

Nigra House, Wokingham: Employment & Skills Plan

Project name: Nigra House, Wokingham
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Introduction

This Employment and Skills Plan (ESP) has been produced on behalf of Tungsten Properties Ltd and Cherwell Wokingham Ltd to support a full planning application for the proposed demolition of the existing office building and the construction of a single building for employment purposes (Use Classes E(g)(ii), (iii), B2 and B8 with new vehicular access and associated infrastructure works including service yard, car parking, boundary treatments and landscaping at Nigra House, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road, Wokingham. The planning condition for the ESP is worded as follows:

"Prior to the commencement of development, an Employment Skills Plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details within the Employment Skills Plan shall be implemented in full, in accordance with the time scales set, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Reason: To ensure an Employment Skills Plan is implemented in accordance with TB12."

In relation to Policy TB12 referred to above, this is within the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan), which was adopted in February 2014. Policy TB12 states that:

"Proposals for 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."

The ESP has been written to align with the condition outlined above, as well as Policy TB12. It relates to the build phase of the scheme.

Socio-Economic Overview of Wokingham

Population

As of 2022, the population of Wokingham is around 180,967 according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This represents an increase of 15.2% since 2012, equating to 23,929 additional people. Over this timeframe, the fastest growing age group in Wokingham were those aged 65 and over, which increased by 24.0% (6,054). Between 2012 and 2022, the number of people aged 0-15 in Wokingham grew by 18.4% (5,861) and the number of people aged 16-64 increased by 12.0% (12,014).

The 2018-based ONS population projections indicate that the population of Wokingham is projected to increase by 12.4% (20,828) between 2018 and 2038. This is mainly down to an increase in people aged 65+, with this age group projected to increase by 46.3% (13,655). Over the same timeframe, the number of people aged 0-15 in Wokingham is projected to decline by 2.0% (712 fewer people) whilst the number of people aged 16-64 is projected to increase by 7.7% (7,886)¹. To ensure sustainable population growth in Wokingham, younger people and people of working age need to be retained and attracted to the area. One way of doing this is by creating new employment opportunities and supporting people to improve their skills to enable them to access jobs in the area.

Labour Market

According to the most recent data from the ONS Business Register & Employment Survey (BRES), in 2022 there were around 93,000 jobs – including self-employment – in Wokingham.

Employment numbers in Wokingham increased by 14.8% between 2015 and 2022, equating to around 12,000 additional jobs. During the build phase of the Proposed Development the construction sector is the sector most likely to benefit. In Wokingham, as of 2022, the construction sector accounted for 3.8% of total employment and supported 3,500 jobs. Between 2015 and 2022, the construction sector in Wokingham grew from 3,000 jobs to 3,500. This represents an absolute increase of 500 jobs, or 3.8%.

Local Policy Objectives

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010. It sets out where development will occur within Wokingham up to 2026, taking account of the health, well-being and quality of life of its residents. One of the aims of the Core Strategy is to maintain and enhance the Borough's knowledge and skills base. As part of its vision for Wokingham, it states that:

*"The area's buoyant economy will be supported through the more effective use of existing employment sites in the borough and other measures that support smart growth, including training in skills."*²

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan

The Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan builds on the Core Strategy and sets out more detailed policies for managing development. It was adopted by the council on 21 February 2014.

Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an ESP with a supporting method statement.

Economic Development Strategy

The Council is in the process of updating its Economic Development Strategy (EDS). A report on the emerging EDS was provided to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee in March 2024³. The EDS is proposed to be centred around four central themes and has identified a number of priorities. Of relevance to the Proposed Development is the following priority:

¹ Total projected change figure of 20,828 may not sum due to rounding.

² Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document, January 2010.

³ Available here: <https://wokingham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71506/Economic%20Development%20Strategy.pdf>

- **People, work and wellbeing: Ensure residents have the skills that businesses need and are able to obtain local, well-paid, secure employment:** Make certain that the strong skills profile of residents is maintained and continues to improve, being cognisant of the Borough's ageing population and projected decline in numbers of young workers.

Employment & Skills Plan Targets

Based on information provided by Wokingham Borough Council, a number of targets have been set for the build phase of the Proposed Development. The targets are based on benchmarks sourced from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB). The Council has checked the targets with the CITB and are happy with them. The aim is to encourage the use of local labour on sites. Table 1 presents the targets, which are based on the build cost of a scheme. Compared to the overall CITB benchmarks, they are more simplified and focus on: community skills activities; jobs; and apprenticeships. These themes apply across sites where the estimated/stated value of construction is more than £1million. The construction cost of the Proposed Development has been calculated as follows by the Council:

- The interior floor space of 3,680 sq .m. has been multiplied by £1,025, which is the cost of construction per square metre. The Council sourced this cost figure from the Building Cost Information Service, which is an online database of build costs for different types of floorspace.
- Based on the above, the construction cost of the Proposed Development is estimated to be £3,772,000.
- Based on the CITB benchmarks presented in Table 1, the ESP targets for the Proposed Development (highlighted in red) are:
 - 5 community skills support activities.
 - 2 apprenticeships.
 - 2 jobs.

Table 1: ESP Targets for Construction Phase (targets for Proposed Development in red)

	Build Cost (£million)									
	£1- £3.5	£3.5- £6	£6- £10	£10- £15	£15- £20	£20- £30	£30- £40	£40- £50	£50- £60	£60- £100
Community Skills	3	5	7	9	11	13	16	18	19	21
Apprenticeships	0	2	4	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Jobs Created	1	2	3	6	7	8	9	9	11	11

In terms of the community skills support activities, these will be agreed with the Council in advance of the scheme's development. Suggested examples could include a mix of:

- Presentations to school pupils.
- Site tours for students.
- Attending local careers events.

As an alternative to the delivery of the ESP, an in lieu sum could be paid before development commences.

Appendix 1 provides a completed version of the Council's ESP Outcomes Summary, with the exception of the contractor contact details which will be provided in due course.

Appendix 1 – Employment and Skills Plan Outcomes Summary

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PLAN OUTCOMES SUMMARY

Planning applicant Tungsten Properties Ltd and Cherwell Wokingham Ltd

The table below provides an overview of the number of employment and skills opportunities that we have agreed to provide on the Nigra House, Mulberry Business Park, Fishponds Road development in Wokingham Borough.

Build start date Q3 2024

Approximate completion date Q4 2025

Estimated value of build £3,772,000

	Total
Community Skills Support Activities	5
Apprentice New Starts	2
Jobs Created	2

EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS PLAN METHOD STATEMENT

The method statement provides information and detail about how the planning applicant intends to deliver the outcomes set out above.

The planning applicant will meet with Wokingham Borough Council to discuss the implementation of the plan before start on site and after planning approval. The planning applicant will confirm the start on site date and inform of any changes to the progress of the development. The planning applicant is responsible for delivering the outcomes as agreed.

The WBC representative will monitor the Employment and Skills Plan and ensure that all the requirements are implemented and collect relevant evidence demonstrating that the developer has discharged the outcomes as set out in the S106 agreement.

In the first instance the planning applicant will seek to recruit candidates for employment opportunities from the Wokingham area, and give consideration to those from 'hard to reach' groups who have significant personal barriers to entering employment – e.g. Care leavers or those young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Prior to the commencement of the build the planning applicant will ensure that its subcontractors are aware of their involvement in supporting the requirements of the Employment and Skills Plan and their role in providing the outcomes agreed in the S106. The planning applicant will liaise with subcontractors to ensure the implementation of the plan and require their supply chain to provide evidence as necessary.

Key contacts and responsibilities

Name	Role	Tel/email	Responsibility
David Brewer	Construction Director	Tel 07391168207 Email david@magrock.co.uk	Key contact responsible for communication with WBC Liaising with sub-contractors and to meet the requirements of the ESP Co-ordinate monitoring outcomes Provide evidence to support outcomes
Chris Beattie	Senior Project Manager	Tel 07805065753 Email chrisb@magrock.co.uk	Liaising with sub-contractors and to meet the requirements of the ESP Co-ordinate monitoring outcomes Provide evidence to support outcomes
Becca Creighton	Head of People	Tel 07539088950 Email becca@magrock.co.uk or careers@magrock.co.uk	Coordination of employment and training opportunities including liaison with external organisations
Hetty Sieling	Employment and Skills, WBC	Tel 07599103330 Email Hetty.Sieling@wokingham.gov.uk	Negotiation and advice regarding the ESP, prior to S106 agreement Support with employment and training/education delivery Monitoring and evaluation
Nicola Hieatt	CITB Engagement Advisor, Berkshire	Tel 07721667109 Email nicola.hieatt@citb.co.uk	Advice to help SME businesses in the supply chain to obtain grants Advice and support for contractors/developers in meeting their ESP commitments

Community Skills Support Activities

The planning applicant will set out its intended Community Skills Support Activities and provide more detail on how these will be achieved

Community Skills Support Activities are agreed and negotiated ahead of finalising the s106 agreement. Although there will be a required overall target, one or more of the following categories can be included; Work Experience Placements, Construction Career Activities and/or Funding CSCS card (H & S Awareness) Training.

Work experience

Candidates may be located on site or office based, placed with site trades people or within roles aligned to construction such as landscaping.

Work experience can be within sales or site office for persons in or out of education (school, further or higher education) ages 16-17 or 18+ out on site. Duration should be a minimum of 5 working days. A longer duration would count as two work experience placements.

The planning applicant will liaise with subcontractors and team members and/or pass relevant contact details to the WBC contact to help ensure the arrangement of placements.

The contractor providing the placement will ensure the young person is aware of their supervisor, allocated tasks and location on site; as well as days/ hours at work and office contact details. The supervisor will be responsible for the continued welfare and training of the new entrant throughout his/her time on site. The WBC representative has the option of checking the placement.

Construction Careers Activities

Curriculum support activities might include:

- Site tours for students from local schools and colleges to gain experience of the various stages of construction projects
- Presentations to pupils in schools and colleges from experienced site team members to raise awareness of careers in the construction industry
- Attending local careers events, in consultation with Wokingham Borough Council
- Supporting students on projects such as the CREST Award

Funding CSCS Card (Health and Safety Awareness) training

Provide funding for 1 day training, screen test and cards for up to 10 candidates.

Organisation and training is provided via a CITB accredited trainer, working with your contact at WBC. A breakdown of costs and arrangements will be made available in advance.

Apprenticeship New Starts

The developer will out-line details of their apprenticeship new start opportunities at the earliest possible opportunity to ensure a planned approach to recruitment.

This target describes recruitment of traditional apprentices, shared apprentices, specialist apprentices or adult apprentices to the workforce, with the apprentice being recruited either directly by the developer or by an employer in the supply chain. A new apprenticeship outcome is defined as an individual pursuing a formal apprenticeship framework incorporating either NVQ level 2, 3 or above.

The new apprentice target does not include those employed prior to the start of the build. The position should be new and created as part of the ESP requirements. The apprentice should be able to work on site for a proportion of their apprenticeship. Every effort should be made to ensure the apprenticeships are created for local people (people resident in or within easy travelling distance of Wokingham borough).

It is advised that developers identify subcontractors at the earliest opportunity who will take on apprentices and liaise with or ensure contact details are passed to the contact at WBC. Subcontractors must be able to ensure that ongoing work for the apprentice will be in the local area for the duration of the apprenticeship unless transport arrangements are agreed.

WBC can support with introductions and discussions with local colleges offering the training provision as well as Job Centre Plus. The CITB and Co-Train (shared apprenticeships agency) offer additional services that can also provide support for recruiting apprentices.

Evidence: Apprenticeship registration documents detailing full framework, a copy of the college (provider) training agreement and an offer letter from the employer.

New Jobs Created

The developer will describe in more detail what new jobs will be created on the development.

These will be new and sustainable job opportunities, created to work directly on the development site, for a proportion of or throughout the duration of the build. These will include unskilled/unemployed people, as well as graduates and need to be in post a minimum of 6 months.

Evidence: Notification of vacancy, copy of offer of employment/other relevant documentation to confirm the start and finish dates and length of contract. Confirmation that employee is resident within the Wokingham or surrounding area.

Financial Contribution in Lieu of an employment skills plan

The developer has the option to make a financial contribution in lieu, either wholly or partly in place of Jobs created/apprenticeship targets contained in the employment skills plan and the amount agreed will be set out in the s106 agreement.

If a financial contribution in lieu is agreed in advance, payment is required on commencement of work on site.

As part of the monitoring process, if it is highlighted mid-way through the build that the developer has made insufficient progress on preparation or delivery of the Employment Skills Plan requirements, they will be asked to make a financial contribution in lieu of agreed outcomes. This will need to be agreed with the WBC contact.

The financial contribution sought in lieu of each employment (apprenticeship/job created) outcome is £3750.

Monitoring and Reporting

Progress on the Employment Skills Plan will be reviewed at regular intervals, with a monitoring report produced mid-way through the build by the representative from WBC. This is to include an update of the employment skills plan showing the achievements against each of the agreed outcomes accompanied by copies of relevant evidence.

An initial review meeting will be organised before start on site date and after planning approval.

Below is a schedule of the review and monitoring dates relating to the above development.

If an in lieu sum has been agreed in default of delivery of the ESP then this will need to be paid before Commencement of Development.

Assessment of ESP progress will be carried out between the planning applicant and the Council before Commencement of Development and two months into the build. In the final quarter of the

development programme a further assessment will be taken. Should the assessment of the outcomes be unsatisfactory then an off-site sum will be sought in lieu of all or some of the outcomes.