

DESIGN, ACCESS AND PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPOSED STORAGE BUILDING ANCILLARY TO OFFICE USE

BEECH COURT, WOKINGHAM ROAD, HURST RG10 0RQ

1.00 INTRODUCTION

- 1.01 Beech Court is a courtyard office site wholly owned by the applicant. It was constructed and completed in 2008 following the grant of full planning permission F/2003/8317 and subsequent DOC permissions. At the time it was approved as Class B1 without any restrictions within that Use Class, allowing B1(a), (b) and (c) activities i.e. uses which can be carried out without harm to the amenity of neighbouring residential properties. The modern equivalent would be Class E(g).

Class E(g)

i) office

ii) the research and development of products or processes or

iii) any industrial process,

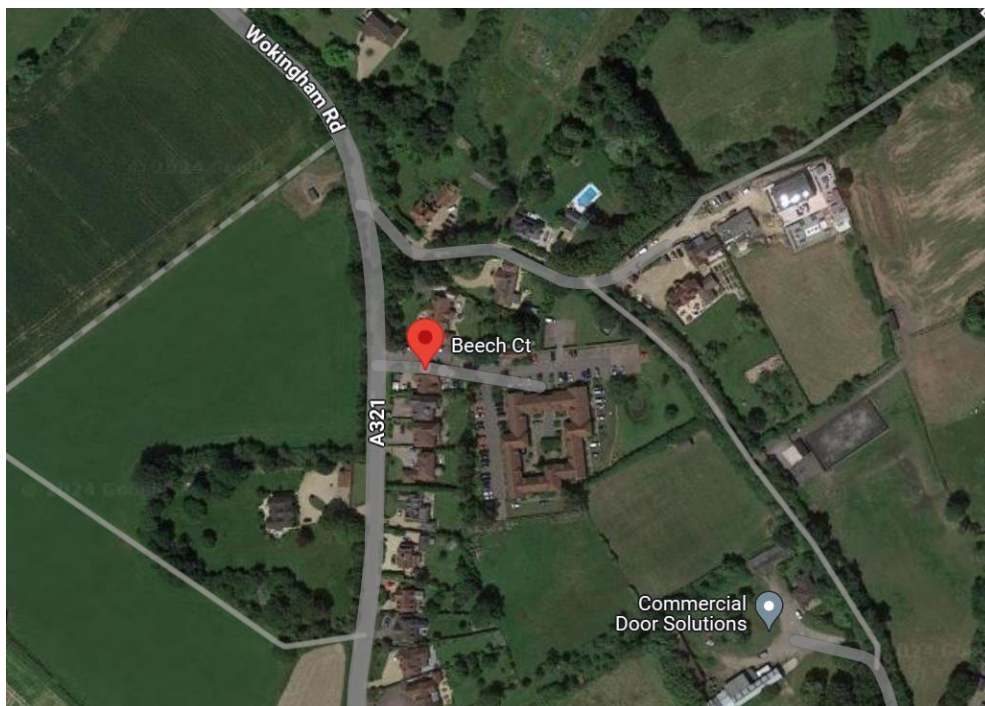
which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area

- 1.02 The existing building provides 12 separate office units with shared parking areas and a large area of landscaped grounds. It operates as a small business park with a high quality landscaped visual character. Security gates face Wokingham Road, with the majority of the site tucked behind residential properties fronting the road. The site has a long history as developed land including as a garden centre and a site with industrial activities in the 20th Century prior to the erection of the current building.
- 1.03 Units 1,2 and 3 of Beech Court are occupied by Pinnacle Property Management Ltd. This successful business provides contract staff/services and advice to clients requiring management, cleaning and maintenance of their own properties. In total it employs around 90 staff, with 60 based on site in the Beech Court offices. Equipment to be stored is garden maintenance equipment, property cleaning equipment, business archives etc.
- 1.04 The business currently stores supplies and equipment offsite, which involves additional security measures and chained trips to collect instructions and equipment in 2 locations, increasing travel and reducing efficiency of the business.

- 1.05 This application seeks planning permission for a new onsite storage building to support the business of Pinnacle Property Management Ltd, or any subsequent occupier of any of the 12 on site offices. The storage building is ancillary to the existing use and not proposed as an independent storage unit.

2.00 SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.01 Beech Court lies to the east of Wokingham Road (A321), south of the centre of Hurst. It is only visible from public view via a gated entrance between brick pillars. The building itself is hidden from the road by linear development of detached houses.



Site location to immediate north of existing Beech Court

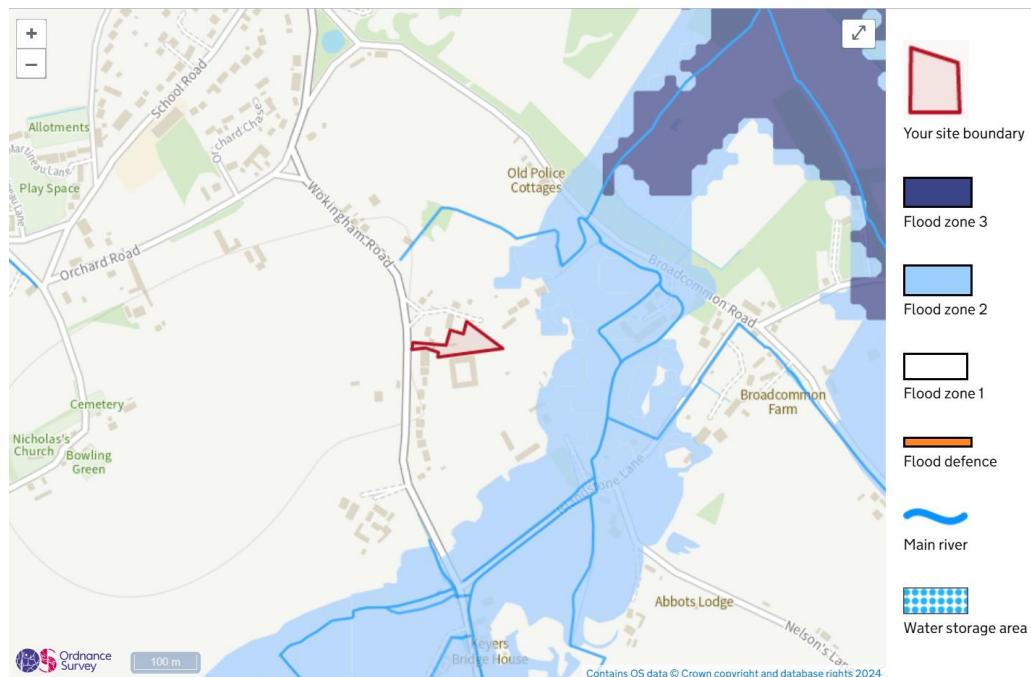
- 2.02 The site lies within a triangle of roads formed by Wokingham Road, Islandstone Lane (approximately 0.3km to the south) and an unnamed lane to the east serving small farms.
- 2.03 The single courtyard building on the site has an attractive character similar to a farmyard arrangement, constructed of brick, timber cladding and tile roof, with a low ridge and the first floor accommodation within the roof. There is a small detached single storey service building (plant, air con, generator utilities etc) to the north of the access drive. Parking is provided on all sides of the main building. The access from Wokingham Road has full design capacity, visibility and dimensions for all types of vehicle.
- 2.04 The application site comprises an area of undeveloped land close to the plant building north of the access road. The eastern part of this area includes a

telecoms mast. The area has been used for overflow parking for in excess of 10 years and forms part of the Beech Court single planning unit.

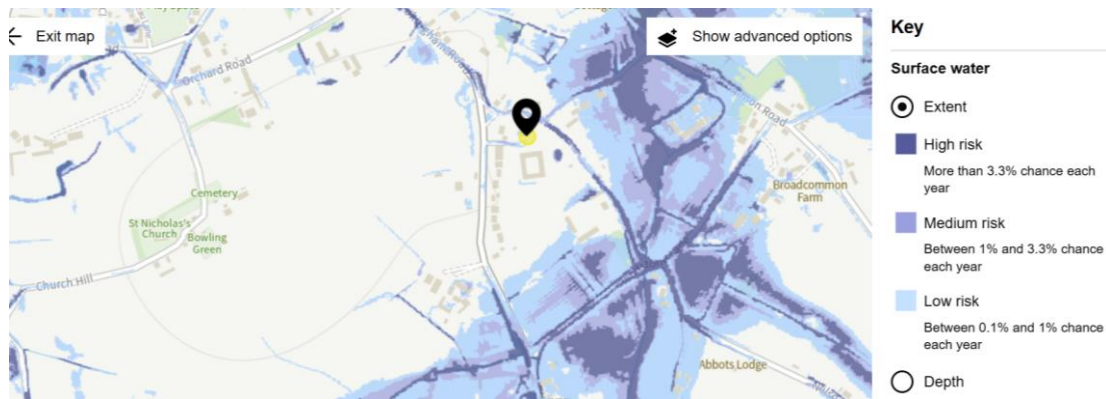


Location of new storage building – behind fence and in front of boundary trees

- 2.05 The site is shown to lie within FZ1 on gov.uk mapping, where there is a low risk of flooding from rivers and water courses. Similarly, it is not in an area where surface water flooding is a significant risk. As the site is significantly smaller than 1 hectare no FRA is required.



Flood risk from rivers/watercourses very low



Flood risk from surface water very low

3.00 SCALE, FORM AND USE OF PROPOSED BUILDING

- 3.01 The area where the new storage building and associated parking and access is proposed is a small triangular area of land set to the north of the main building. The new building is a simple rectangle in footprint, providing 120sm of usable space as a single room.
- 3.02 The siting means that the new building will not be visible from public view outside the site and any long views from the wider countryside will be screened by existing trees and hedges or the mass of the much larger main building.
- 3.03 The proportions and hipped roof design proposed reflects those used on the main building and have a rural barn character. To reflect the rural location and courtyard design of the overall site, materials for the new store are proposed as brick plinth and a stained timber boarding to match existing office building with a tiled roof - emphasising the ancillary outbuilding character and function. It will appear as an additional building directly related to the existing buildings on site.



Traditional materials and rural architectural style of existing main building

- 3.04 To maximise utility for storage of equipment and supplies (see submitted internal indicative layout showing range of storage required) access will be via a traditional large barn door under a projecting gable. Windows will provide natural daylight to reduce the use of energy.
- 3.05 The building will be used for storage ancillary to office/business activities in Beech Court, which will not affect the overall Class E(g) use of the planning unit. The application site is part of a single planning unit and constitutes previously developed land.

4.00 ECOLOGY AND TREES

- 4.01 A tree survey and impact assessment is provided by Glen Harding, a qualified and experienced arboricultural consultant. It concludes that no existing trees will be adversely affected by the proposed development.
- 4.02 BNG baseline assessment by metric and conclusions are provided by Sam Watson Ecology. As reported, the site is currently mown grass with a bare muddy area where casual parking exists.
- 4.03 The Metric indicates that the study area could achieve a post development biodiversity value of 1.28 HaU and 1.28 HeU, which is equivalent to a 11.98% net gain in the biodiversity value of the habitats and a 11.58% net gain in the biodiversity value of the hedges. This compliant BNG in excess of 10% can be secured via a standard Condition and all measures will be delivered on site.

5.00 ACCESS AND PARKING

- 5.01 Access is via the existing fully engineered junction to the A321 Wokingham Road. Gates with a keypad are set back from the highway to enable waiting vehicles to wait off road. The existing situation works well for all types of vehicle without problems.
- 5.02 The application site area has been used for additional overflow car parking since at least 2013 (see image overleaf), providing 8-10 additional unsurfaced spaces while voiding 2 of the original for the gated access. The proposed development would continue to displace the 2 for the gates and provide 2 replacements plus 7 new on a sustainably constructed permeable blockwork and tarmac surface. A space is left within the parking area to provide access for maintenance to the telecoms mast. Additional cycle parking is provided immediately adjoining the new building.



Google Earth image date stamped June 2013-parking use established on application site



Existing unsurfaced area used for overflow parking since 2013

- 5.03 The new storage building is for use ancillary to the existing lawful use by the existing staff and will not attract additional traffic to the site.

6.00 DRAINAGE, SEWERAGE AND ENERGY

6.01 The site is on mains drainage and a connection can be made from any sink/WC provided. Surface water run-off is a matter for detailed assessment during Building Regs submission, but two options are available, either of which would be adequate:

- a) A filtered connection to the pond on site within the same ownership, or
- b) Soakaway constructed 5m distant from new building.

6.02 The site is already provided with an onsite backup generator in the existing utilities building. The new building will carry solar PV cells on the roof, linked to battery storage. As the building is for storage and not additional personnel it is anticipated that energy requirements for heating will be minimal.

7.00 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

7.01 The site lies outside the defined settlement area in an area of countryside, but together with frontage housing it forms part of a larger group of buildings visible from public roads. The development will not alter the public perception of the site or wider area.

7.02 The site is not within or close to a Conservation Area or Listed Buildings or within a Valued Landscape or other special designation, and there are no TPOs affecting trees on the site.

7.03 NPPF advice is supportive of development assisting the ongoing success of businesses in rural areas:

- 85. Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

- 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, beautiful new buildings;.....

- 89. 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.

- 7.04 The WBC Core Strategy and the MDD are inconsistent with NPPF advice in many respects and predate the current national advice. One key Policy which has consistently been found on appeal to be out of date is Policy CP11, which limits development outside defined settlement boundaries. This policy attracts little weight in the Planning Balance.
- 7.05 The proposal does however comply with the overall thrust of CP11, as it will contribute to the success and efficient operation of a sustainable rural enterprise and (1) does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings (2). The Policy is silent on the issue of new buildings but in terms of spatial and visual impacts this store will appear as a similar but much smaller outbuilding.

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)
[relevant parts]

In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

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

- 7.06 The supporting text to Policy CP11 explains the thinking behind the policy.

4.57 Restricting development outside of development limits also helps protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the borough's environment which is recognised in the Audit Report. Preventing the proliferation of development in areas away from existing development limits is important, as they are not generally well located for the facilities and services. Proposals for

development, which would be an increase over what currently exists (outside development limits) are likely to lead to increased use of the private car as they are poorly served by other transport modes contrary to Policy CP6. Proposals may be able to address deficiencies in accessibility to services through contributions in line with Policy CP4.

- 7.07 In this case, on this well screened site within an existing approved B1 planning unit and with additional new tree planting, the new building will not affect the separate identity of settlements. Concerns over additional traffic generation are also irrelevant as the vehicles visiting the store are those used by existing staff, and will not increase. By avoiding the need for a chained trip to this site then offsite storage for collection of equipment, traffic movements on local roads will be reduced.
- 7.08 The new building is no larger than is necessary to provide storage for commercial equipment used daily by the applicant. In terms of design and siting it fully meets the advice set out in the Design Guide and complies with Policy CP1 and MDD policy CC01 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development). The orientation of this small building accommodates south facing roof mounted solar panels to minimise energy use.
- 7.09 The development therefore complies with NPPF advice and does not adversely impact on issues addressed in Policy CP11 and other development Plan policies.

8.00 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 8.01 This is a small single storey development which will be an adjunct to the existing use and will not generate additional traffic. Pre-application consultation with neighbours has not been viewed as necessary. However, the amenity of neighbours has been carefully considered in the siting of the new store.

9.00 OTHER MATTERS

- 9.01 The development is not CIL liable and no S106 Obligation is required. BNG, landscaping details and approval of materials can be secured via Condition. Building Regulations compliance will ensure adequate foul and surface water measures.

10.00 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.01 This is a small addition to a well-established and attractive local employment site, needed to support the continued overall use of the site without adverse impact to neighbours, local character, traffic generation or the primary use of the planning unit.
- 10.02 The development complies with relevant policy. Planning permission is requested.

Deirdre Wells Dip TP MRTPI
Red Kite Development Consultancy
August 2024