

**Wyvols Court Farm,  
Swallowfield, Wokingham**

**Economic Assessment  
(including Employment & Skills  
Plan)**

On behalf of: Wyvols Court Farm Ltd

19 January 2026

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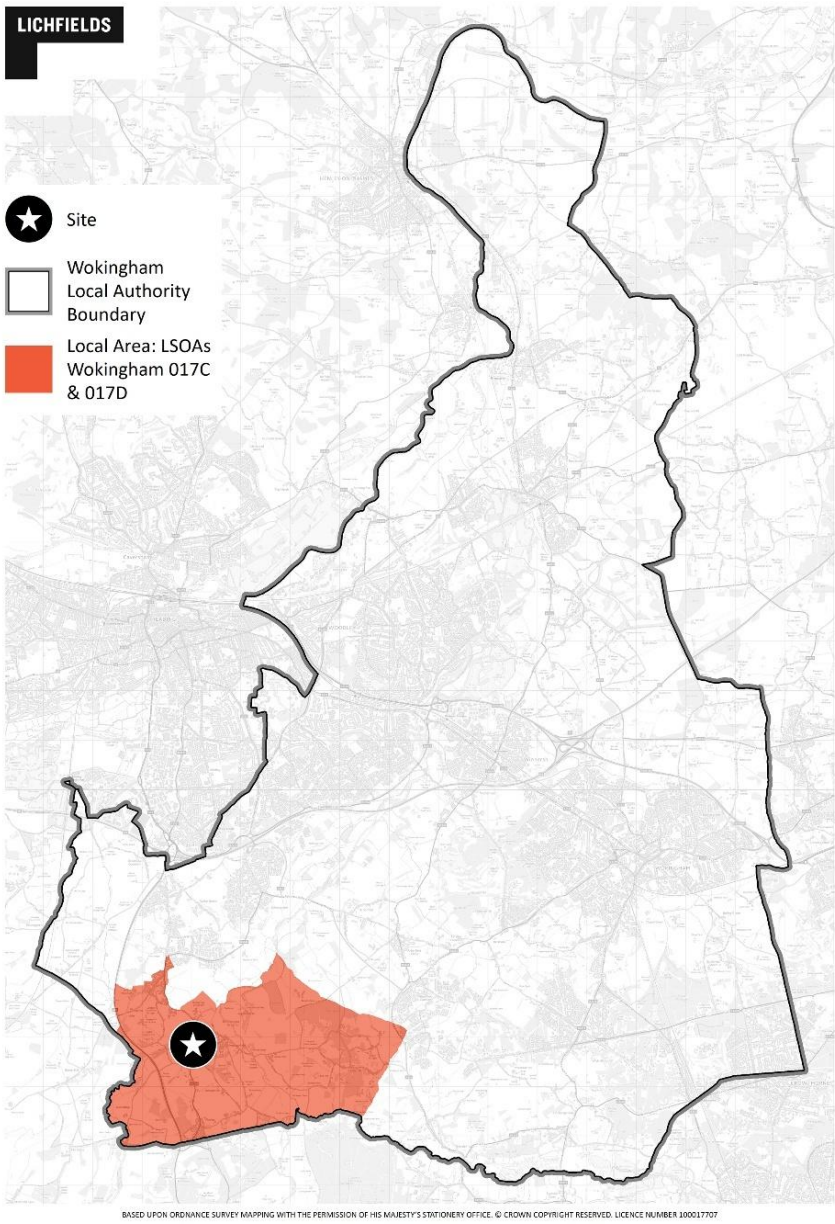
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## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 Wyvols Court Farm is an existing business location in Swallowfield, Wokingham, which is comprised of farming, niche forestry and commercial real estate enterprises. It is located on Basingstoke Road, (B3349) at the western edge of the settlement of Swallowfield and relates to a 67.69ha agricultural holding. The site is approximately six miles south of Reading and seven miles west of Wokingham.
- 1.2 Wyvols Court Farm is a diversified business operating mainly across three key sectors: commercial real estate, agriculture, and forestry. Currently at site there is approximately 30,000sqft (2,788sqm) of employment space, comprising former use classes B1(c) (light industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution), supporting approximately 120 jobs. Existing commercial functions are distributed among nine separate units which are all occupied and subject to long term lease agreements. As such, Wyvols Court Farm has successfully attracted and retained a wide range of occupiers.
- 1.3 The operator of Wyvols Court Farm has recently (2025) undertaken formal pre-application discussions with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) in respect of the development of three new commercial buildings, as an expansion to existing operations at the site (LPA Ref: 251002). The proposals subject to this planning application have sought to respond positively to the matters raised through this pre-application process, full details of which are set out in the supporting Planning Statement and the Design and Access Statement. An overarching aim of the current economic strategy for the Wokingham Borough Plan area is to direct the majority of employment development to Core Employment Areas, with more limited additional employment directed to small/scale rural based economic development.
- 1.4 Against this context, Lichfields has been instructed by Wyvols Court Farm to assess the case for the proposed development, having regard to:
- 1 The need for different types of new employment floorspace throughout Wokingham Borough, taking account of the overall level of need and the key economic sectors;
  - 2 The importance of ensuring a balance of employment growth across Wokingham Borough, with a focus on the Core Employment Areas but with delivery also in other areas, including rural communities; and,
  - 3 The economic impact of the proposed development and the extent to which this would contribute towards the sustainability of Swallowfield.
- 1.5 In accordance with the requirements of Policy TB12 of the Core Strategy and Policy ER4 of the emerging Local Plan Update, this report also includes an Employment and Skills Plan for the proposed development.
- 1.6 This assessment draws on a review of existing policy and evidence base reports, alongside a range of economic and property market data from the following sources:
- 1 Office for National Statistics (ONS);
  - 2 Valuation Office Agency (VOA); and,
  - 3 WBC Local Plan monitoring data and relevant emerging Local Plan evidence base documents.

- 1.7 Whilst the purpose of this study is to provide a long-term strategic perspective, it inevitably represents a point in time assessment. The work has incorporated the latest data, assumptions and available evidence at the time of preparation. It relies on existing published evidence and data sources, the accuracy of which has not been checked or verified by Lichfields.
- 1.8 By way of summary, the Economic Assessment found that:
- 1 The proposed development will play an important role in the supporting the economic strength of Wokingham both during construction and following completion. It will give rise to an increased local population and workforce, which will create local jobs and expenditure by the new workers will sustain existing and an increased range of new shops, services and facilities.
  - 2 The proposed development would offer sustainability and economic benefits to the local area, but without in any way harming that of other parts of the Borough, including the Core Employment Areas. On this basis, there is no evident economic or policy justification to withhold planning permission.
- 1.9 This report is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** summarises relevant planning and economic policies that relate to this assessment;
  - **Section 3** summarises relevant planning and economic evidence bases that relate to this assessment;
  - **Section 4** sets out the baseline socio-economic data for Swallowfield and the comparator areas. It also reviews the distribution of employment floorspace by type and unit size to show the current level of provision in Swallowfield relative to other parts of Wokingham Borough;
  - **Section 5** assesses the level of construction and operational employment, GVA and wage growth associated with the proposed development;
  - **Section 6** details the case for development at Wyvols Court Farm;
  - **Section 7** includes the Preparation of an Employment and Skills plan; and,
  - **Section 8** sets out the key conclusions of this assessment.
- 1.10 In this report, we have considered economic trends across the Wokingham administrative area and the area local to Wvols Court Farm which is defined as comprising of Lower Super Output Areas Wokingham 017C and 017D, as illustrated below.

Figure 1.1 Site context map



Source: Lichfields

## 2.0 Policy Context

- 2.1 This section summarises the relevant planning policy relating to economic growth – including in rural areas – and the provision of new employment floorspace.

### National policy

#### National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England, which underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.
- 2.3 Chapter 2, “Achieving sustainable development”, places an emphasis on the importance of promoting sustainable development. To achieve sustainable development, paragraph 8 states that the planning system has three overarching objectives which need to be pursued, including:
- “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 a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being.”*
- “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.”*
- 2.4 Chapter 6, “Building a strong, competitive economy”, states that economic growth should be given significant weight, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development (paragraph 85).
- 2.5 Chapter 6 also includes a section on “Supporting a prosperous rural economy”. Paragraph 88 states that
- “88. 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, new buildings;...*
- 2.6 Paragraph 89 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.” (Lichfields emphasis)*

- 2.7 In this context, the NPPF clearly recognises and supports the role that new development can play in rural areas to support local businesses and enhance the economy. It therefore does not seek solely to concentrate growth into urban areas or core employment zones, even though the importance of such locations is acknowledged.

## **Local policy**

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

- 2.8 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010 and covers the period to 2026. It is one of the oldest local plans in England and will soon be time expired.

- 2.9 Policy CP15 (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.*

*“Some scope for limited additional employment development may be identified in:*

- i) The Managing Development Delivery DPD;*
- ii) Within the Strategic Development Locations as detailed within the proposed SDL Masterplan SPDs (Policies CP18-21); or*
- iii) The retail centres defined in policy CP13 for office proposals.*

*“Any proposed changes of use from B1, B2 & B8 should not lead to an overall net loss of floorspace in B Use within the borough. 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.*

*“All proposals for employment development (including offices in line with Policies CP13 and CP14) will include mitigation commensurate with the impact of the development on the demand for housing, labour, skills, traffic and highways.”*

- 2.10 In addition to the above, the Core Strategy also includes Policy CP16 (Science Park) which is specific to the science park development South of the M4 in Shinfield.
- 2.11 Whilst Policy CP15 seeks to direct employment growth to the Core Employment Areas, it notes the importance of ensuring the provision for a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of premises. This would presumably include locations that are outside of the Core Employment Areas, rural parts of the Borough and the provision of small-scale employment units. Restricting employment development solely to the Core Employment Areas would be inconsistent with the aspiration of the policy to deliver a mix of employment spaces in different locations. It would also fail to accord with the (more recent) provisions of the NPPF in respect of rural employment developments, as detailed above.

### **Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan)**

- 2.12 The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) was adopted in February 2014 and adds extra policies to the adopted Core Strategy. Of relevance to the Proposed Development is Policy TB12 (Employment Skills Plan) which states:

*“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.”*

### **Emerging Local Plan**

- 2.13 Wokingham Borough Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan 2023-2040 to replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Document. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in February 2025<sup>1</sup> and the first hearing sessions (Stage 1) are scheduled to commence on 18 November 2025. The Local Development Scheme 2024-2027 (September 2024) anticipates that the new Local Plan will be adopted in May 2026, albeit that this may now slip given that the examination has not yet commenced.

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<sup>1</sup> [Examination](#)

## **Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan**

- 2.14 The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040<sup>2</sup> sets out the vision and objectives for development in Wokingham Borough. The policies set out below are of particular relevance to the proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm.
- 2.15 Draft Policy SS8 (Meeting employment needs) supports sustainable growth of offices and industrial spaces throughout Wokingham. It emphasises making better use of land by intensifying, redeveloping or upgrading current sites and buildings, noting that this will help meet future demand, respond to modern business needs and support the local economy.
- 2.16 While the policy seeks to concentrate future employment growth within the Core Employment Areas, it does recognise the role of other sites in promoting the local economy. To this end, Point 5 of draft Policy SS8 states that:
- “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”.*
- 2.17 Draft Policy ER2 (Employment uses outside Core Employment Areas) states the following regarding new employment floorspace:
- “1. Employment development proposals of less than 1,000m<sup>2</sup> gross internal area within a defined settlement but outside Core Employment Areas will be supported provided:*
- a) It is appropriate to the character of the area; and*
- b) It does not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residential uses, other employment uses and other uses, including impacts caused by traffic movements, noise, emissions, hours of operation, odour and lighting.*
- “2. Employment development proposals of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or greater gross internal area within a defined settlement but outside Core Employment Areas must demonstrate:*
- a) Compliance with a sequential approach to location that demonstrates there are no suitable and available opportunities within Core Employment Areas;*
- b) How it is appropriate in nature and scale to its location;*
- c) The number and type of jobs likely to be created, including how they are to be sourced; and*
- d) It does not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residential uses, other employment uses and other uses, including impacts caused by traffic movements, noise, emissions, hours of operation, odour and lighting.*
- 2.18 The supporting text recognises that the Borough’s economy benefits from small and medium sized employment sites. This approach is consistent with that of the NPPF and follows on with the aspiration of the adopted Core Strategy to provide a range of locations of premises.

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<sup>2</sup> [Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040 Proposed Submission Plan](#)

2.19 Paragraph 8.13 of the Proposed Submission Plan states that:

*“Proposals for new development may come forward on sites outside Core Employment Areas, that are not allocated for employment uses. Where a site is not already in employment use, an assessment will be made of the benefits arising from the proposal. Each case will need to be considered based on its merits and the local circumstances.”*

2.20 This report provides the evidence that is sought by this policy.

2.21 The Local Plan Update also includes the proposed Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) which states the following:

*“1. Development proposals that contribute towards supporting a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged.*

*“2. 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.*

*...”*

2.22 This policy further supports employment developments in rural parts of Wokingham, in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF.

2.23 Draft Policy ER4 (Employment and skills plans) states that

*“1. Development proposals for 10 or more dwellings or 1,000m<sup>2</sup> 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.*

*“2. Where it is demonstrated that an Employment and Skills Plan either cannot be implemented, or is inappropriate for the proposal, an in lieu financial contribution will be sought to fund relevant employment, skills and training initiatives elsewhere.”*

## 3.0 Wokingham Borough Council's Evidence Base

### Employment Land Needs Review (March 2023)

- 3.1 WBC commissioned Stantec to prepare an Employment Land Needs Review<sup>3</sup> (ELNR) as part of the evidence base to inform the Council's new Local Plan. This was published in March 2023 and combines *"the aggregate of light (Eg(iii) and general industrial (B2) plus logistics/distribution (B8) floorspace/land"* when assessing industrial throughout as they have similar characteristics such as location, floorspace, building layout and external areas.

#### Demand

- 3.2 Table 3.1 below shows the Annual Average number of transactions and total floorspace take up in Wokingham and how it varied across different areas of the Borough. The ELNR found that office demand in Wokingham was broadly similar to that of the wider Thames Valley area, albeit there was an emphasis on technology, media and telecommunications, professional services and pharmaceuticals. The Borough attracted lots of micro-businesses and SMEs because of the range of sizes and quality of office spaces in the Borough.

Table 3.1 Wokingham – gross annual office take-up 2017-2021

| Area of Wokingham              | No. of Transactions (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) | Total take-up sqm (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wokingham (overall)</b>     | <b>35</b>                                        | <b>15,435</b>                                  |
| Town Centre                    | 5                                                | 155                                            |
| Green Park (Wokingham Borough) | 1                                                | 460                                            |
| Thames Valley Park             | 1                                                | 2,187                                          |
| Winnersh Triangle              | 9                                                | 10,152                                         |
| Molly Millars                  | 6                                                | 1,621                                          |
| Whiteknights                   | 1                                                | 1,323                                          |
| Shinfield Studios              | n/a                                              | n/a                                            |
| Ruscombe Business Park         | 2                                                | 895                                            |
| Hogwood Ind. Est.              | 1                                                | 95                                             |

Source: Wokingham Borough – Employment Land Needs Review

- 3.3 The stakeholder workshop which was undertaken in order to inform the ELNR highlighted demand for industrial floorspace in the Borough but no specific sector was found to be driving demand for industrial space.

Table 3.2 Wokingham – gross annual industrial take-up 2017-2021

| Area of Wokingham          | No. of Transactions (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) | Total take-up sq m (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wokingham (overall)</b> | <b>27</b>                                        | <b>30,832</b>                                   |

<sup>3</sup> [Wokingham Employment Land Needs Review 2023](#)

| Area of Wokingham       | No. of Transactions (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) | Total take-up sq m (Annual Average 2017 – 2021) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Winnersh Triangle       | 3                                                | 10,873                                          |
| Molly Millars           | 10                                               | 5,449                                           |
| Sutton Industrial Area  | 5                                                | 6,876                                           |
| Toutley Industrial Area | 1<                                               | 54                                              |
| Hogwood Ind. Est.       | 1                                                | 377                                             |
| Headley Road East       | 4                                                | 1,910                                           |
| Ruscombe Business Park  | 2                                                | 701                                             |

Source: Wokingham Borough – Employment Land Needs Review

- 3.4 As demonstrated in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, the number of office transactions was greater than industrial transactions over the same period. However, as expected, the average size for industrial floorspace take up was greater than that for office floorspace take up (i.e. 1,142sqm for industrial take-up compared to 441sqm for office take-up). Winnersh Triangle had the greatest number of office transactions and the largest amount of office and industrial floorspace take up, highlighting its importance role in Wokingham's employment sector. Molly Millars had the greatest number of industrial transactions, and second greatest office transactions and industrial floorspace take up.

## Past trends

### Jobs

- 3.5 The ELNR assessed the job change from 2009 to 2019. The review found that there was an increase of 1,074 office jobs per annum (10,739 additional jobs in total across the study period) so office jobs reached 40,000 by 2019; this was 37% higher than the number of office jobs in 2009. The ELNR found that the sectors driving office job growth were predominantly professional services, computing & information services and administration/support services.
- 3.6 The ELNR also found that there was an increase of 259 industrial<sup>4</sup> jobs per annum (2,592 additional jobs across the study period), so industrial jobs reached c.12,000 by 2019; this was 28% higher than in 2009. The industrial job sectors driving employment growth were predominantly wholesale, land transport, storage & post, manufacturing and utilities.
- 3.7 In respect of both the overall number of jobs and the rate of change, the local economy in Wokingham is dominated by office-based activities. This reflects the character of the wider Thames Valley economy and the importance of Wokingham within that. However, industrial sectors do still play an important role in the local economy and should be encouraged as such.

### Floorspace

- 3.8 The ELNR assessed Council monitoring data in respect of the delivery of additional employment floorspace. Table 3.3<sup>5</sup> below shows the Council's completion monitoring data

<sup>4</sup> Industrial and warehouse

<sup>5</sup> Table 5.3 within the ELNR

in terms of annualised net change in floorspace (accounting as far as possible for losses as well as gains in employment floorspace<sup>6</sup>). This relates to the delivery of new employment floorspace and therefore differs to the data set out in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 above which represent transactions/floorspace transaction (regardless of whether a space is new or existing). The data reveals opposing trends for office and industrial floorspace, with a net loss of office floorspace since 2012/13, compared to a growth in industrial space over the same period. However, the trends were reversed over the longer term with a growth in office floorspace and decline in industrial floorspace between 2007/8 and 2021/22. We have not scrutinised the base data to verify its accuracy but this would suggest that there was a particularly high level of growth in office floorspace and a significant decline in industrial floorspace between 2007/8 and 2012/13.

Table 3.3 Wokingham Borough - floorspace change

| Floorspace net change per annum | Office sqm | Industrial sqm |
|---------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Recent 2017/18-2021/22          | -2,122     | 1,499          |
| Middle 2012/13-2016/17          | -2,792     | 730            |
| Longest 2007/08-2021/22         | 3,444      | -2,186         |

Source: WBC Authority Monitoring Report 2020/21 Table 8 plus unpublished data for 2021/22 – taken from Table 5.3 of the ELNR

- 3.9 This data was sense checked against Valuation Office Agency floorspace data by Stantec which showed a similar trend for office and industrial floorspace to the Council data.
- 3.10 The evidence from the ELNR that is set out above shows that that office jobs are increasing at faster rate than industrial jobs, even though office floorspace declining. This is likely to be caused – at least in part – by the increase in home/hybrid working which has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Future growth

- 3.11 The ELNR estimated the following net demand figures to meet job growth between 2022 and 2040 based on job change:
- 1 Office<sup>7</sup>: 14,731 sqm GIA/818sqm per annum; and,
  - 2 Industrial<sup>8</sup>: 22,255 sqm GIA/1,236sqm per annum – equivalent to 5.6ha at 40% plot ratio.
- 3.12 The gross demand for office and industrial floorspace (2022-2040) was found to be as follows:
- 1 Office: 30,761 sqm GIA – based on net demand of 14,731sqm GIA plus an allowance for 16,031sqm future loss of office floorspace (with planning permission); and,
  - 2 Industrial: 17,164 sqm GIA – based on the assumptions set out in paragraph 5.73 of the ELNR regarding industrial occupier demand running negative.
- 3.13 The ELNR identified the total supply of office and industrial floorspace as detailed below:

<sup>6</sup> The ELNR notes that employment losses are not always well recorded as they can occur outside of planning monitoring

<sup>7</sup> The Plan period forecast growth of 5,751 jobs that equates to 320 office jobs per annum.

<sup>8</sup> The Plan period forecast decline of 704 core industrial jobs but growth of 370 warehousing jobs

- 1 Office: 77,402<sup>9</sup> sqm – comprising of 37,402sqm with planning permission, 20,000sqm floorspace in Core Employment Area at Green Park and 20,000sqm on allocated land at Green Park expansion; and,
- 2 Industrial: 11,372<sup>10</sup> sqm – comprising of 5,365sqm with planning permission and 6,007sqm on allocated land at Aborfield Garrison.

3.14 Based on the assessment of the gross demand for office and industrial floorspace, less the identified supply, the ELNR identified the following balance of office and industrial floorspace between 2022 and 2040:

- 1 Office: 46,641 sqm GIA – over supply of 152% when assessed against gross need value of 30,761 sqm GIA; and,
- 2 Industrial: 5,792 sqm GIA – under-supply of 34% when assessed against gross need value of 17,164 sqm GIA.

3.15 We have not undertaken a review of the figures that formed part of the ELNR, or the methodology that informed the assessment. It should, however, be noted that the identified requirements contained in employment land reviews are typically set out as minimum rather than maximum figures, such that any exceedance of the identified level of employment land provision would not be seen as problematic, particularly if it would not affect the deliverability of allocated sites.

## Recommendations

3.16 The Review concludes with the following recommendations:

- 1 Allocating additional office space is unnecessary;
- 2 WBC should consider short term selective release of office space;
- 3 WBC should assess where for other policy reasons, alternative uses for office areas would be supported to help with any residual and persistent vacancy rate;
- 4 WBC has a need for industrial land of a minimum 18ha, but an aspiration for 53ha; and,
- 5 WBC should consider the needs of strategic logistics / distribution with FEMA partners.

3.17 Drawing on these recommendations, paragraph 4.19 of the Local Plan Update states that:

*“This [Table 3 within the LPU] shows that future office needs are anticipated to be met, because there is an oversupply of over 15,000m<sup>2</sup> of office floorspace when compared to identified needs. However, based only on completions and commitments data there is anticipated to be a shortfall in meeting future industrial need. Land is allocated for further employment uses, including industrial, to help meet this identified need.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Planning permissions total (37,402sq m) + Land within Core Employment Areas (20,000sq m) + Plan allocations (20,000sq m)

<sup>10</sup> Planning permissions total (5,365sq m) + Plan allocations (6,007sq m)

## Employment topic paper (September 2024)

- 3.18 In September 2024, Wokingham Borough Council published an Employment Topic Paper<sup>11</sup> which provided background information in respect of the economic strategy and policies in the Local Plan Update (LPU): Proposed Submission Plan (September 2024).
- 3.19 The Topic Paper assessed the loss of employment floorspace due to proposed allocation for alternative uses in the Local Plan Update. This calculated a loss of 41,292sqm of industrial floorspace and a loss of 8,500sqm of office floorspace.
- 3.20 However, when assessing the future employment needs found in the ELNR against completions, commitments and the floorspace losses and gains caused by land proposed for allocation in the Local Plan, the Topic Paper found that there was still a surplus of office and industrial floorspace. Table 3.4 below is taken from the Employment Topic Paper<sup>12</sup> which calculated a net supply of 67,439sqm for industrial floorspace and 37,813sqm for office floorspace.
- 3.21 As such, the 2022-2040 need/supply balance was +34,967sqm for industrial floorspace and +12,021sqm for office floorspace.

Table 3.4 Need and supply balance.

|   |                                                                                                          | Industrial (sqm) | Office (sqm)      |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| A | Identified needs (2022-2040)                                                                             | 73,756           | 30,761            |
| B | Completions (2022-2023)                                                                                  | 41,284           | 4,979             |
| C | Remaining needs (2023-2040) (A-B)                                                                        | 32,472           | 25,782            |
| D | Commitments at 31st March 2023                                                                           | 7,731            | 41,313            |
| E | Net needs 2023-2040 (Table 6 <sup>13</sup> )                                                             | 24,741           | 15,531 oversupply |
| F | Land allocated for employment uses<br>- Thames Valley Science and Innovation Park<br>- Hogwood Extension | 95,000<br>6,000  | 5,000             |
| G | Gross Supply (D+F)                                                                                       | 108,731          | 46,313            |
| H | Floorspace losses due to proposed allocation for alternative uses (Table 7 <sup>14</sup> )               | 41,292           | 8,500             |
| I | Net Supply (G-H)                                                                                         | 67,439           | 37,813            |
| J | <b>Need/Supply Balance (I-C)</b>                                                                         | <b>+34,967</b>   | <b>+12,031</b>    |

Source: Topic Paper: Employment (September 2024)

- 3.22 Additionally, for industrial land, when using the 0.4 plot ratio set out in the ELNR there is a surplus of 8.7 ha, greater than the identified need of 18 ha.
- 3.23 The Topic Paper concluded that the aspiration for 53ha of industrial land as identified in the ELNR<sup>15</sup> was inappropriate for several reasons:

<sup>11</sup> [Topic Paper: Employment](#)

<sup>12</sup> Table 8

<sup>13</sup> Table 6: Future Employment Needs within the Employment Topic Paper

<sup>14</sup> Table 7: Employment floorspace loss due to proposed allocation for alternative uses in the LPU within the Employment Topic Paper

<sup>15</sup> As referenced in paragraph 3.16(4) of this report

- 1 The ELNR identified that large-scale warehousing would require new land and joint working with neighbouring authorities; despite the Council's 2023 Duty to Cooperate efforts, no neighbouring authority could assist in meeting the 53ha employment land need.
- 2 Within the Borough, only a small number of sites have been promoted for employment use, with very limited deliverable options, highlighting a shortage of suitable land beyond existing Local Plan proposals.

3.24 The Topic Paper therefore concluded that:

*"the needs for industrial and office floorspace can be met within the plan period through completions, commitments and the expansion of existing Core Employment Areas. In addition, employment floorspace will be delivered through the intensification and regeneration of Core Employment Areas, and appropriate employment uses outside Core Employment Areas within settlements. Economic development proposals in the countryside will only be supported where the criteria set out in the Proposed Submission Plan are met."*

3.25 Critically in respect of the proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm, paragraph 4.12 of the Topic Paper stated that:

*"Outside Core Employment Areas, smaller scale economic development will be supported in other locations as set out in subsequent policies. This includes the flexible and sustainable growth of small businesses in appropriate locations."*

### **The Response to Inspectors' Initial Questions (ID1) (28 May 2025)**

3.26 Question 37 of the Response to the Inspectors' Initial Questions<sup>16</sup> asked the following:

*"Table 6 of the Employment Land Topic Paper (ED3) states that completions totalling 41,284 m2 took place during 2022-23, and that commitments for 7,731 m2 were extant at that time. Were those permissions / sites taken into account in the Employment Land Needs Review (ED2)?"*

3.27 The response explains that the 2022/23 completions and extant commitments were not considered in setting the recommended industrial need. It states that the ENLR:

*"recommended an industrial need for the period 2022-2040 of 12ha based on past floorspace change 2017/18-2021/22, plus an additional 6ha to reflect the stimulation of additional jobs as a result of Shinfield Studios. This 18ha is a gross need, incorporating a vacancy factor, but not the pipeline of industrial supply."*

3.28 It went on to state that the Topic Paper "in Table 6 sets out the net industrial need for the period 2023-2040 by deducting the completions that occurred in 2022/23 (Row B) and extant commitments (Row D) at 31 March 2023."

3.29 The Response confirmed that WBC is currently undertaking monitoring and will provide an updated employment land position up to 31 March 2025. The update was expected for July 2025 but this is not presently available on the WBC website.

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<sup>16</sup> [https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/\\_files/ugd/017f5b\\_edd7135802bb4fae9bd40aaa6ca10caf.pdf](https://www.localplanservices.co.uk/_files/ugd/017f5b_edd7135802bb4fae9bd40aaa6ca10caf.pdf)

## **Summary of evidence base:**

3.30 A summary of the above findings is as follows:

- 1 WBC will need to reflect the supply/demand balance in new allocations, ensure infrastructure delivery aligns with employment site delivery, and monitor market change.
- 2 Although employment growth in office-based sectors is projected to exceed that of industrial activities, WBC's comparative need favours industrial floorspace over office space as the industrial supply is less than the demand, representing a shortfall.
- 3 Existing office stock should be carefully managed.
- 4 Employment targets tend to be set out as "floors" rather than "ceilings" such that any provision over and above the identified level should be supported, so long as it would not have an adverse impact on the delivery of allocated sites.
- 5 There is a need to deliver a range and choice of floorspace in order to maximise the potential economic benefits. That should include the provision of light industrial and smaller office premises; such uses that would tend not to be well suited to Core Employment Areas but that could deliver substantial economic benefits in rural parts of the Borough.
- 6 The majority of provision will be in Core Employment Areas, but policy also recognises the need for and benefits of employment provision elsewhere in the Borough, including in rural areas, so long as it is appropriate in scale etc.
- 7 Such an approach is critical to ensuring the long-term economic well-being of the Borough and the distribution of growth amongst all communities.

## 4.0 Baseline data

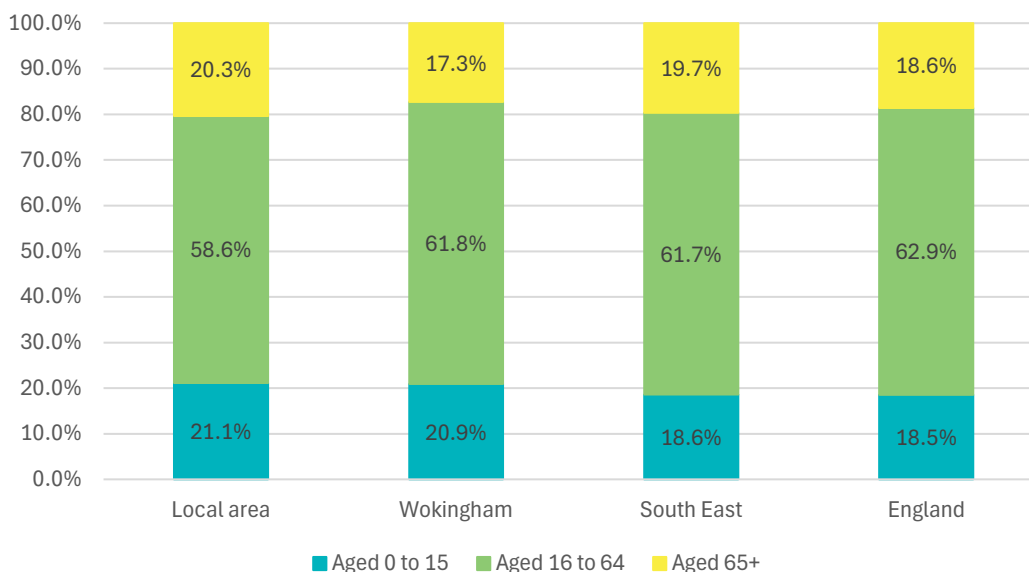
4.1 This section considers the demographic economic context of the local area in order to provide a baseline against which to consider the case for the proposed development of three industrial units at Wyvols Court Farm in Swallowfield.

### Demographic

4.2 According to the 2022 population estimates<sup>17</sup>, the resident population of the local impact area<sup>18</sup> amounted to 3,556 which is 2.0% of the population of Wokingham Borough. This represented an increase of 19.2% (an additional 573 people) since 2011. By way of comparison, the population of Wokingham Borough increased by 17.0% over the same period, while that of the South East and England grew by 8.6% and 7.6% respectively.

4.3 As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the demographic profile of the local area differs to that of the other spatial areas that we have reviewed, with a greater proportion of both children and older people. The implication of this is that the dependency ratio (i.e. the ratio of children and older people to the number of people of core working age) will be higher locally than in the other areas.

Figure 4.1 Age structure 2022



Source: ONS Population estimates

4.4 Looking forwards, the 2022-based Sub National Population Projections anticipate a 12.2% increase in the total population of Wokingham Borough between 2022 and 2032<sup>19</sup>. Over this period, there is projected to be a 14.5% projected increase in the number of people of core working age and a 22.5% increase in the number of people over the age of 65. Over longer term to 2040, the population of Wokingham Borough is projected to increase by

<sup>17</sup> Whilst 2024-based population estimates are available for local authorities, the most up-to-date small area (i.e. sub-district) population estimates use 2022 data. For consistency, this information has been applied for each geographical area considered.

<sup>18</sup> LSOA Wokingham 017C and 017D

<sup>19</sup> Note that the population projections are not available at sub-district level

18.4% with a 20.1% increase in the number of core-working aged people, and a 38.1% increase in the elderly population.

- 4.5 As shown in Table 4.1, the rate of growth in Wokingham Borough is expected to exceed the rate of growth in the South East (6.4% and 10.1%) and England (7.8% and 11.6%). The rate of change in terms of the working population is greater in Wokingham (14.5% and 20.1%) compared to the South East (5.6% and 8.2%) and England (7.9% and 10.7%) over the same periods. In terms of the older population, the growth expected between 2022 to 2032 in Wokingham is slightly higher than in the South East (21.7%) and England (20.9%). However, when comparing the growth from 2022 to 2040, Wokingham (38.1%) exceeds the South East (34.6%) and England (32.8%) by a more significant margin.

Table 4.1 Projected population change by cohort

|                         | Wokingham |         | South East |         | England |         |
|-------------------------|-----------|---------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
|                         | 2022-32   | 2022-40 | 2022-32    | 2022-40 | 2022-32 | 2022-40 |
| Total population change | 12.2%     | 18.4%   | 6.4%       | 10.1%   | 7.8%    | 11.6%   |
| 16-64 population change | 14.5%     | 20.1%   | 5.6%       | 8.2%    | 7.9%    | 10.7%   |
| 65+ population change   | 22.5%     | 38.1%   | 21.7%      | 34.6%   | 20.9%   | 32.8%   |

Source: 2022 SNP

## Economic activity and unemployment

- 4.6 The economic activity level amongst residents of Wokingham Borough<sup>20</sup> aged between 16 and 64 was 83.5% between April 2024 to March 2025. This compares with a rate of 81.1% in the South East and 78.8% in England over the same period. The economic activity level amongst residents of Wokingham aged 16+ was 68.2% over the same period. This is higher than the regional (65.1%) and national comparators (63.7%).
- 4.7 Of the economically inactive population (aged 16-64), there was a lower proportion of (working age) people that are retired in Wokingham (16.5%) than in the South East (18.9%) and England (21.2%).
- 4.8 The unemployment rate for those aged 16 to 64 in Wokingham averaged 3.1% over the period from April 2024 to March 2025. This equates to 2,700 people and is lower than the rate for the South East (3.3%) and England (4.0%).

## Occupational profile

- 4.9 Table 4.2 indicates the breakdown of occupations within Wokingham in the 12 months to March 2025. It should be noted that this information is not available at a sub-district level.

Table 4.2 Occupational structure within Wokingham

| Occupation category (SOC2010)                  | % total employment | Change 2011-2025 | % change 2011-25 |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Managers, directors and senior officials       | 15.2%              | 1,200            | 10.1%            |
| Professional occupations                       | 37.2%              | 11,000           | 51.9%            |
| Associate professional & technical occupations | 18.1%              | 700              | 4.7%             |

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that this information is not available at a sub-district level.

| Occupation category (SOC2010)                 | % total employment | Change 2011-2025 | % change 2011-25 |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Administrative and secretarial occupations    | 8.7%               | -1,100           | -12.6%           |
| Skilled trades occupations                    | 5.3%               | -2,900           | -38.7%           |
| Caring, leisure and other service occupations | 5.0%               | -1,200           | -21.8%           |
| Sales and customer service occupations        | 3.3%               | -2,800           | -49.1%           |
| Process, plant and machine operatives         | 3.4%               | 800              | 38.1%            |
| Elementary occupations                        | 3.5%               | -1,700           | -36.2%           |

Source: Annual population survey (April 2024 to March 2025)

- 4.10 The professional occupation is the most significant occupation sector in Wokingham, accounting for 37.2% of employment in 2025. The sector also accounted for the greatest absolute and relative increase in employment between 2011 and 2025 (+11,000 jobs/+51.9%). Other sectors which have experienced growth include managers, directors and senior officials (+1,200/ 10.1%); process, plant and machine operatives (+800 jobs/ 38.1%); and associate professional occupations (+700 jobs/ 4.7%).
- 4.11 Skilled trades occupations had the greatest absolute decline in jobs (-2,900 jobs/ -38.7%) and sales and customer service occupations had the greatest relative decline (-2,800 jobs/ -49.1%). Other sectors which experienced a decline include administrative and secretarial occupations (-1,100 jobs/ -12.6%); caring, leisure and other service occupations (-1,200 jobs/ -21.8%); and elementary occupations (-1,700 jobs/ -36.2%).

## Employment trends

- 4.12 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES) 2023 data indicates that there were 1,210 employment jobs in the local area. This is equivalent to 1.3% of the employment in Wokingham Borough over the same period (92,070 employment). This is lower than the local share of population, suggesting that a disproportionately low number of working residents remain in the area to work. There would be merit in the provision of additional employment in the local area to secure a better balance such that it would serve less of a “dormitory” function in economic terms.
- 4.13 BRES data can be used to show employment over time and by broader sector. A review of this data identifies the following key sectors in employment terms in the local area:
- 1 Wholesale/retailing increased by 195 jobs /16.1% compared to 15.1% in Wokingham, 14.9% in the South East and 13.7% in England;
  - 2 Human health and social work activities increased by 150 jobs/ 12.4%, compared to 8.6% in Wokingham, 13.8% in the South East, and 13.3% in England; and,
  - 3 Administrative and support service activities increased by 125 jobs/ 10.3% compared to 8.6% in Wokingham, 7.9% in the South East and 8.8% in England.

Table 4.3 Employment by sector in the local area, Wokingham, South East and England in 2023

| Sector                            | No. jobs in local area | % total jobs in: |           |            |         |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|---------|
|                                   |                        | Local area       | Wokingham | South East | England |
| Agriculture, forestry and fishing | 0                      | 0.0%             | 0.6%      | 1.2%       | 1.2%    |

| Sector                                                               | No. jobs in local area | % total jobs in: |           |            |         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------|-----------|------------|---------|
|                                                                      |                        | Local area       | Wokingham | South East | England |
| Mining and quarrying                                                 | 0                      | 0.0%             | 0.0%      | 0.0%       | 0.1%    |
| Manufacturing                                                        | 100                    | 8.3%             | 4.8%      | 6.0%       | 7.3%    |
| Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply                  | 0                      | 0.0%             | 0.5%      | 0.3%       | 0.3%    |
| Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities  | 20                     | 1.7%             | 1.1%      | 0.8%       | 0.7%    |
| Construction                                                         | 80                     | 6.6%             | 3.2%      | 5.0%       | 4.8%    |
| Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles | 195                    | 16.1%            | 15.1%     | 14.9%      | 13.7%   |
| Transportation and storage                                           | 45                     | 3.7%             | 1.3%      | 4.6%       | 5.1%    |
| Accommodation and food service activities                            | 75                     | 6.2%             | 6.5%      | 8.6%       | 7.8%    |
| Information and communication                                        | 115                    | 9.5%             | 14.0%     | 5.4%       | 4.7%    |
| Financial and insurance activities                                   | 10                     | 0.8%             | 1.1%      | 2.6%       | 3.4%    |
| Real estate activities                                               | 35                     | 2.9%             | 1.1%      | 1.8%       | 2.1%    |
| Professional, scientific and technical activities                    | 115                    | 9.5%             | 14.0%     | 9.0%       | 9.7%    |
| Administrative and support service activities                        | 125                    | 10.3%            | 8.6%      | 7.9%       | 8.8%    |
| Public administration and defence; compulsory social security        | 0                      | 0.0%             | 1.6%      | 3.4%       | 4.2%    |
| Education                                                            | 100                    | 8.3%             | 11.8%     | 9.6%       | 8.3%    |
| Human health and social work activities                              | 150                    | 12.4%            | 8.6%      | 13.8%      | 13.3%   |
| Arts, entertainment and recreation                                   | 10                     | 0.8%             | 2.4%      | 3.0%       | 2.6%    |
| Other service activities                                             | 35                     | 2.9%             | 2.7%      | 2.2%       | 2.0%    |

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey 2024

4.14 Further analysis shows that the fastest growing sectors (in relative terms) in the local area between 2015 and 2023 included:

- 1 Manufacturing (65 jobs/ 185.7%);
- 2 Education (20 jobs/ 25.0%);
- 3 Professional, scientific and technical activities (15 jobs/ 15.0%);
- 4 Financial and insurance activities (10 jobs/ An increase from 0 to 10 jobs represents the introduction of new employment where none previously existed); and,
- 5 Arts, entertainment and recreation (10 jobs/ An increase from 0 to 10 jobs represents the introduction of new employment where none previously existed).

- 4.15 These sectors collectively accounted for an additional 120 jobs in the local area between 2015 and 2023.
- 4.16 By contrast, there was a significant contraction in employment levels within the other service activities (-53.3%), information and communication (-53.1%), water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (-50.0%), administrative and support service activities (-43.2%), accommodation and food service activities (-31.8%) and real estate activities (-30.0%). These sectors collectively experienced a loss of 335 jobs over the same period.
- 4.17 Wokingham had growth in the same sectors as the local area over the same period (manufacturing 28.6%, finance and insurance 25.0%, professional, scientific and technical activities 18.2%, education 10%, and arts and entertainment 12.5%). The South East had growth in the arts and entertainment sector (27.6%), and small increases in the professional, scientific and technical activities (4.7%), and manufacturing (2.7%). However, the financial and insurance (-3.3%), and education (-0.7%) sectors saw a decrease over the same period. In terms of England, the professional, scientific and technical activities (20.0%), and arts, entertainment and recreation (17.8%) saw good growth, while the financial and insurance (4.9%), and education (2.2%) sectors saw smaller levels of growth. Manufacturing saw a small decline (-0.2%) over the same period.

## **Business premises**

### **Offices**

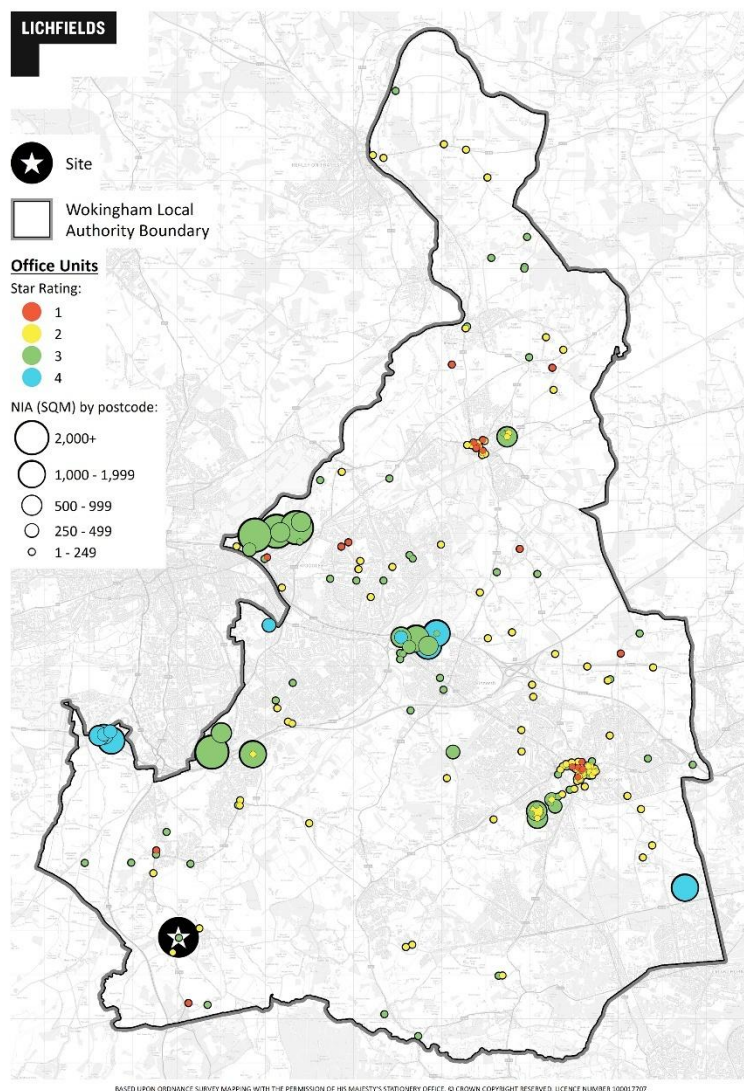
- 4.18 According to a review of the Co-Star property database (2025), there are 354 office premises in Wokingham Borough, which occupy a total of 47,026 sqm of floorspace (net internal area) – an average of 133sqm. RG7 1 was used to represent the local area instead of LSOAs 017C and 017D because of data availability. Of this total, 22 office premises (6.2%) in total are situated in the RG7 1 postcode area; these occupy a total of 949 sqm (2.0% of the total office floorspace in Wokingham) – an average of 43sqm, highlighting a lack of office facilities in the RG7 1 area. Figure 4.2 shows the existing office premises in Wokingham, and it clearly illustrates a lack of office provision in the Swallowfield area as only three small units are shown within the settlement. These units equal a total floorspace of 73 sqm, showing that office premises in the Swallowfield area are small scale – equivalent to 7.9% of office floorspace in the RG7 1 area and 0.15% of total office space in Wokingham Borough.
- 4.19 The average age of office premises in the local area is significantly less than that of the overall office stock in Wokingham Borough. 61.% of office premises in the local area are aged from 2000 and newer, in comparison to 23.9% in the overall Borough. Also, the average star rating of local office accommodation is lower than Wokingham overall. There are no four-star office spaces in RG7 1 but 6% of Wokingham's office are rated four stars. The four-star office spaces are concentrated in Winnersh, Shinfield, the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus and South East of the Borough.
- 4.20 It is noted that the quantum of vacant floorspace<sup>21</sup> in the local area is much lower than the average for Wokingham Borough as a whole. There is currently 12,951 sqm of available

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<sup>21</sup> Co-Star availability data has been used as a proxy for vacancy

office space in Wokingham Borough – 27.5% of total floorspace. This compares to 108 sqm of available floorspace in the local area – 11.4% of total space – which could point towards a possible under-supply of office space in the local area.

Figure 4.2 Size, quality and amount of office space



Source: Co-Star 2025/Lichfields analysis

- 4.21 As shown above, there is a particularly low level of office provision in Swallowfield and in the surrounding area.

## Industrial

- 4.22 According to a review of the Co-Star property database (2025), there are 242 industrial premises<sup>22</sup> in Wokingham Borough, which occupy a total of 47,521 sqm of floorspace (net internal area) – an average of 196sqm. Of this total, 38 industrial premises (15.7%) in total are situated in the RG7 1 postcode area; these occupy a total of 2,159 sqm (4.5% of the total office floorspace in Wokingham). As such, the average size is approximately 57 sqm which

<sup>22</sup> Light industrial and industrial combined

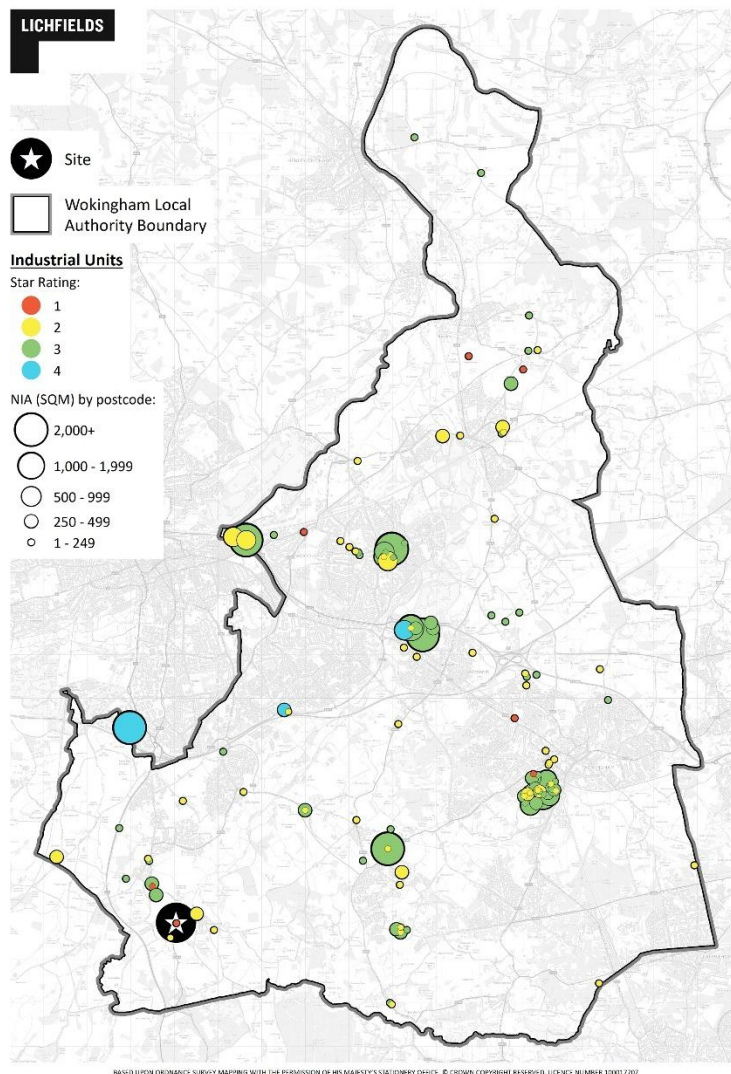
shows that office floorspace in the RG7 1 area are very small-scale units. Those industrial units in the Swallowfield area total 410sqm and are of a comparable (small) size, averaging 46sqm.

- 4.23 Figure 4.3 shows the existing industrial units in Wokingham Borough. As with Figure 4.2, this reveals a very limited supply of facilities in the Swallowfield area, albeit that there is a slightly higher provision of industrial space than office units in the Swallowfield area, with the local provision being concentrated in the nearby Lambs Farm Business Park. The units within the Swallowfield area make up 19.0% of industrial floorspace in the RG7 1 area – i.e. 0.9% of industrial floorspace in Wokingham Borough.
- 4.24 The average age of industrial premises in the local area is older than that of the overall industrial stock in Wokingham Borough. 27.4% of industrial stock in Wokingham Borough is aged from 2000 and newer, in comparison to just 13.2% in the local area. Similarly to office spaces, the average star rating of local industrial accommodation is lower than Wokingham overall. There are no four-star industrial spaces in RG7 1 but 2% of Wokingham's office are rated four stars. All the industrial units in Swallowfield have a Co-Star rating of 2.
- 4.25 It is noted that the quantum of vacant floorspace<sup>23</sup> in the local area is slightly lower than the average for Wokingham Borough as a whole. There is currently 4,641sqm of available office space in Wokingham Borough – 9.8% of total floorspace. This compares to 158 sqm of available floorspace in the RG71 area – 7.3% of total space – which could point towards a possible slight under-supply of office space in RG71. Only two units in the RG7 1 area have available floorspace and they are both located on Basingstoke Road. As such, there is no available industrial floorspace located in the immediate Swallowfield area.

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<sup>23</sup> Costar availability data has been used as a proxy for vacancy

Figure 4.3 Size, quality and amount of industrial space



Source: Costar 2025/Lichfields analysis

- 4.26 As shown above, there is a greater provision of industrial units in the local area. However, there is still a relatively limited provision in the immediate vicinity of Swallowfield.

## Deprivation

- 4.27 Deprivation at the local level is measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (2019) which uses a series of data to rank across seven domains ranging from income to health. Together, these categories produce a multiple deprivation score for each local area.
- 4.28 In overall terms, Wokingham ranks 316<sup>th</sup> out of 317, local authorities in England in the IMD, indicating that the Borough almost the least deprived local authority in the country<sup>24</sup>.
- 4.29 Across the seven domains that are considered by the IMD:

<sup>24</sup> MCHLG Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019)

- 1 Wokingham performs similarly in respect of income (ranked 315), employment (ranked 315), health and disability (ranked 315), being within the 1% least deprived LSOAs in respect of each of these.
- 2 Wokingham performs similarly in respect of education (ranked 311), crime (ranked 301), and living environments (ranked 309), being within the 5% least deprived LSOAs in respect of each of these.
- 3 However, Wokingham performs worst in terms of barriers to housing for which is ranks 133 out of the 317 local authorities in England. This places it in the 50% most deprived authorities in the Country in relation to this domain.

4.30

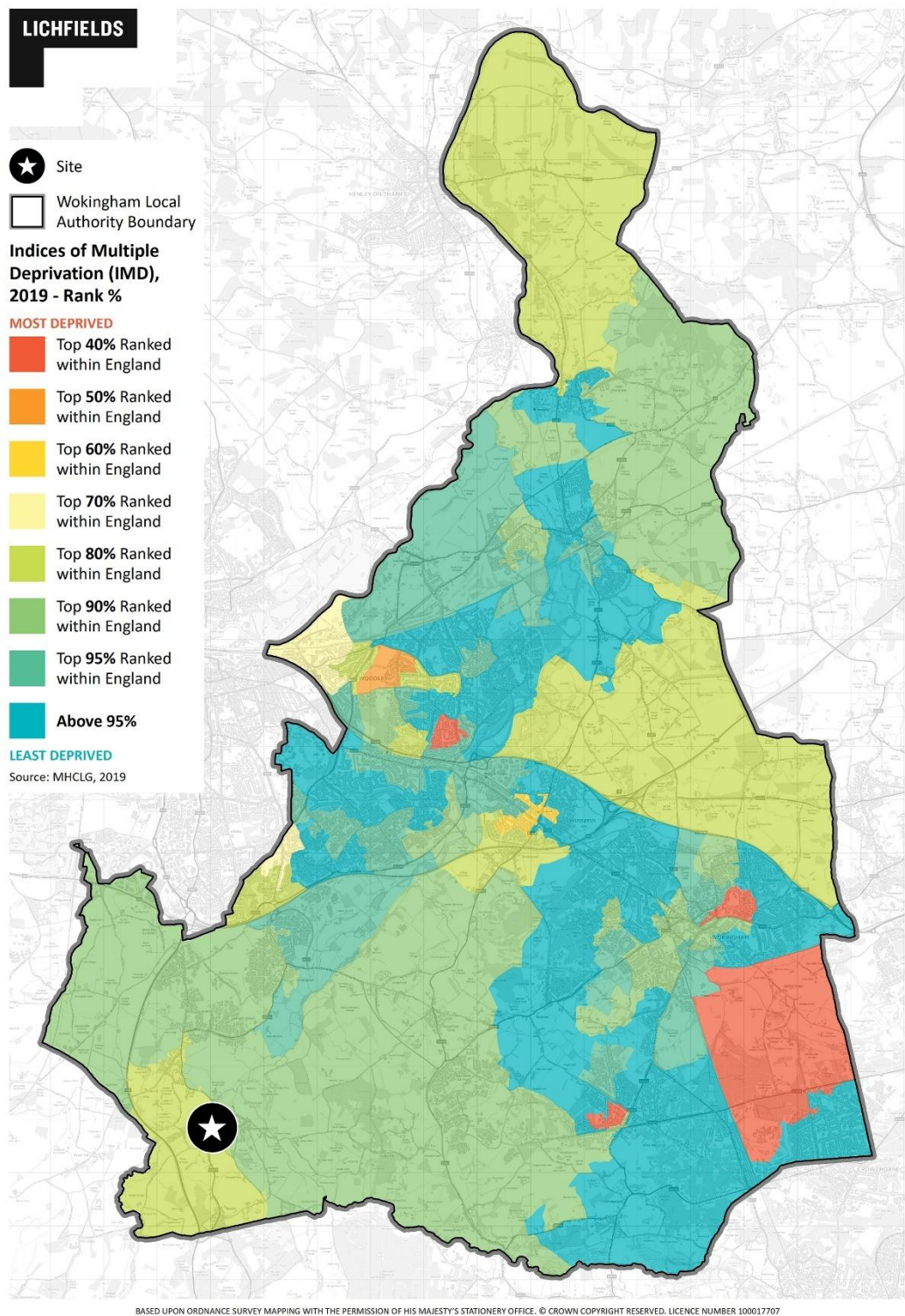
At a local level, the site sits within Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) Wokingham 017C and 017D. as shown in table 4.3, LSOA 017C is within the 30% least deprived and LSOA 017D is within the least 20% least deprived. As illustrated below, they perform worst in respect of barriers to housing (20% most deprived) and best in terms of health and disability (5% least deprived). As such, when viewed nationally both LSOAs perform well, but when considered in the context of Wokingham, the local area is seen to perform less well. The proposed development is likely to improve the rankings for the income and employment domains, with knock on effects to the other domains.

Table 4.4 IMD 2019 Domain Ranges

|                              | Wokingham |                   | LSOA 017C |                    | LSOA 017D |                    |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
|                              | Rank      | Decile            | Rank      | Decile             | Rank      | Decile             |
| Overall IMD                  | 316       | 1% least deprived | 24906     | 30% least deprived | 28661     | 20% least deprived |
| Income                       | 315       | 1% least deprived | 21754     | 40% least deprived | 26201     | 30% least deprived |
| Employment                   | 315       | 1% least deprived | 30243     | 10% least deprived | 30887     | 10% least deprived |
| Education                    | 311       | 2% least deprived | 23671     | 30% least deprived | 28449     | 20% least deprived |
| Health and disability        | 315       | 1% least deprived | 31556     | 5% least deprived  | 31320     | 5% least deprived  |
| Crime                        | 301       | 5% least deprived | 23952     | 30% least deprived | 25303     | 30% least deprived |
| Barriers to housing services | 133       | 50% most deprived | 5384      | 20% most deprived  | 5938      | 20% most deprived  |
| Living environments          | 309       | 3% least deprived | 15028     | 50% most deprived  | 25175     | 30% least deprived |

Source: Lichfields analysis of IMD 2019 data

Figure 4.4 Index of Multiple Deprivation for the site location



Source: Ministry for Housing, Communities and Government

## Summary

4.31

Our assessment above concludes that:

- 1 Paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF support employment development in the rural economy.
- 2 The Local Plan Update includes draft Policy SS8 (Meeting employment needs), draft Policy ER2 (Employment uses outside Core Employment Areas) and draft Policy ER3 (Supporting the rural economy) which all support employment in rural areas.
- 3 The ELNR data found that since 2012/13, office floorspace has decreased while industrial floorspace has increased, but over the longer period from 2007/08 to 2021/22, the opposite occurred — office space grew while industrial space declined.
- 4 The ELNR found that there is enough office floorspace in Wokingham but there is a deficit of industrial floorspace in the Borough.
- 5 The local area has a higher proportion of people aged 65 and over (20.3%) in comparison to Wokingham (17.3%), the South East (19.7%) and England (18.6%).
- 6 The local area has an older population in comparison to the comparator areas. Against this context, the proposal will help to strengthen the local economy by ensuring that there are enough employment opportunities to sustain services and infrastructure.
- 7 The population predictions show that Wokingham is expected to have an aging population so the creation of additional jobs may help to attract younger/new workers to the area, balancing the age structure.
- 8 Employment in the local area is equivalent to 1.3% of the employment in Wokingham so the proposal would increase employment in the local area.
- 9 Swallowfield contains a very low proportion of the office and industrial premises/ floorspace in respect of the wider Borough. Accordingly, there is currently a lack of employment provisions in Swallowfield.
- 10 Wokingham Borough is one of the least deprived local authority area in the country. The local area performs well in respect of low levels of deprivation. However, the local area's performance could be improved when in comparison to the wider Borough.

## 5.0 The economic impacts of the proposed development

5.1 This section assesses the level of construction and operational employment and GVA associated with the proposed development and determines these impacts locally and upon Wokingham.

### Construction impacts

5.2 Based on a review of BCIS data for Berkshire (September 2025 data), the total construction cost of the Proposed Development is estimated to be approximately £2.96 million.

### Direct Employment

5.3 Labour coefficients from the HCA Calculating Cost per Job Best Practice Note (2015) assume that 16.6 direct FTE construction jobs will be created for every £1 million investment in residential development (2011 prices). Using this data, it is estimated that the construction of the Proposed Development will support 34 FTE person-years of construction employment during the estimated one-year build period.

Table 5.1 Assessment of construction employment

| a                       | b                                          | c                                                   | d                    | e                    | f                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 2025 construction value | 2011 deflated construction value           | Direct FTE jobs per £1m investment pa (2011 prices) | Total jobs created   | Build period (years) | No. direct FTE jobs pa |
|                         | a x deflation ratio <sup>25</sup> (0.6885) |                                                     | (b ÷ £1,000,000) x c |                      | d ÷ e                  |
| £2,960,856              | £2,038,566                                 | 16.6                                                | 34                   | 1                    | 34                     |

Source: HCA Calculating Cost per Job Best Practice Note (2015) / Lichfields analysis Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding

5.4 Although national and regional construction firms often use their own labour on schemes, a share of the contractors is usually drawn locally. However, it is difficult to estimate the likely source of labour to fill these jobs before contracts have been let. Based on past experience, it is reasonable to expect a proportion of the remaining construction jobs will be taken up by local workers, particularly if measures are put in place to increase local skill levels and promote local recruitment (e.g. local trainee / apprenticeship schemes).

5.5 In the event that all construction jobs were filled by people in the local authority area, it would represent a 0.45% increase in employment within the skilled trade sector in Wokingham Borough<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Sources: Calendar years 1955 to 2022 taken from ONS series MNF2 in data tables: Table O For years 2023-24 to 2027-28 (2023 to 2027): taken from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) GDP deflator forecasts as of March 2023 Economy Supplementary tables.

<sup>26</sup> 34 as a percentage of 7,500 jobs (Annual population survey 12 months to March 2025)

## Indirect and Induced Employment

- 5.6 It is likely that businesses in the local area and the wider regional economy will benefit from the trade linkages that will be established to construct the proposed development through the supply chain. This means that further indirect jobs will be supported locally in suppliers of construction materials and equipment. Local businesses would generally also benefit to some extent from temporary increases in expenditure as a result of the direct and indirect employment effects of the construction phase, for example, as construction workers spend their wages in local shops and other facilities. This is known as the induced impact.
- 5.7 The relationship between the initial direct spending and total economic effects is known as the ‘multiplier effect’, which demonstrates that an initial investment can have much greater indirect effects as this spending is diffused through the economy. The construction sector is recognised to be a part of the UK economy where there is a particularly large domestic benefit in the supply chain.
- 5.8 In this context, it is anticipated that businesses in the local and wider impact area would benefit from trade connections established over the construction phase of the scheme. As a result, additional indirect jobs would be supported in the economy through local suppliers of construction materials and equipment.
- 5.9 Research by CEBR for the National Housing Federation (2019) indicates that the construction industry has an indirect and induced FTE employment multiplier of 1.21 for new industrial development in the South East<sup>27</sup>.
- 5.10 Based on this multiplier, the Proposed Development will support 44 indirect/induced jobs per annum during the construction phase.

Table 5.2 Assessment of indirect construction employment

| Direct FTE jobs p.a. | Multiplier | Indirect FTE jobs p.a. |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|
| 36                   | 1.21       | 41                     |

Source: Lichfields analysis based on CEBR for the National Housing Federation (2019). Note: Numbers may not sum due to rounding.

## Growth in the local economy

- 5.11 The construction phase of the proposed development will also make a significant contribution to local economic output, as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), a commonly used metric of productivity and economic performance.
- 5.12 On average, the construction sector generates an average GVA per FTE worker of £93,871 per annum in the South East<sup>28</sup>. The GVA per FTE worker data provided by Experian is currently calculated based on 2019 GVA generation figures. As such, an uplift of 1.27 has been applied to these figures to translate them into 2025 figures<sup>29</sup>. Based on this evidence,

<sup>27</sup> This multiplier provides an indication of the number of the total number of direct, indirect and induced jobs that are likely to be created. This means that 1.21 indirect/induced job will be created for every new direct job created in relation to private industrial development.

<sup>28</sup> Experian July 2023

<sup>29</sup> Source: Calendar years 2019 to 2022 taken from ONS series MNF2 in data tables: Table O.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/file?uri=/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/datasets/uksecondestimateofgdpdatatables/quarter1janto mar2023quarterlynationalaccounts/quarterlynationalaccountsdatatables.xlsx> For years 2023-24 to 2027-28 (2023 to 2027): taken

the development opportunity therefore has the potential to deliver an additional £4.1 million of direct GVA per annum during the construction period. In addition, the spin-off impact would equate to an additional £5.1 million of GVA per annum during the build period. The total (direct and indirect) GVA produced would therefore be £9.2 million per annum over the construction period.

- 5.13 It is accepted that not all the GVA impact will be retained locally or in Wokingham, but this will nevertheless constitute a significant economic boost.

### **Local wage growth**

- 5.14 The 34 direct FTE jobs that will be created during the construction phase will bring additional wages into the area, helping to raise levels of prosperity and increasing expenditure in local shops and services.
- 5.15 Based upon an analysis of 2024 data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, it is estimated that employment associated with the construction phase could support c.£1.3 million per annum in additional wages<sup>30</sup> throughout the build period.

## **Operational impacts**

### **Direct employment**

- 5.16 Whilst the development will constitute an expansion to the existing successful Wyvols Court Farm, the site to which this application relates is currently vacant and does not presently contribute to the local economy. As such, the development opportunity would not result in the loss or displacement of any existing employment. Instead, the development of the site would bring forward new beneficial activity and the new jobs that are to be created by the development would represent the net impact in terms of employment generation.
- 5.17 The precise number of jobs that will be supported will depend on the end users that occupy the proposed development. However, it is possible to estimate employment generation by applying average employment densities<sup>31</sup> to the proposed floorspace. The proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm is for three 697sqm industrial units (i.e. 2,091sqm in total).
- 5.18 Drawing upon details of the proposed development, similar facilities elsewhere and published data within the HCA 2015 & Lichfields Employment Densities Guide 2016, it is estimated that a total of 47 new jobs would be provided at Wyvols Court Farm. This is equivalent to 42 FTE positions. The 47 jobs are proportionate of 3.8% of the jobs in the local area<sup>32</sup> and 0.1% of the jobs in Wokingham Borough<sup>33</sup>.

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from the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) GDP deflator forecasts as of March 2023 Economy Supplementary tables.  
<https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2023/>

<sup>30</sup> Based on average annual pay of £37,898 for a full time employee working in the skilled construction and building trades in the South East

<sup>31</sup> Employment densities for light industrial have been used to calculate the jobs

<sup>32</sup> BRES 2023: 1,210

<sup>33</sup> BRES 2023: 92,070

Table 5.3 Number of operational jobs

| Development type | Sqm (NIA sqm) | Sqm (GEA sqm <sup>34</sup> ) | Sqm/job           | Jobs | Sqm/FTE         | FTE |
|------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------|-----------------|-----|
| Light industrial | 2,091         | 2,525                        | 1 job per 53.5sqm | 47   | 1 job per 60sqm | 42  |

Source: HCA Employment Densities Guide/Lichfields analysis

- 5.19 It is likely that new jobs generated by the development opportunity could be filled from a variety of potential sources of labour supply and drawn from those living in Swallowfield and the wider Wokingham area. As such, these jobs would therefore provide a clear boost to the local economy.
- 5.20 The number of jobs has been calculated with light industrial ratios. However, if the development later includes some office space within the 2,091sqm, then the number of operational jobs would exceed 47 as offices have higher employment densities. As such, 47 jobs are likely to be a minimum number of workers.

### Indirect and Induced Employment

- 5.21 As with construction jobs, the creation of new operational jobs as a result of the Proposed Development will support indirect jobs through expenditure on goods, supplies and services in the surrounding area. The spending of wages by both employees of the employment generating facilities and of the local firms supplying goods and services to these facilities will also support induced employment in other local shops, services and firms. As set out in Table 5.4, it is anticipated (based on the application of multipliers set out in the HCA Additionality Guide, Fourth Edition 2014) that the Proposed Development will generate 21 indirect and induced jobs in the South East (5-18 FTEs), of which between 5 and 11 jobs (3-9 FTEs) will be in Wokingham Borough.

Table 5.4 Indirect and induced employment generation

| Jobs     |       | FTEs     |       |
|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| Regional | Local | Regional | Local |
| 0.44     | 0.29  | 0.44     | 0.29  |
| 21       | 14    | 18       | 12    |

Source: Lichfields analysis based on multipliers from the HCA Additionality Guide, Fourth Edition 2014. All numbers rounded to the nearest one

### Economic output

- 5.22 As with the construction phase of the development, the creation of new employment once the development is operational will also make a contribution to local economic output.
- 5.23 The operational phase would also make a significant contribution to local economic output by supporting the creation of new employment.

<sup>34</sup> Employment densities are provided in terms of total jobs per Gross External Area (GEA). It is necessary to convert to GEA from NIA through the application of a +15% adjustment and then from Net External Area (NEA) through the application of a +5% adjustment for all uses to reflect the area of external walls etc.

- 5.24 Based on the levels of GVA per workforce job detailed in Table 5.5, it is estimated that the jobs at the proposed development could contribute £7.6 million per annum to the regional economy, comprising £5.3 million per annum derived from direct GVA generation and £2.3 million per annum from indirect GVA generation.

Table 5.5 Direct, indirect and total GVA generation

| Land Use         | Direct GVA | Indirect GVA | Total GVA  |
|------------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| Light Industrial | £5,288,480 | £2,326,931   | £7,615,411 |

Source: Experian (July 2023) / Lichfields analysis (2025 uplift applied)

## Local wage growth

- 5.25 As outlined above, the proposed development is expected to create 42 direct FTE jobs per annum, during the operational phase. These employment opportunities will bring additional wages into the area, helping to raise levels of prosperity and increasing expenditure in local shops and services.
- 5.26 Based upon an analysis of 2024 data from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, it is estimated that employment associated with the operational jobs created through the proposed development could support c.£1.2 million per annum in additional wages<sup>35</sup>.

## Business rates

- 5.27 Based upon a review of the rateable values of the commercial properties in the RG7 1 postcode area, it is estimated that the industrial floorspace will generate c.£120,000 in additional business rate revenue per annum.

Table 5.6 Business Rates

| Sqm (GIA)           | Estimated price per sqm | Business rate multiplier | Total Business Rate revenue |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2,196 <sup>36</sup> | £99.62                  | 0.546                    | £119,446                    |

Source: Valuation Office Agency / Lichfields analysis

<sup>35</sup> Based on average annual pay of £29,500 for a full time employee working in the process, plant and machine operatives in the South East

<sup>36</sup> 2091\*1.05 to convert NIA to GIA

## 6.0 **Assessing the case for development at Wyvols Court Farm**

- 6.1 This section draws together the preceding analysis in order to explain the case for and acceptability of the proposed development of three new business units at Wyvols Court Farm.

### **Alignment with policy**

- 6.2 As set out in Section 2, Policy 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. This would presumably include locations that are outside of the Core Employment Areas, rural parts of the Borough and the provision of small-scale employment units. Such an approach does not undermine the importance of the Core Employment Areas but instead recognises the potential role of other parts of Wokingham Borough to support growth. Restricting employment development solely to the Core Employment Areas would be inconsistent with the aspiration of the policy to deliver a mix of employment spaces in different locations.

- 6.3 The Local Plan Update includes a number of (as yet unexamined) draft policies which are relevant to the consideration of the proposed development. These include:

- 1 Policy SS2 sets out the settlement hierarchy for Wokingham Borough. It defines Swallowfield as a minor settlement and refers to such “*small villages*” as receiving “*an appropriate level of planned housing growth, where opportunity exists, to support the evolution of the community in a way which respects its rural character.*” No reference is given to employment development, even though this could clearly meet the policy objective in relation to supporting the evolution of the community. Save for specific allocations, it requires development to be “*limited to exception sites which accord with Policy H4.*” This is a policy that relates to housing exception sites – again indicating that insufficient consideration has been given to the importance of delivering employment growth in smaller settlements in order to distribute economic growth across the Borough and support the sustainability of rural communities.
- 2 Policy SS8 which relates to the meeting of employment needs. Criteria 4 and 5 consider employment development outside of the Core Areas. Criteria 4 supports new employment uses within local centres:

“a) ...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.*”

The proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm could be viewed as satisfying both of these aspirations inasmuch as it is proportionate in scale to the existing settlement and is well aligned with – and would form part of – an existing employment site, such that it would make a more efficient use of the site and support its contribution to the local economy.

- 3 Policies ER2 and ER3 which relate to employment sites outside of the Core Employment Area and employment in the rural economy. They support the principle of the proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm. In respect of the specific criteria contained within those policies, it should be noted that:
  - a The proposed development is to be located at a minor settlement (as categorised by Policy SS2) and is not in the open countryside.
  - b The development will, however, support the rural economy within Wokingham through the provision of additional employment facilities outside of the Core Employment Areas/main settlements.
  - c The focus of the development is to contribute towards a more geographically diverse economic base within Wokingham Borough by specifically serving the settlement of Swallowfield. As such, we do not consider that the application of a sequential test to demonstrate that there are no suitable or available sites within the Core Employment Areas is appropriate as the provision of additional employment floorspace within such areas would not support this overall objective for the development.

6.4 It is important to note that the adopted Local Plan is time expired and the emerging Plan is subject to examination and so the policies contained within each document cannot be afforded full weight at this time. In this context, it is particularly important to have regard to the extent to which the proposed development is aligned with the requirements of paragraphs 88 and 89 of the NPPF, namely that:

- 1 It will support the sustainable growth and expansion of business in rural areas; such that,
- 2 It will support a prosperous rural economy; whilst also,
- 3 Being sensitive to the local context.

## **Alignment with the local economy**

6.5 The provision of an additional 2,091sqm employment floorspace equates to an increase of 4.3 times the existing (very limited) office and industrial floorspace<sup>37</sup> within Swallowfield (an increase of 5.1 times the existing industrial floorspace in Swallowfield). The projected level of employment creation within the new business units would equate to 3.9% of existing employment within the local impact area (LSOA 17C and 17D). In respect of each of these metrics, the development will make a significant and beneficial contribution to the local economy, in accordance with the aspirations of the NPPF and the emerging Local Plan.

6.6 However, this level of development would have no discernible impact on the wider economic in Wokingham Borough. In particular, it should be noted that:

- 1 The provision of an additional 2,091sqm floorspace would equate to 2.2% of existing office and industrial floorspace and 4.4% of existing industrial floorspace in Wokingham Borough;

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<sup>37</sup> The comparative figure for office and industrial floorspace has been applied given that light industrial uses can be incorporated in the wider "office" category – i.e. the former Use Class B1(c) and current Use Class E(g)(iii)

- 2 The estimated 47 operational jobs that would be created within the proposed new employment floorspace will equate to 0.05% of total employment in Wokingham Borough; and,
- 3 The proposed new floorspace will equate to 2.0% of the total identified office and industrial employment needs as set out in the Employment Topic Paper and 2.8% of the industrial floorspace requirement identified by the Employment Topic Paper – albeit noting that, as set out above, such figures should not be viewed as maximum limits but rather minimum targets and that any exceedance of this figures should be supported as a means by which to extend local economic growth.

6.7 Against each of these metrics, the proposed development is very modest in the context of the scale and the existing economy in Wokingham Borough and the expected rate of future change. It will not detract from investment in the Core Employment Areas, nor will it redirect employment growth from such areas of the larger settlements.

6.8 The Employment Topic Paper reports that only a small number of sites have been promoted for employment use within the Borough and that there have been very limited deliverable options. This has highlighted a shortage of suitable land beyond existing Local Plan proposals. It represents a risk to the local economy and one that should be the focus of attention by the Council going forward. It is acknowledged that the strategic importance of the proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm is limited in the context of the Borough as a whole. However, the promotion of new employment floorspace in this location should nevertheless be supported as a means by which further growth can be achieved.

6.9 The development further aligns with the comment set out in paragraph 4.12 of the Topic Paper, namely that:

*“Outside Core Employment Areas, smaller scale economic development will be supported in other locations as set out in subsequent policies. This includes the flexible and sustainable growth of small businesses in appropriate locations.”*

6.10 The ELNR identified a number of key sectors within the Borough including:

- 1 Office based: professional services, computing & information services and administration/support services; and,
- 2 Industrial sectors: Wholesale, land transport, storage & post, manufacturing and utilities.

6.11 These sectors are predominantly suited to the Core Employment Areas. The provision of light industrial and/or small office units would be neither suited to these sectors nor to Core Employment Areas. On the other hand, those industrial sectors listed above would not be well suited as the end use for the proposed use at Wyvols Court Farm, due to the size and location of units that they would need. Again, this will ensure that the proposed development does not have an adverse impact on the wider economy of Wokingham Borough and does not restrict the achievement of the strategic economic objectives for the Borough. Rather, such space would be well suited to boosting the economic profile of Swallowfield and the surrounding rural area. This should be supported by the Council.

## Alignment with similar sized settlements

- 6.12 It is recognised that Wokingham Borough will not achieve full self-containment. Some people will travel into the area for work while residents will commute out to other employment destinations. Given its proximity to London, it is a testament to the resilience of the local economy that the ONS records a jobs density figure of 0.9. This indicates that there is an element of net out-commuting but that this is comparatively limited<sup>38</sup>. Whilst this figure has remained comparatively stable for a number of years, there has been an upward trend since 2011. This is illustrated in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 Wokingham Borough job density, 2011-2023

| Year | Jobs density |
|------|--------------|
| 2011 | 0.81         |
| 2012 | 0.81         |
| 2013 | 0.84         |
| 2014 | 0.85         |
| 2015 | 0.88         |
| 2016 | 0.92         |
| 2017 | 0.93         |
| 2018 | 0.89         |
| 2019 | 0.93         |
| 2020 | 0.87         |
| 2021 | 0.90         |
| 2022 | 0.91         |
| 2023 | 0.90         |

Source: ONS Jobs Density

- 6.13 The concept of alignment is less likely to apply at a sub-district level, and particularly for a small settlement such as Swallowfield. However, it is in the interests of sustainability to ensure that employment opportunities are available for people close to where they live. This is at the heart of the concept of the 15- or 20-minute community. ONS does not report on Job Density below local authority level, although it is possible to calculate the labour force ratio as a proxy by assessing the relationship between the number of jobs and the number of economically active residents in a particular area. As with the Job Density ratio, a labour force ratio of 1.0 would equate to a balance while a figure of less than 1.0 would indicate net out-commuting from the area.
- 6.14 Table 6.2 shows the job to labour force ratio for Swallowfield and other small settlements in the local area (not just within Wokingham Borough). Whilst these vary in terms of the local economically active population and number of jobs, they provide a basis by which to assess the relative labour force ratio for Swallowfield. The ratio varies considerably between the different settlements – ranging from 0.22 for Spencers Wood to 2.32 for Woolley Green/Littlewick Green (two settlements that fall within the same LSOAs so cannot be disaggregated), such that the average labour force ratio is 0.81. The figure of 0.69 for

<sup>38</sup> This is based on the fact that a Job Density figure of 1.0 would represent balance between the number of jobs and workers, a figure less than 1.0 would indicate net out-commuting and a figure above 1.0 would indicate net in-commuting.

Swallowfield is materially lower than this figure, indicated that there are fewer jobs available locally compared to the number of working-age residents. This serves to reduce the sustainability of the community and could give rise to a leakage of spending power as workers spend time elsewhere and a weaker local economy in Swallowfield.

6.15

As explained in Section 7, the proposed development would generate 47 operational jobs. Reassessing the labour force ratio in the light of this additional employment would result in the figure for Swallowfield increasing from 0.69 to 0.72<sup>39</sup>. Whilst this remains below the average for comparator areas and for Wokingham as a whole, it does further underline the extent to which the proposed development would offer sustainability and economic benefits to the local area, but without in any way harming that of other parts of the Borough. On this basis, there is no evident economic or policy justification to withhold planning permission.

Table 6.2 Existing jobs to labour force ratio

|                                              | Swallow-field <sup>40</sup> | Finchamp-stead <sup>41</sup> | Barkham <sup>42</sup> | Spencers Wood <sup>43</sup> | Hartley Witney <sup>44</sup> | Woolley Green/Littlewick Green <sup>45 46</sup> | Total  |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------|
| No. jobs <sup>47</sup>                       | 1,210                       | 580                          | 620                   | 615                         | 2,065                        | 4,095                                           | 9,185  |
| No <sup>48</sup> . econ active <sup>49</sup> | 1,747                       | 729                          | 1,396                 | 2,812                       | 2,808                        | 1,763                                           | 11,255 |
| Jobs to labour force ratio                   | 0.69                        | 0.80                         | 0.44                  | 0.22                        | 0.74                         | 2.32                                            | 0.81   |

Source: 2023 BRES and 2021 TS066 - Economic activity status/ Lichfields analysis

<sup>39</sup> (1210+47)/ 1,747

<sup>40</sup> LSOA Wokingham 017C and 017D

<sup>41</sup> LSOA Wokingham 019H

<sup>42</sup> LSOA Wokingham 015A

<sup>43</sup> For BRES data – LSOA Wokingham 017B; For economic activity – LSOA Wokingham 017H and 017G

<sup>44</sup> LSOA Hart 004B, 004C and 004D

<sup>45</sup> LSOA Windsor & Maidenhead 002E and 002F

<sup>46</sup> Littlewick Green is within both LSOAs so the data cannot be broken up into a smaller area

<sup>47</sup> BRES 2023

<sup>48</sup> 2021 Census data TS066 - Economic activity status (Data from the annual population survey on economically active population is not available at the LSOA level so the census data has been used for the job to labour force ratio)

<sup>49</sup> Economically active aged 16 and over (excluding full-time students)

## **7.0 Employment and Skills Plan**

- 7.1 As set out in the Managing Development Delivery Document under Policy TB12 (Employment Skills Plan) and Local Plan Update Draft Policy ER4 (Employment and skills plans) an Employment and Skills Plan is required to accompany the submission.
- 7.2 As such, this section sets out how the Applicant, working in collaboration with WBC, and other partners will seek to maximise the economic and social benefits generated by the proposed development during construction and once operational (commencing pre-opening).
- 7.3 The proposed development will contribute to improved economic and social value outcomes in respect of employment, training and skills through the creation of new jobs in the local economy, the provision of opportunities for apprenticeships, and support for local people to improve their skills. These opportunities will exist during the construction and operational phases.

### **Construction Opportunities**

#### **Apprenticeships and Trainee Opportunities**

- 7.4 Apprenticeship opportunities in construction play a vital role in attracting more young people into the sector. They offer the benefit of providing pay to individuals whilst they acquire training and develop highly credible and transferable skills.
- 7.5 The construction phase of the proposed development will offer a range of employment and training opportunities across different trades and skillsets, from bricklaying and carpentry through to plumbing and maintenance.
- 7.6 To maximise the economic benefits of the proposed development, the Applicant will seek to work with the WBC, as well as other partners to identify and support local individuals to access opportunities for work placements and training (including apprenticeships) throughout the project's 12-month long construction phase.

#### **Local Procurement During Construction**

- 7.7 At this stage, it is not possible to quantify the amount of the anticipated construction investment that will accrue to businesses located within Wokingham Borough. This will depend on several factors, including the Applicant's chosen contractor(s) as well as their respective supply chains.
- 7.8 The Applicant recognises the opportunity the proposed development provides in creating local value through procurement. Drawing on WBC's ambition to lead on progressive procurement to keep wealth in the Borough and reduce emissions (as outlined within its Economic Strategy 2025-2035<sup>50</sup>), the Applicant will work with its chosen contractor(s), the Council and other partners to identify opportunities for companies based and/or operating in the Borough to access supply chain opportunities for the proposed development. This includes working with the key contractor(s) to ensure that whenever feasible, local

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<sup>50</sup> [59d. WBC Eco Dev Strat 2025-2035 - FINAL.pdf](#)

businesses are included within the supply chain. This will be an important consideration in any decision relating to the appointment of a preferred contractor.

### **Local Employment During Construction**

- 7.9 The Applicant will also seek to support the local community during the construction phase by ensuring that opportunities created are advertised and made available to local residents. As outlined above, the Applicant will work with WBC and other relevant stakeholders to identify and support local individuals access employment opportunities throughout the proposed development's 12-month long construction phase.
- 7.10 This will include opportunities for local businesses to support the proposed development by supplying raw materials and/or goods needed for construction, in addition to procuring the services of local trades people.
- 7.11 Specific measures to support local recruitment could include:
- 1 Local contractors invited to submit tenders to undertake construction of the project;
  - 2 Advertisement of positions in local job centres; and/or,
  - 3 Appointment of apprentices.
- 7.12 Local workers employed during construction could also benefit from the training typically offered by construction companies to employees, helping to develop their skills. This can include courses focused on:
- 1 General Health and Safety;
  - 2 Upskilling; and,
  - 3 Manual Handling.

### **Long-term (i.e. Operational) Employment Opportunities**

- 7.13 Once completed, the proposed development will comprise of 2,091sqm (GEA) of light industrial floorspace, with potential to support around 42 FTE direct jobs on-site.
- 7.14 As outlined above, the Applicant will work in collaboration with WBC and other relevant stakeholders to identify and support local individuals access local employment opportunities once the proposed development is operational. Consideration may be given to priority marketing to local businesses and/or those that can provide assurances in respect of local recruitment and the provision of training and/or apprenticeship opportunities to local people.
- 7.15 All occupiers will be encouraged to advertise and publish job opportunities at local Job Centres and WBC's website.

## Summary

Table 7.1 Strategy for maximising economic and social benefits

| Objective                                              | Activities                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Target Group(s)                                                                                                        | Timescale                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Construction apprenticeships and trainee opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apprenticeships</li> <li>- Traineeships</li> <li>- Work placements (16+)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unemployed residents</li> <li>- 16+ and NEETs</li> <li>- Graduates</li> </ul> | Short-medium term (i.e. during construction phase) |
| Local procurement during construction                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with WBC and business representatives to identify and deploy opportunities for local procurement</li> <li>- Establish/ build community of local businesses that can form part of project's supply chain.</li> <li>- Encourage key contractor(s) (perhaps through voluntary measures / S106 agreements) to whenever possible source locally</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local businesses</li> </ul>                                                   | Short-medium term (i.e. during construction phase) |
| Local employment during construction                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertise and publish job opportunities at local Job Centres and WBC's website</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unemployed residents</li> <li>- 16+ and NEETs</li> </ul>                      | Short-medium term (i.e. during construction phase) |
| Long-term (i.e. operational) employment opportunities  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Advertise and publish job opportunities at local Job Centres and WBC's website</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unemployed residents</li> <li>- 16+ and NEETs</li> </ul>                      | Long term                                          |

## 8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The proposed development seeks to introduce three industrial units at Wyvols Court Farm. This will play an important role in further enhancing the employment opportunities in Wokingham.
- 8.2 In terms of current local policies, 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.
- 8.3 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.
- 8.4 Additionally, the development is in line with national policy which supports local businesses and enhances the rural economy.
- 8.5 The job creation caused by the development is equivalent to 3.9% of employment in the local impact area but 0.05% of employment in Wokingham Borough. As such, the job creation would help boost the rural economy, whilst having negligible impacts on jobs or investment in the Core Employment Areas. It will therefore support the local economy without undermining the wider economy of Wokingham Borough by diverting investment away from Core Employment Areas.
- 8.6 Some of the more quantifiable economic benefits of the proposed development during its construction phase include:
- 1 A capital investment of c.£3.0 million to be spent on a one-year construction period;
  - 2 The creation of 34 direct employment opportunities per annum through the construction period. These would support a further 41 indirect/induced FTE jobs per annum;
  - 3 The generation of c.£9.2 million GVA across the construction period, comprising c.£4.1 million direct GVA and c.£5.1 million indirect GVA;
- 8.7 Once operational, the proposed development will generate the following quantifiable socio-economic benefits:
- 1 The creation of 47 additional jobs at the site that would support the creation of an additional 21 indirect and induced jobs and;
  - 2 Contribute to the generation of c.£7.6 million GVA;
- 8.8 The proposed development at Wyvols Court Farm will play an important role in the supporting the economic strength of Wokingham both during construction and following completion. It will give rise to an increased local population and workforce, which will create local jobs and expenditure by the new workers will sustain existing and an increased range of new shops, services and facilities.

- 8.9 The proposed development would offer sustainability and economic benefits to the local area, but without in any way harming that of other parts of the Borough. On this basis, there is no evident economic or policy justification to withhold planning permission.

## **Employment and Skills Plan**

- 8.10 The Employment and Skills Plan outlined in Section 7.0 highlights the Applicant's commitment to work with its chosen contractor(s), WBC and other stakeholders to ensure that the benefits and employment opportunities generated during both construction and operational phases of the proposed development are of benefit to local residents. Proposed actions include working with WBC to secure:
- 1 Construction apprenticeships and trainee opportunities;
  - 2 Local procurement during construction;
  - 3 Local employment during construction; and,
  - 4 Long-term (i.e. operational) employment opportunities.





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