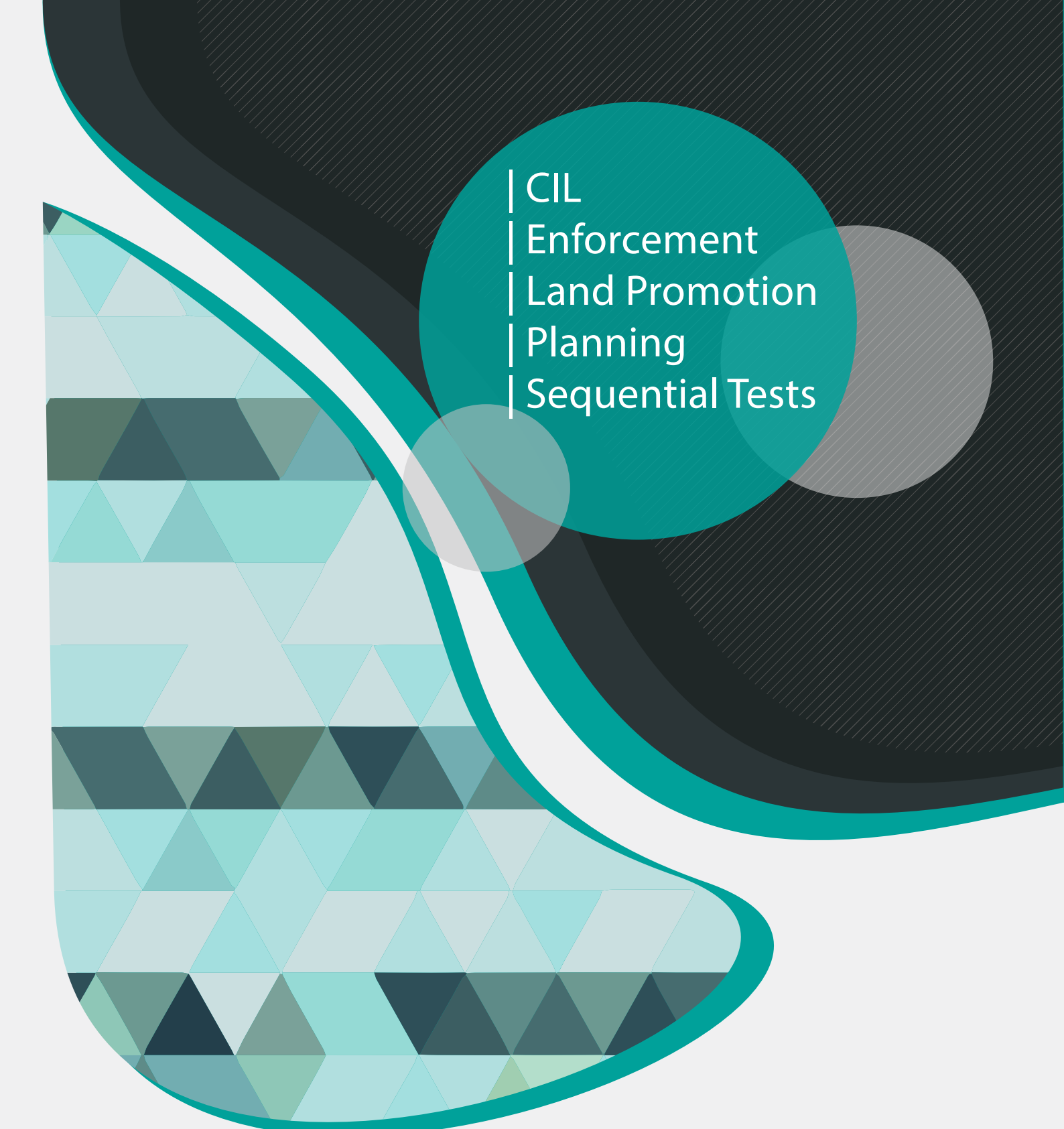
- 7.1 The updated proposals for the development at Robin Lodge align with the spatial vision and policies set out in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), and national planning policy.
- 7.2 The principle of development the site for forestry-related uses is appropriate and will support the rural economy, contributing to a diverse and sustainable business within the area.
- 7.3 Several changes have been made to the proposals to address issues regarding the character and appearance of the site. A new Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken, alongside adjustments to the development itself, to mitigate the potential impact of flooding.
- 7.4 Significant reductions in hardstanding and the removal of bunds have been incorporated to address the Planning Inspector's concerns, ensuring that the development will have minimal impact on the countryside and remain sensitive to its surroundings.
- 7.5 The updated Acoustic Assessment confirms that the development will not adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring properties. The proposed tree and landscaping plans will enhance green infrastructure, while the updated Flood Risk Assessment demonstrates that sustainable drainage measures will be in place, ensuring that the development does not exacerbate flood risks.
- 7.6 Overall, the development will make a positive contribution to the rural economy and is not expected to result in any harm to the environment or local community. Therefore, it is fully in accordance with relevant planning policies and is recommended for approval, subject to appropriate conditions.

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