



Shinfield Park, Shinfield

Planning Statement

On behalf of **Wrenbridge (FRELD Reading) LLP**

Project Ref: 333101463 | Rev: A | Date: February 2025

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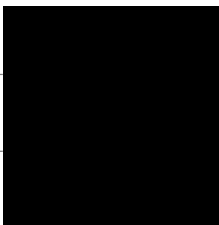
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For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the following development at Shinfield Park, Whitley Wood Way, Shinfield, RG2 9FW (the “Application Site” or “Site”):

‘Redevelopment of site for flexible employment use (Use Class E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8) together with associated servicing areas, parking, landscaping and other associated works (including demolition)’.

- 1.1.2 The Site extends to c.5.5ha and comprises an established, albeit now vacant, office complex located on the southern outskirts of Reading, north of the M4 motorway and accessed off Lower Early Way. The Site is located less than a mile (c.3 mins drive) from Shinfield Studios to the south of the M4.
- 1.1.3 The application is made by Wrenbridge (FRELD Reading) LLP (‘Wrenbridge’) to Wokingham Borough Council (‘WBC’) as Local Planning Authority.

Wrenbridge

- 1.1.4 Wrenbridge is a leading UK property company founded in 1993 who have been successfully developing and investing in properties across the UK for over 30 years.
- 1.1.5 As a specialist in industrial redevelopment projects, Wrenbridge prides itself on the design and quality of its developments and has a consistent track record of delivering best in class employment/industrial facilities around London, East Anglia, and the southeast. Their approach is to positively add to the local areas in which they work and deliver highly sustainable facilities that stand the test of time and support the local and wider community, and which are valued by their tenants, partners and neighbours.
- 1.1.6 Wrenbridge take adding positively to the built environment very seriously and work closely with its design team, landowners and stakeholders to bring forward projects that are both viable and sustainable, to create high quality next generation development.

Scheme Objectives

- 1.1.7 Wrenbridge have identified the Site as an opportunity to replace what is presently a vacant and out-dated office complex with a range of high-quality, modern flexible and sustainable employment units in order to bring the Site back into meaningful and positive economic use.

- 1.1.8 This Statement will demonstrate how the Proposed Development accords with planning policy at a national and local level and highlights the substantial benefits which the scheme will deliver.

Pre-Application Engagement

- 1.1.9 The Proposed Development has been the subject of extensive pre-application discussions with officers at WBC (including in relation to Ecology, Landscape, Highways and Environmental Health), key stakeholders and the local community.
- 1.1.10 In order to ensure that the community and relevant local stakeholders had sufficient opportunity to find out about the proposals, a consultation website was launched on 15 January 2025. This contains key information on the proposals, including detailed images, and encouraged visitors to submit feedback. An online webinar was held via Zoom on 15 January 2025 which allowed the local community to learn more about the proposals and ask questions of the Applicant and their professional project team. There has also been close engagement with Shinfield Parish Council (SPC).
- 1.1.11 Detailed feedback received during the engagement process and how the Applicant has responded is set out within the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (February 2025) prepared by Stantec.

Submission Documents

- 1.1.12 The Planning Application is accompanied by the following documents:
- Application Form and Certificates, duly completed by Stantec;
 - Covering Letter (dated 19 February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
 - CIL Additional Information Form, duly completed by Stantec;
 - Application Drawings, prepared by Chetwoods;
 - Landscape Drawings, prepared by Stantec;
 - Design and Access Statement (February 2025), prepared by Chetwoods;
 - Planning Statement (February 2025), prepared by Stantec (this document);
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Aspect;
 - Ecological Appraisal (February 2025), prepared by Aspect;
 - Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Metric (February 2025), prepared by Aspect;
 - Flood Risk Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Burrows Graham;
 - Groundwater Review (February 2025), prepared by TRC;
 - Transport Statement (February 2025), prepared by Icenii;
 - Framework Travel Plan (February 2025), prepared by Icenii;
 - Framework Delivery and Servicing Management Plan (February 2025), prepared by Icenii;

- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
- Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
- Noise Impact Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
- Air Quality Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
- External Lighting Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA;
- Energy and Sustainability Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA;
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment (February 2025), prepared by MBA;
- Utilities Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA;
- Desk-based Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Assessment (Tier 1) (July 2024), prepared by TRC;
- Desk-based Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Assessment (Tier 2) (July 2024), prepared by TRC;
- Framework Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) (February 2025), prepared by KAM;
- Economic Benefits Statement (February 2025), prepared by Stantec;
- Statement of Community Involvement (February 2025), prepared by Stantec; and
- Fire Strategy Report (February 2025), prepared by Jensen Hughes.

1.1.13 Read together the above documents provide a comprehensive assessment and robust justification for the Proposed Development. A full schedule of submission drawings is included in **Appendix 1**.

1.1.14 A separate formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion has been submitted to the Council. This concludes that the proposals are not considered to constitute EIA development.

Statement Contents

1.1.15 The structure of this Planning Statement is as follows:

- **Section 2** describes the Site and the main features in the surrounding area and provides a summary of the relevant planning history.
- **Section 3** describes key aspects of the Proposed Development.
- **Section 4** outlines the relevant planning policy context of the Site.
- **Section 5** sets out a planning assessment of the Proposed Development.
- **Section 6** provides an overall summary and our conclusions on the appropriateness of the Proposed Development and its acceptability in planning terms.

2 Site Context and Planning History

Site Context

- 2.1.1 The boundary of the Site is identified in red on the Site Location Plan (Drawing Ref: 5704-CA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00050 Rev 01), included in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.1.2 The Site extends to c.5.5 hectares and comprises an existing geometric shaped office building providing 4-storeys of office floorspace plus basement parking. The building comprises c. 77,642 sqm GIA albeit we understand that the actual office component (excluding extensive basement parking and ancillary areas (e.g. restaurant, gym, plant rooms, delivery areas etc.) comprises c.23,730 sqm NIA. The office building is currently vacant following the decision by the previous owner-occupier (Wood Plc) to relocate to more modern premises in nearby Green Park.
- 2.1.3 Until recently, the Site also included a detached 3-storey modular office building (which was subject to a long-term temporary planning permission) but this has since been removed. The Site also contains internal access roads, surface level car parking, 2No. longstanding vacant bungalows, and there are a number of existing, established trees. The area to the south of the main office building (outside the application area) comprises mature woodland and ponds.
- 2.1.4 The Site sits to the north of and is accessed off Lower Earley Way (B3270) and Whitley Wood Lane. The M4 motorway runs south of the Site, with Shinfield Studios located approximately 700m to the east of the Site (south of the M4).
- 2.1.5 The Shinfield Park, Nores Hill Local Wildlife Site surrounds the Site to the north-west, and west, with existing dwellings beyond to the east, north, and west. The Local Wildlife Site includes areas of Ancient Woodland (to the north-west) and priority woodland habitat (to the west).
- 2.1.6 There are no heritage assets located within the Site or within its immediate surroundings. The Site does not fall within a Conservation Area. The closest heritage asset is the Grade II Listed 'Lodge to Meteorological Office', located approximately 300m north-east of the Site.
- 2.1.7 The Site is located entirely within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of flooding.
- 2.1.8 A Public Right of Way (PRoW), identified as SHIN10 on the definitive map, crosses the northern part of the Site. The PRoW links Greenwich Road to the north-east to Railton Close to the west and provides access to and a route through the Local Wildlife Site.

Planning History

- 2.1.9 The planning history for the Site is largely associated with its former office use. There are a number of applications associated with the detached office building which was first granted temporary permission in 2006 (Ref: F/20006/6836).
- 2.1.10 The most recent permission for the temporary building was granted in 2022 (Ref: 213196). Condition 1 attached to this permission required the development to be discontinued and the land restored to its former condition on or before the 19 January 2025 in accordance with a scheme of work that shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details submitted pursuant to Condition 1 were approved in November 2024 and the building has subsequently been dismantled and removed.
- 2.1.11 More recently, a Prior Notification application (Ref: 250188) relating to the demolition of the main building (including basement levels), 2No, bungalows and ancillary buildings down to ground level was submitted to the Council on 27 January 2025. Prior Approval was subsequently granted on 18 February 2025.

3 Proposed Development

- 3.1.1 The proposals seek to demolish the former office complex and associated structures and to deliver 5No. new high-quality, purpose-built and sustainably constructed employment/industrial buildings with associated yards and parking areas set within a high-quality landscape. The detailed layout is illustrated on the Proposed Site Layout Masterplan (Drawing Ref: 5704-CA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00051 Rev P4) included within **Appendix 3**.
- 3.1.2 In total, the Proposed Development will deliver 20,102 sqm GIA (21,247 sqm GEA) of flexible employment floorspace within Use Classes E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8. The proposed breakdown of floorspace per unit is shown in Table 3.1. Building 3 has been designed to accommodate two smaller units (Units 3A and 3B), alternatively the building could be occupied as a single, larger unit. A range of unit sizes are proposed aimed at appealing to a wide range of potential end users.

Table 3.1: Proposed Floorspace

Building	Unit	Sqm GIA	Sqm GEA
1	1	8,030	8,358
2	2	3,799	4,027
3	3A	1,106	1,187
	3B	1,106	1,187
4	4	2,593	2,792
5	5	3,468	3,696
TOTAL		20,102	21,247

- 3.1.3 For the purposes of maximising the attractiveness of the units to the industrial market, 24-hour use of the buildings is proposed. However, whether the units are actually operated 24-hours a day will ultimately depend on individual end occupiers.
- 3.1.4 Each unit includes provision for ancillary office accommodation at first floor level. These areas have been positioned on key frontages so as to maximise the impact of additional glazing and architectural detailing around entrance areas. These areas also contribute towards providing natural surveillance around the site entrance and yard areas. Further details on the design approach to the buildings is set out within the Design and Access Statement (February 2025), prepared by Chetwoods.
- 3.1.5 Extensive and well-considered hard and soft landscape treatments are proposed to provide a functional yet high-quality and attractive setting for the proposed buildings and to soften the site

boundaries and interface with the woodland to the north-west and west, and the residential area to the north. As set out within the detailed landscape drawings and the Design and Access Statement, due consideration has been given to ensuring safe, accessible and legible network of pedestrian and cycle routes; provision of staff amenity areas including links to the existing ponds which are to be retained (but sit outside the site area); and improved boundary treatments to the public right of way where it traverses the Site.

- 3.1.6 As set out within the accompanying Transport Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Icen, the Site will continue to be accessed via the existing access off Lower Early Way / Whitley Wood Lane. Each unit is served by a dedicated yard which will have a secure boundary. A total of 250No. parking spaces are proposed, which will include 14 disabled bays and 45 electric charging points. In addition, a total of 104No. cycle parking spaces are proposed and 15No motorbike spaces (referred to as 'powered two-wheelers' (P2W)). The breakdown of spaces proposed per unit, is set out in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Proposed Parking Provision

Unit	No. Spaces	Blue Badge	EV	Cycles	P2W
1	84	4	17	40	6
2	45	3	9	20	3
3A	12	1	2	6	1
3B	15	1	3	6	1
4	37	3	7	14	2
5	33	2	7	18	2
Overflow	24	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	250	14	45	104	15

Pre-Application Discussions

- 3.1.7 As detailed within the Design and Access Statement, the proposals have been developed and refined following discussions with Officers at WBC. The final proposals are considered to have positively responded to the feedback provided, as outlined below.

- Provision of a 15m buffer to the ancient woodland (based on the revised boundary agreed with Officers).
- Re-working the site layout to try and maximise the retention of existing trees.
- Orientation of proposed buildings and office areas to maximise opportunities for natural surveillance and minimise bulk and massing along the main road frontage.

- Enhanced elevational treatment along key frontages aimed at breaking down the perceived bulk and massing, particularly around the site entrance and along the main road frontage.
- Maximising opportunities to reduce the height of retaining structures and adopting a considered approach to the treatment of such structures having regard to location and visibility.
- Enhanced connectivity to the existing ponds aimed at maximising the amenity benefit for on-site employees and site visitors.

4 Planning Policy Context

4.1.1 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the Site comprises:

- Wokingham Core Strategy (2010)
- Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014);
- Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (2023); and
- Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

4.1.2 The following supplementary planning guidance is also considered to be of relevance to this application:

- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2010) and Companion Document (2010); and
- Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPG (2012)

4.1.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are also a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2024)

4.1.4 The most recent NPPF was published in December 2024 (as amended in January 2025) and sets out the Governments objectives for achieving sustainable development. The NPPF outlines a series of considerations against which development would need to be assessed.

Achieving sustainable development

4.1.5 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

- i) the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed¹; or
- ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Building a strong, competitive economy

- 4.1.6 Paragraph 85 encourages decisions to help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and *'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'* (our emphasis).
- 4.1.7 Paragraph 87 additionally encourages decisions to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for:
 - a) clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections);
 - b) storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation; and
 - c) the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience.

Promoting healthy and safe communities

- 4.1.8 Paragraph 96 encourages the creation of healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction; are safe and accessible; and enable and support healthy lifestyles.

¹ Includes: habitat sites and/or designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

Promoting sustainable transport

- 4.1.9 Paragraph 109 encourages transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places. This should involve *inter alia* understanding and addressing the potential impacts of development on transport networks; realising opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure and changing transport technology and usage; identifying and pursuing opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use; and identifying, assessing and taking into account the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure.
- 4.1.10 Paragraph 115 requires applications for development to ensure that sustainable transport modes are prioritised, taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location. Proposals should also ensure that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; that the design of parking areas and other transport elements reflects current national guidance; and to ensure that any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.
- 4.1.11 Paragraph 116 confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Making effective use of land

- 4.1.12 Paragraph 124 encourages decisions which promote the effective use of land and paragraph 125c) calls for substantial weight to be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements to meet identified needs, *'proposals for which should be approved unless substantial harm would be caused'*.
- 4.1.13 Local Planning Authorities are also required to *'take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs'* (paragraph 128).

Achieving well-designed places

- 4.1.14 The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. The creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

- 4.1.15 Paragraph 135 encourages decisions to ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; are sympathetic to local character and history; establish or maintain a strong sense of place; optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible which promote health and well-being.

Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

- 4.1.16 Paragraph 161 calls for the planning system to support the transition to net zero by 2050 and to take full account of all climate impact. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions; minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.

- 4.1.17 Paragraph 182 requires applications which could affect drainage on or around the site to incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, and which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the development.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

- 4.1.18 Paragraph 187 requires development proposals to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment including through the protection and enhancement of sites of biodiversity or geological value; minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity; and preventing new and existing development from contributing, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution.

Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

- 4.1.19 Paragraph 202 recognises that heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of highest significance. In determining applications, Applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance (Paragraph 207).

Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

- 4.1.20 Local Planning Authorities are required to safeguard mineral resources by defining Mineral Safeguarding Areas and adopt appropriate policies so that known locations of specific minerals resources are not sterilised by non-minerals development where this should be avoided (whilst not creating a presumption that the resources defined will be worked (paragraph 223)).

- 4.1.21 Development proposals within Mineral Safeguarding Areas should not normally be permitted if it might constrain potential future use for mineral working (paragraph 225).

Planning Practice Guidance

- 4.1.22 The Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”) was originally published in March 2014 and is periodically updated. The PPG provides additional guidance to support the NPPF.

The Development Plan

Wokingham Core Strategy (2010)

- 4.1.23 The Wokingham Core Strategy (CS) was adopted in January 2010 and sets out the overarching planning policies which guide development in the Borough over the period to 2026.
- 4.1.24 **Policy CP1** (Sustainable Development) requires development in the Borough to enhance the overall sustainability of the area through minimising impact on the environment including by maintaining or enhancing the environment; minimising the emission of pollutants into the wider environment; limiting adverse effects in water quality and providing adequate drainage; minimising the consumption and use of resources and incorporating facilities for recycling; supporting opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car; and contributing towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon.
- 4.1.25 **Policy CP3** (General Principles for Development) seeks to ensure that development is of a high standard of design and capable of integrating with the character of an area. The policy supports proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to an area together with high quality design which does not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and their quality of life. Proposals will also be supported where there is no detrimental impact upon important ecological, landscape or geological features; where the ability of the site to support fauna and flora is maintained or enhanced; where the full potential of the site is used; development contributes towards a sense of place, including the use of appropriate landscaping; and do not lead to a net loss of dwellings.
- 4.1.26 Where improvements or provision of infrastructure may be required to make development proposals acceptable, such provision will be secured via condition of planning obligation in accordance with **Policy CP4** (Infrastructure Requirements).
- 4.1.27 **Policy CP6** (Managing Travel Demand) supports proposals for development that provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice; are located in areas where there is (or will be) a choice of transport modes available and which minimise the distance people need to travel; provide any necessary improvements to the existing infrastructure network; provide appropriate

vehicular parking; mitigate any adverse effects upon the local and strategic transport network that arise from the development proposed; enhance road safety; and do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems.

- 4.1.28 Under **Policy CP7** (Biodiversity), development proposals which may harm Local Wildlife Sites (either directly or indirectly), habitats or species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or compromises the implementation of local biodiversity action plans will only be permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance and includes mitigation measures or provision of appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses.
- 4.1.29 **Policy CP8** (Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area) requires development proposals which alone or in combination that are likely to have significant effects on the SPA to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigation any adverse effects will be delivered.
- 4.1.30 **Policy CP9** (Scale and Location of Development Proposals) aims to direct development towards areas within the defined Development Limits, including Major Development Locations such as Shinfield (north of M4). Major Development Locations are defined as *‘those with the greatest range of facilities and services which also allow residents the greatest choice in modes to access them. It is it within the development limits of these settlements where major development (including urban extensions within these limits) would be acceptable’* (paragraph 4.52).
- 4.1.31 **Policy CP15** (Employment Development) supports the redevelopment of buildings in employment uses within the defined Development Limits. The policy additionally seeks to ensure no net loss of employment uses within the Borough and 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 are expected to include mitigation measures commensurate with the impact of the development on the demand for housing, labour, skills, traffic and highways.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014)

- 4.1.32 The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) was adopted in February 2014 and, building on the overall approach set out within the CS, provides more detailed policies for managing development.

- 4.1.33 **Policy CC03** (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) builds on CS Policies CP1, CP3 and CP4 and sets out additional criteria to be met, aimed at providing for or enhancing green corridors in developments. This requires development to, *inter alia*, provide new or protect and enhance existing green infrastructure networks; promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors, including public rights of way. Developments should also protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and to incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.
- 4.1.34 **Policy CC04** (Sustainable Design and Construction) requires proposals involving the creation of over 100 sqm gross of non-residential floorspace to achieve BREEAM accreditation and meet or exceed statutory requirements for water resource management.
- 4.1.35 **Policy CC05** (Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks) requires proposals involving the creation of over 1,000 sqm gross of non-residential floorspace to deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
- 4.1.36 **Policy CC06** (Noise) requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impacts.
- 4.1.37 **Policy CC07** (Parking) requires proposals to incorporate parking provision in line with the Council's parking standards. For employment uses of the scale proposed by this application, the relevant parking standards are set out in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Parking Standards

Use Class	Car Parking	Cycle Parking	PTW Parking	Disabled Parking
B1 (now Class E(g))	1:30 sqm	1:150 sqm	1: 20 car parking spaces (up to 100 spaces, 1:40 thereafter)	Dependent on no. bays
B2	1:50 sqm	1:200 sqm		
B8	1:200 sqm	1:200 sqm		

- 4.1.38 **Policy CC09** (Development and Flood Risk) requires all sources of flood risk to be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. **Policy CC10** (Sustainable Drainage) additionally requires all development proposals to ensure surface water arising from development, including taking climate change into account, is managed in a sustainable manner.

- 4.1.39 **Policy TB04** (Development in vicinity of AWE) requires the AWE to be consulted in relation to proposals which may increase the number of people living, working, shopping or visiting the development site. The Application Site is located within the Outer Consultation Zone which, for the purposes of Policy TB04, is triggered in relation to all residential or non-residential applications where 500 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.
- 4.1.40 Under the provisions of **Policy TB12** (Employment Skills Plan) proposals for major development should (albeit not must) 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.
- 4.1.41 **Policy TB20** (Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use) requires proposals for commercial development to demonstrate that there will be no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses in terms of noise, fumes and disturbance; that there will be no significant impact on highway safety; no significant adverse visual impacts; and no significant adverse environmental impacts. The supporting text encourages the use of Delivery Management Plans to assist in managing and minimising impacts associated with commercial operations (particularly those that operate over 24 hours).
- 4.1.42 **Policy TB21** (Landscape Character) requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and to seek to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.
- 4.1.43 **Policy TB23** (Biodiversity and Development) builds on CS Policy CP7 and sets out additional criteria for development proposals to meet including making provision for: new biodiversity features (or enhanced existing); buffer zones to designated sites; and to ensure that new development is ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.

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

- 4.1.44 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP) was adopted in January 2023 and sets out the strategy for managing minerals and waste related development, including the extraction of minerals such as sand and gravel.
- 4.1.45 The northern part of the Site is identified as falling within the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sharp sand and gravel. Under the provisions of **Policy M2** (Safeguarding Sand and Gravel Resources) development within the MSA may be permitted in instances where it can be

demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or it would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location.

Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (2017)

4.1.46 The Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) was made in January 2017 and covers the whole of Shinfield Parish, which includes the Application Site to the north of the M4. The following policies are considered to be of particular reference:

- **Policy 1** (Location of Development) seeks to direct development to areas within the Development Limits (which includes the Application Site).
- **Policy 3** (Sustainable Development) seeks for all development to achieve the highest standards of sustainability including through the use of renewable and low or zero carbon technologies; giving consideration to the layout of development and a fabric-first approach to building design; encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport; and sustainable use and recycling of resources.
- **Policy 4** (Accessibility and Highways Safety) – seeks for development proposals to demonstrate levels of accessibility and highway safety including by making the fullest possible use of sustainable modes of transport.
- **Policy 6** (Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland) supports the retention and protection of trees, hedgerows and woodland and **Policy 7** (Biodiversity) supports development which provides biodiversity enhancements.
- **Policy 8** (Flooding) promotes the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in new developments which should be provided wherever practicable and incorporated into the site layout and landscape design.
- **Policy 11** (Commercial Development) supports new employment development where it can be demonstrated that the scale would complement the local area and contribute to the development of local employment and innovation; would not result in an unacceptable loss of amenity for neighbouring land use; cause adverse impacts on highway safety; and would retain and enhance green routes where relevant.

Emerging Development Plan

4.1.47 The Council are currently in the process of preparing a new local plan in order to set out the planning policies to manage development across the Borough to 2040. The Council consulted on the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) between September-November 2024 and had been expected to submit the Plan for examination in late 2024 / early 2025. However, it is

anticipated that the timetable for submission may have been affected by the changes to the NPPF (specifically in relation to housing delivery requirements) in December 2024.

- 4.1.48 At the current time therefore, emerging policies would be considered to have limited weight in the determination of planning applications.
- 4.1.49 However, of particular relevance to this application, **Draft Policy SS8** (Meeting employment needs) supports the redevelopment of existing sites within employment use to make more efficient use of land, and support meeting future economic needs. Additionally, draft Policy **ER2** (Employment uses outside Core Employment Areas) supports employment proposals within the defined Development Limits but outside of Core Employment Areas where appropriate to the character of the area and subject to: there not being an unacceptable impact on nearby residential, employment or other uses; compliance with the sequential approach (as relevant); being appropriate in nature and scale of location; demonstrating transport implications; stating the number and type of jobs created (including how they are sourced); and demonstrating how any unacceptable impacts will be mitigated.
- 4.1.50 The supporting paragraph 6.12 notes that major employment development will be directed primarily to Core Employment Areas, and paragraph 6.20 supports intensification of existing employment sites (including outside of Core Employment Areas).

Evidence Base

Employment Land Needs Review (March 2023)

- 4.1.51 The Council's emerging Local Plan is informed by an up-to-date Employment Land Needs Review (2023) which identifies a large quantum of surplus and vacant office stock which, alongside existing planning consents, means there is no requirement or need to allocate additional land for office use.
- 4.1.52 There is also an identified opportunity to selectively release office stock or consider alternative uses. It is also noted that there is job growth in the TV/film sector generating a need for additional industrial space as well as high growth in logistics/distribution. Set against low available industrial stock within the Borough there is a strong demand for additional industrial space, particularly for micro, small, large and strategic scale units.
- 4.1.53 It is noted that the Council's adopted strategy to intensify existing floorspace is working but not to the extent that will meet the significant demand occurring across the Thames Valley, and should sites come forward that have characteristics and no insurmountable constraints to accommodate demand for large/strategic logistics and distribution uses, it is recommended that these be positively considered.

- 4.1.54 Overall, the Study identifies a need for a minimum of 19ha of industrial land, although an aspiration target of 51ha is recommended.

Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

- 4.1.55 Whilst not an evidence base document, the Government are due to publish Invest 2035: the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy in spring 2025 which will set out the Government's vision for a modern industrial strategy centred on growth. Its primary objective is to drive growth, by taking advantage of the UK's unique strengths and untapped potential, enabling the UK's world-leading sectors to adapt and grow, and seizing opportunities to lead in new sectors.
- 4.1.56 Job creation is at the heart of the Strategy, supporting growth sectors to create high-quality, well-paid jobs across the country. The strategy will focus on tackling barriers to growth across the potentially growth-driving sectors and places, creating the right conditions for increased investment, and ensuring tangible impact in communities right across the UK.

Policy Conclusions

- 4.1.57 Arising from the above review it is clear that redevelopment of the Site for employment use is supported under adopted and emerging policy. The evidence base also points towards a clear need for additional industrial floorspace (and for surplus office accommodation to be released), which is also an important material consideration in the determination of this application.
- 4.1.58 There are however clearly a number of detailed development management considerations which need to be addressed, and these are considered in more detail in Section 5.

5 Planning Assessment

- 5.1.1 This Section sets out how the Proposed Development complies with the relevant national and local planning policy identified in Section 4. It draws upon the extensive analysis that has been undertaken as part of the Planning Application and as detailed within the suite of supporting technical documents which accompany the submission. In this section, reference is made to the findings of the technical reports where appropriate in order to avoid unnecessary repetition.

Principle of Development

- 5.1.2 The core theme underpinning national and local planning policy is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF summarises the objective of sustainable development as *'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'* (paragraph 7). As part of this there are intertwined economic, social and environmental objectives which need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that, where possible, they each secure net gains.
- 5.1.3 The Site is an existing employment site which comprises previously developed land (i.e. brownfield land) located within the defined Development Limits and a Major Development Location. Paragraph 125 of the NPPF places substantial weight to the value of using brownfield land within settlements for meeting identified development needs and calls for such proposals to be approved *'unless substantial harm would be caused'* (our emphasis).
- 5.1.4 At the local level, the adopted Development Plan also seeks to maximise the use of previously developed land and to direct development towards areas within the defined Development Limits, including Major Development Locations such as Shinfield (north of M4) (CS Policy CP9 and SNP Policy 1). These are locations which are recognised as offering a range of facilities and services which allow residents the greatest choice in modes to access them. CS Policy CP15 additionally supports the redevelopment of existing employment sites for employment use.
- 5.1.5 The Site is therefore considered to be an entirely appropriate, and indeed favourable location, for development which fully aligns with one of the basic principles of sustainable development. Whilst there are a number of relevant development management policies which require due consideration (discussed in more detail below), there are no policies within the Development Plan which would fundamentally preclude the principle of development on the Application Site.

Economic Considerations

- 5.1.6 As noted above, CS Policy CP15 supports the redevelopment of existing employment sites (including those outside Core Employment Areas) for employment use. Policy CP15 additionally requires there to be no net loss of floorspace in employment use.
- 5.1.7 As noted in Section 2, the Site is currently vacant and not therefore contributing in any way to the local economy. The existing building comprises c.77,642 sqm GIA albeit the actual office component (excluding basement parking and ancillary areas (e.g. restaurant, gym, plant rooms, delivery areas etc.) comprises c.23,730 sqm NIA. This in itself is a clear indicator as to the inefficiency of the existing building, with significant areas given over to ancillary/back of house functions.
- 5.1.8 It is also relevant to acknowledge the findings of the Council's employment evidence base (ELNR), which identifies both a surplus of supply and lack of demand for office floorspace within the Borough, and consequently recommends selective release of existing office stock. In parallel, the ELNR identifies strong demand and limited supply of industrial floorspace and the need to plan for additional provision to come forward in order to accommodate anticipated demand.
- 5.1.9 The Economic Benefits Statement (EBS) (February 2025), prepared by Stantec includes an up-to-date review of the office and industrial markets and concludes that *'Wokingham Borough's office market is shifting towards modern, sustainable spaces driven by hybrid working trends, while surplus outdated offices are better suited for redevelopment. Industrial demand remains strong, with constrained supply necessitates new developments and site intensification'* (Section 3.8). The EBS goes on to conclude that the existing building is functionally obsolete and unable to comply with modern market requirements and environmental standards.
- 5.1.10 In the context of the above, there is considered no sound basis on which to protect the existing office floorspace within the Site either in use or floorspace terms.
- 5.1.11 The Proposed Development will deliver 20,102 sqm GIA (21,247 sqm GEA) of flexible employment floorspace within Use Classes E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8. These are uses for which there is a clear and demonstrable need. Whilst the application is being submitted on a speculative basis (i.e. there are currently no signed tenants), there is strong investor confidence in the market (indeed the Site has been purchased outright) and the scheme has been designed to maximise its appeal to a wide-range of potential end users.
- 5.1.12 The Proposed Development would bring forward modern, high-quality and adaptable employment floorspace which offers the potential for the Site to remain within employment use,

but more importantly to bring the Site back into a position whereby it is capable of meaningfully and positively contributing to the local economy.

5.1.13 The Proposed Development will also contribute towards meeting a clear and identified need for additional industrial floorspace within the Borough which should be afforded significant weight in the determination of the application (NPPF paragraph 85) and should clearly outweigh the net loss of employment floorspace overall.

5.1.14 As detailed within the EBS (Section 5), the Proposed Development will deliver the following economic benefits in terms of job creation and GVA:

Construction Phase

- 270 Gross Direct FTE jobs / £15.0m GVA
- 116 Gross Indirect FTE jobs / £5.4m GVA
- 267 net employment effect to Wokingham (direct and indirect jobs)

Operational Phase

- 224-558 Gross Direct FTE jobs / £10.3m – £25.8m GVA
- 291 – 726 Gross Indirect FTE jobs / £15.8m – £39.4m GVA
- 166-414 net employment effect to Wokingham (direct and indirect jobs)
- £945,000 business rates

5.1.15 The above is considered highly beneficial in terms of bringing the Site back into meaningful employment use. However, for the purposes of MDD Policy TB04 (which is triggered in relation to all residential or non-residential applications where 500 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit within the outer consultation zone), the anticipated employment generation falls below the level of employment which the Site has historically supported (within office use) – estimated to be in the region of 1,500 employees. As the Proposed Development is expected to support a reduced level of employment (c.558 employees at the upper level), the requirements of Policy TB04 are not considered to be activated.

Loss of Dwellings

5.1.16 The Site includes 2No. bungalows which are longstanding vacant having been originally built to house on-site caretakers associated with the original civic function of the building when it was occupied by Berkshire County Council. These buildings are longstanding vacant and do not

contribute in any meaningful way to the Council's housing stock. The removal of these dwellings is there considered to have a neutral effect in overall housing stock/supply terms.

- 5.1.17 As set out within the submitted drawings, it is proposed to utilise the area currently occupied by the bungalows to deliver new and enhanced landscaping. This is aimed at reinforcing (and maintaining) a green buffer between the Site and the adjacent residential area to the north as well as contributing towards achieving net gains in biodiversity.
- 5.1.18 Taking these benefits into account alongside the wider benefit of bringing the Site back into meaningful economic use, this is considered to outweigh any policy conflict associated with the proposed loss of dwellings which in any event, gives rise to a neutral impact.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 5.1.19 As noted in Section 2, the Site sits adjacent to areas of local ecological value including Ancient Woodland (to the north/north-west) and Priority Woodland Habitat (to the west) within the Nores Hills Wood Local Wildlife Site. There are also a number of existing trees and vegetation within the Application Site itself and around the perimeter.
- 5.1.20 An Ecological Appraisal (February 2025) has been undertaken by Aspect which is submitted in support of the planning application. This provides full details of existing habitats within the Site, including those with the potential to support protected species, alongside details of the suite of ecological surveys which have been undertaken prior to submitting the planning application.
- 5.1.21 This confirms that the proposals have sought to minimise impacts on biodiversity, and subject to the implementation of appropriate avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures, will not result in significant harm to biodiversity. In this respect the proposals are entirely in accordance with the provision of CS Policies CP3 and CP7 and MDD Policy TB23.
- 5.1.22 Recommended mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures are set out within Section 6 of the Ecological Appraisal but include, *inter alia*, the following:
- Protection of all hedgerows, woodland and trees to be retained within the Proposed Development (MC4);
 - The implementation of appropriate buffer zones including to the Veteran Tree (MC5) and Ancient Woodland (MC6);
 - Sensitive lighting design (MC10);
 - Updated species surveys (as required) at appropriate times prior to works commencing (MC8, MC11 and MC12);

- Implementation of appropriate precaution measures during demolition and construction (MC1, MC2, MC3, MC9 and MC13)
- New planting to mitigate losses (MC7) and provide habitat enhancements.
- Additional enhancements via the provision of bat and bird boxes, habitat piles and refugia and bee bricks and insect boxes.

5.1.23 As noted above, the proposed layout respects the Ancient Woodland area to the north-west by incorporating a 15m buffer. This is in line with the standing advice from Natural England and the Forestry Commission. The buffer is measured based on the Ancient Woodland boundary as agreed with the Council's Ecology and Landscape Officers during pre-application discussions for reasons detailed within the Ecological Appraisal (Section 3.3). The inclusion of the 15m buffer represents a marked improvement relative to current circumstances which includes built structures and hardstanding in close proximity to the woodland edge. These structures will be carefully removed and replaced with appropriate new landscape planting as shown on the submitted landscape drawings. As detailed within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) is recommended to carefully manage works within proximity to the woodland edge, which we would expect to be secured by condition.

5.1.24 Due consideration has also been given to the extent to which the Proposed Development could materially affect the drainage and hydrological conditions within the Ancient Woodland. As detailed within the Groundwater Review (February 2025), prepared by TRC, bedrock is present beneath the Site and the Ancient Woodland is classified as Unproductive Strata and is not therefore expected to hold significant volumes of groundwater. Where groundwater is present it is expected to be locally perched in near surface granular deposits and likely to have very low yields. Any groundwater present is unlikely to be continuous between the Site and the Ancient Woodland and therefore any impact to groundwater beneath the Site resulting from the redevelopment of the Site is unlikely to impact on the woodland.

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.1.25 In line with statutory requirements and Development Plan policies (MDD Policy TB23 and SNP Policy 7), the Proposed Development will deliver significant net gains for biodiversity as detailed within the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and summarised below:

- Onsite Habitats: +1.85 units (13.46%)
- Onsite Hedgerows and tree lines: +1.22 units (+176.18%)

- 5.1.26 Notwithstanding the above, it is acknowledged that there is a trading error identified within the metric due to unmitigated loss of 0.2 units (0-.015ha) of lowland mixed deciduous woodland (from the south-east corner); other woodland; broadleaved and urban trees. Accordingly, it will be necessary for the development to secure some off-site provision in order to overcome this. The Applicant will continue to work with the Council with a view to ensuring these credits are secured within the Borough.

Trees

- 5.1.27 As detailed within the AIA (February 2025), prepared by Aspect, the Proposed Development will necessitate the removal of 41 trees, six groups of trees and the partial removal of one further group and a small section of woodland. The removals have been reduced as far as possible during the iterative design process, and their loss can be compensated for with replacement planting. As noted above, the pressure on the boundary Ancient Woodland and offsite veteran Oak tree will be improved through the removal of existing development features and provision of appropriate buffer zones within the proposed setting.
- 5.1.28 As detailed on the Proposed Landscape Drawings, a total of 289No. new trees are proposed to be planted within the scheme. A full detailed Planting Schedule forms part of the suite of proposed landscape details submitted as part of the planning application.

Transport and Parking

- 5.1.29 In accordance with the NPPF (paragraph 118) and Development Plan policies (CS Policies CP1 and CP6; MDD Policies CC07 and TB20; and SNP Policy 4), the planning application is supported by a Transport Statement (TS), the scope of which has been discussed and agreed with WBC's Highway Officer as part of the pre-application process. The TS assesses the potential changes on the local highway network and public transport services in the vicinity of the Site relative to the overall development site traffic generation agreed upon under the existing use of the Site.
- 5.1.30 The TS establishes that the Site is located within a sustainable location with good access to bus services, and links to Reading station. There is also a good network of pedestrian and cycle routes linking the Site to the surrounding areas. The application is also supported by a Framework Travel Plan which will encourage travel by sustainable modes.
- 5.1.31 In terms of access, it is proposed that the Site will make use of the existing accesses on B3270 and Whitley Wood Lane, with a minor amendment to the Whitley Wood Lane/internal access junction to better accommodate articulated lorries. These works are entirely within the Applicant's ownership and will not require a Highways Agreement with WBC.

- 5.1.32 The proposed level of parking provision (as set out in Section Table 3.2) is in accordance with WBC's parking standards for cars, blue badge parking, bikes and motorbikes. As proposed end use of the units are currently unknown, we have sought to accommodate the average requirement for B2 and B8 uses. Provision for electric vehicle parking infrastructure has also been incorporated into the design, with 20% of all car parking spaces having active provision and the remaining 80% benefitting from passive coverage.
- 5.1.33 Cycle parking is also provided in accordance with the adopted standards for long stay parking, with a total of 104 covered spaces provided for within the Site. Shower and changing facilities will also be provided within each unit to encourage cycling to the Site.
- 5.1.34 A trip generation assessment has been undertaken comparing the expected vehicular movements with the trip generation associated with the existing use. This assessment has shown that the proposals will have a reduced number of vehicle movements when compared with the extant trips for the AM peak and PM peak. As such, the proposals are not expected to have a detrimental impact on the local highway network.
- 5.1.35 It has also been demonstrated through a parking accumulation assessment that the proposed level of parking and loading dock provision will be sufficient to accommodate demand and the maximum accumulation likely to arise is lower than the number of car parking spaces and total loading docks to be provided on Site. As such, there will be no overspill onto the surrounding highway network.
- 5.1.36 Overall, the TS concludes that the Proposed Development will not give rise to any highway safety concerns or lead to a severe impact on the local highway network when compared to the existing use. As such, there are no grounds on which to refuse the application on highways and transportation reasons.

Design and Landscape

- 5.1.37 The Government places significant emphasis on the importance of good design in order to create high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places, which is considered fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.
- 5.1.38 The proposal seeks to provide modern, high-quality flexible employment floorspace in a range of sizes aimed at meeting current as well as future market demands. The proposed units have been designed to institutional standards and will be capable of accommodating a wide range of different employment uses and occupiers. Both the layout and orientation of proposed units as well as their external appearance has been developed and refined following extensive pre-application discussions with Officers at WBC as encouraged by the NPPF (paragraph 137). As a result, the design and layout of the scheme have been very carefully curated to ensure it is

functional, legible and attractive whilst also responding to the surrounding constraints in an appropriate and sympathetic manner.

5.1.39 Full details of the design evolution and final proposals is set out within the Design and Access Statement (February 2025), key aspects of which are summarised below:

- The buildings have been designed to achieve a high-quality finish with the considered use of materials and detailing to add interest and activity and to break up massing on key elevations. The Proposed Development will be both aesthetically pleasing and distinctive whilst also supporting a functional working environment.
- The proposed landscape builds on the Site's existing assets, adding to boundary planting to soften edges and provide more generous buffers to the north-east and north-west. The use of landscaped links and features adds to create an accessible, attractive and quality working environment for employees and site visitors. The development also presents an opportunity to enhance the section of public right of way which crosses the Site to create a more spacious and attractive route to/from Nores Hill Wood.
- The scheme has been designed to be fully accessible for all and provides flexibility for future occupiers to adapt the buildings to meet their operational requirements.
- The scheme has been designed to provide spaces where employees and site visitors feel safe through the use of natural surveillance, security fences, appropriate levels of lighting and by limiting opportunities for conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and vehicles.

5.1.40 The proposals are therefore considered to accord with the objectives of CS Policies CP1 and CP3, MDD Policy CC03 and the Council's accompanying Design Guide.

Landscape Character and Visual Effects

5.1.41 In accordance with both national and local policy, the application is supported by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), prepared by Stantec which identifies and assesses the visual effects of the Proposed Development having regard to the Council's Landscape Character Assessment and the character and features that contribute to the local landscape.

5.1.42 The LVIA has been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment's *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* 3rd Edition (2013) (GLVIA3). As detailed within the LVIA, the Proposed Development has been considered in terms of its effects on the landscape character, landscape value and visual influence.

- 5.1.43 The LVIA acknowledges the series of mitigation measures which have been embedded in the design of the Proposed Development from the outset, with the aim of reducing adverse effects resulting from its introduction into the surrounding landscape and visual context. These mitigation measures include both the landscape proposals and the layout, height and footprint of the proposed built form. The design of the Proposed Development has evolved as part of an iterative process and has been informed by the findings of the baseline landscape and visual amenity conditions.
- 5.1.44 Overall, the assessment identifies moderate adverse effects on one landscape receptor in year 1. However, no visual receptors will be subject to moderate or greater effects by Year 15, there will be no moderate or greater adverse effects remaining on either landscape or visual receptors, and there will be moderate beneficial effects on three landscape receptors. In addition, twelve of the landscape and visual receptors will benefit appreciably from the mitigation, such that adverse or neutral effects become beneficial by Year 15, or beneficial effects increase in their level of significance.
- 5.1.45 Overall, it is concluded that the Proposed Development will deliver an appreciable improvement on the baseline condition of the Site. The distinctive and locally recognisable architecture of Shire Hall and its function as a landmark in the wider landscape will be lost. However, the condition of the built form will be improved, and its lower height is such that the surrounding landscape and views will be less influenced by built form.
- 5.1.46 The offsetting of the proposed built form away from the ancient woodland to the north-west of the Site will provide a buffer that will allow the woodland edge to restore its health over time. The proposed landscape strategy represents a substantial improvement on the existing landscape condition. Whilst a number of trees will be removed, a much larger number will be planted. The planting will integrate the proposed built form in its immediate context and enhance the landscape and scenic quality of the Site. It will improve the functional aspects of the Site including the green infrastructure and biodiversity benefits both within the Site and in their connections with the wider network.
- 5.1.47 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the Site has the capacity to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue harm on the landscape character and visual amenity of the Site and the wider area. It is further considered that the Proposed Development will lead to tangible long-term benefits on the character and features of the Site and the character and general amenity of the local area.
- 5.1.48 The Proposed Development is therefore considered to accord with the objectives of the NPPF (paragraph 187) and Development Plan Policies CP1, CP2, CC02, CC03 and TB21; SNP

Policies 1 and 2; and supplementary guidance including the Borough Design Guide and Sustainable Design and Construction SPD.

Sustainability

- 5.1.49 In accordance with the NPPF and CS Policy CP1, MDD Policies CC04-CC05 and SNP Policy 3 (and having regard to Draft Policy CE2), a range of sustainability measures have been incorporated as part of the Proposed Development as set out within the Energy and Sustainability Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA.
- 5.1.50 Sustainable design and operation is at the core of all Wrenbridge developments and progressive designs on previous sites allow for continuous improvement to reflect better materials and products available on the market.
- 5.1.51 Policy CP1 supports developments that include appropriate on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption so as to minimise carbon dioxide emissions. Policy CC04 additionally requires non-residential development to achieve BREEAM certification (with draft Policy CE2 calling for proposals to achieve 'Excellent' or 'Outstanding').
- 5.1.52 As detailed within the Energy and Sustainability Strategy, the proposals have been designed to achieve a minimum BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' as well as EPC A rating and will secure at least 10% of the expected energy demand from renewable or low carbon sources (including solar panels and air source heat pumps). A BREEAM Pre-Assessment demonstrating the ability to achieve BREEAM 'Excellent' is also submitted as part of the planning application.
- 5.1.53 Further details on the overarching sustainability credentials of the scheme are also set out within the Design and Access Statement. This includes the approach to minimising energy use through design, layout and orientation (where possible). There is also a commitment to re-using and recycling materials used in construction, where possible (as detailed within the Framework CEMP).
- 5.1.54 Additionally, and in accordance with MDD Policy CC10 and SNP Policy 8, the proposal has incorporated sustainable drainage systems into the site layout and landscape design, details of which are set out in the Flood Risk Assessment (February 2025), prepared by Burrows Graham and the Design and Access Statement (Section 6.13).
- 5.1.55 In accordance with SNP Policy 3, the Utilities Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA demonstrates that there is adequate network capacity for all utility provision for the Site to serve the development.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 5.1.56 In accordance with the NPPF and CS Policy CP1, MDD Policies CC09-CC10 and SNP Policy 8 a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (incorporating the sustainable drainage strategy) has been prepared and submitted as part of the planning application.
- 5.1.57 The FRA confirms that the Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding. Further to this, the Site is considered to be at very low risk from all other sources of flooding; tidal, surface water, sewer, groundwater and artificial sources.
- 5.1.58 A review of the site topographical, GPR and CCTV surveys indicate that the existing buildings and parking areas are served by two below ground surface water drainage networks. One outfalls unrestricted to a pond beyond the B3270 to the southeast and the other to a small watercourse to the southwest. The foul drainage serving the existing buildings is also made up of two distinct networks that outfall ultimately to the Thames Water sewer networks to both the north and south of the Site.
- 5.1.59 The proposed surface water drainage strategy is to restrict flow rates in line with policy requirements for brownfield developments, and to ensure that the flood risk to the Site and surrounding catchment is not increased by the development. Having considered the SuDS hierarchy, it is proposed to restrict flows via the use of geocellular attenuation tanks located beneath service yards. The peak rate of runoff will be restricted to the respective 1 in 1 year and 1 in 100-year greenfield rates, in line with WBC policy.
- 5.1.60 It is relevant to note that the existing site is largely impermeable and discharges at an unrestricted rate. As such the proposed strategy provides a betterment in terms of significantly reducing predevelopment discharge rates. The post development impermeable areas will also decrease, thus reducing the overall post development runoff volumes.
- 5.1.61 SuDS in the form of permeable paving and small bio retention areas adjacent the new highways have also been incorporated into the layout.
- 5.1.62 The FRA confirms that there is no residual flood risk from the development site to the surrounding district due to the reduction in storm water flow rates. The Proposed Development will not therefore increase the risk of flooding to other adjacent neighbourhoods. Out of chamber or gully flooding for the extreme 100 year plus climate change event may occur within the Site and is classed as exceedance flows. Flood water from this event will be contained within the lower lying yard areas of the Site and directed away from the proposed units.

- 5.1.63 Foul flows will be collected by a new below ground gravity network and discharge to the existing Thames Water foul water sewer located beyond the southwestern boundary via an existing connection.
- 5.1.64 The proposals are therefore considered to accord with national and local planning policy in flood risk and drainage terms.

Noise

- 5.1.65 In accordance with CS Policy CP3, MDD Policy CC06 and SNP Policy 11, the planning application is supported by a Noise Impact Assessment (NIA) (February 2025), prepared by Stantec which provides an assessment of potential noise impacts associated with operational activities within the new development, including car parking facilities. Recommendations are also made in terms of plant noise emission criteria which we would expect to the subject of a condition. The NIA will be subject to an update in order to also give due consideration to potential noise impacts associated with vehicular movements to and from the Site, the data for which has yet to be provided by WBC.
- 5.1.66 The NIA concludes that with reference to the requirements of the NPPF (and subject to the assessment of traffic movements on the surrounding road network) the operational sound associated with the Proposed Development is unlikely to have an observable adverse effect on any identified receptors (i.e. below the LOAEL). No specific mitigation measures are therefore proposed, and the Proposed Development is therefore considered to be compliant with national and local planning policy with respect to noise. Notwithstanding this, a Framework Delivery and Servicing Management Plan is submitted with the planning application, as encouraged by MDD Policy TB20.
- 5.1.67 Provisions are also set out within the Framework CEMP in order to manage and minimise potential disturbances during the construction period.

Lighting

- 5.1.68 As detailed within the External Lighting Strategy (February 2025), prepared by MBA careful consideration has been given to the lighting design, location and operation in order to avoid adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity, particularly to the north and the surrounding environment (including protected species). To achieve this, the following measures have been adopted:
- Selecting luminaires that will greatly reduce light spill and glare to and around site boundaries. The maximum lux level will not exceed 1 lux and will prevent sky glow.

- Lighting to the main access roads through the Site and the parking area to the north have been designed using column lighting that includes automatic presence detection with automatic dimming controls to operate as follows:
 - If no presence is detected in the area the individual luminaires will automatically dim down to an output level of 20% of the maximum output.
 - If presence is then detected in the area the individual luminaires will automatically ramp up to the maximum output until no further presence is detected.
- Careful placement of luminaires, ensuring that the main beam angle of all luminaires directed towards any potential observer is not more than 70 degrees.
- Careful choice of mounting heights and luminaires to allow for greater spacing between luminaires thus reducing the overall number of lighting points required.
- Use of upward lighting and glow design control to prevent excessive light spill near and adjacent to the Site boundaries, including back shields and optics with zero tilt and glare.

5.1.69 The proposals are therefore considered to accord with the requirement of the NPPF, MDD Policy TB20 and SNP Policies 3 and 11.

Air Quality

5.1.70 In accordance with the NPPF and CS Policy CP1 and MDD Policy TB20 (and having regard to draft Local Plan Policies C1 and HC6), an Air Quality Assessment (AQA) has been submitted in support of the Proposed Development. This confirms that the Site is not located within an AQMA. The closest AQMA to the Site is the Wokingham AQMA, located approximately 60m south of the Site around the M4.

5.1.71 It is acknowledged that construction works have the potential to create dust. During construction it is therefore recommended that, in accordance with the IAQM guidance, a package of mitigation measures is put in place to minimise the risk of elevated PM10 concentrations and dust nuisance in the surrounding area. Such measures are incorporated within the Framework CEMP submitted as part of the planning application. The AQA concludes that with mitigation in place the construction impacts are judged as not significant.

5.1.72 Similar to the NIA, the AQA will be subject to an update following receipt of traffic data from WBC, which will assess the operational impacts of the Proposed Development, in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF, as well as relevant local and national planning policy and guidance regarding air quality. Concentrations of NO₂, PM10 and PM2.5 will be predicted for a number of worst-case locations representing existing properties adjacent to the road network, as well as future receptor locations within the Site. The significance of any potential impacts to

air quality will be determined based on the criteria outlined in the EPUK/IAQM guidance (EPUK/IAQM, 2017).

- 5.1.73 At this stage, mitigation measures to reduce the impacts of the Proposed Development on air quality concentrations are not required. However, should the updated AQA identify significant effects from operational road traffic emissions, appropriate mitigation measures will be proposed.
- 5.1.74 Overall, the Proposed Development is expected to fully accord with the requirements of the NPPF, and relevant local and national planning policy and guidance regarding air quality.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 5.1.75 In accordance with the NPPF, CS Policy CP3 and MDD Policy TB24, a Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (HEDBA) (February 2025) has been undertaken and is submitted in support of the planning application.
- 5.1.76 The HEDBA establishes that the Site is located within an area where any archaeological remains have been extensively disturbed and truncated. Archaeological resource is not therefore considered to be a constraint to the Proposed Development and no further archaeological work is considered necessary to inform determination of the planning application.
- 5.1.77 The HEDBA also concludes that the main building (formerly known as Shire Hall) holds no heritage interest and is not a constraint to the planning application. Its removal would not harm the historic environment and provides an opportunity to redevelop this area.
- 5.1.78 This assessment has also identified no harm as a result of the redevelopment on other designated heritage assets, notably Listed Buildings, located within a 1km study area of the site boundary.
- 5.1.79 The Proposed Development is therefore fully compliant with the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the NPPF and local planning policy.

Safeguarded Minerals

- 5.1.80 As noted in Section 4, the northern part of the Site is identified as falling within the Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sharp sand and gravel. Under the provisions of JMWP Policy M2, development within the MSA may be permitted in instances where it can be demonstrated that the mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised; or it would be inappropriate to extract mineral resources in that location.

5.1.81 Having regard to the findings of the Geoenvironmental and Geotechnical Assessments undertaken by TRC, the areas within the northern part of the Site comprise of finishes overlaying made ground on London Clay. This indicates that even if there are sand and gravel deposits present, it would likely comprise only a very limited area and as such the extractable volume and overall yield would also be low. The proximity of nearby residential uses and environmental sensitivities including a number of existing trees (some of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders) also constrains the potential for meaningful extraction. For these reasons, extraction is unlikely to be economic and not considered to be appropriate.

5.1.82 In any event, the proposals in this part of the Site include landscape and parking, neither of which would be considered to fully sterilise the potential for future extraction in any event.

Assessment Summary

5.1.83 Having regard to the above, the Proposed Development is considered to accord with the Development Plan and the NPPF. The Proposed Development will also deliver substantial benefits including, but not limited to, the following:

- Promoting the efficient and effective use of land through the redevelopment of previously developed land. In line with NPPF paragraph 125, this is to be afforded substantial weight.
- Bringing forward positive economic development on an existing, outdated employment site within a Major Development Location. In line with NPPF paragraph 85, this is to be afforded significant weight.
- Economic gains in terms of job creation at both the construction and operational stages and associated net additional GVA both short and long-term.
- Removal of existing urban features in proximity to the Ancient Woodland and replacement with a 15m landscape buffer to secure its long-term protection.
- Enhancements to local biodiversity within the Site, with significant net gains in habitat and hedgerow units, in excess of policy requirements.
- Significant reduction in impermeable surfaces and introduction of new drainage (including the use of SuDS) to manage surface-water discharges, providing a significant reduction in pre-development discharge rates and runoff volumes.

6 Summary and Conclusions

- 6.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Stantec, on behalf of Wrenbridge (FRELD Reading) LLP, to assess the planning matters associated with the proposed redevelopment of land at Shinfield Park, Shinfield for flexible employment use (Use Class E(g)(ii)-(iii)/B2/B8) together with associated servicing areas, parking, landscaping and other associated works (including demolition).
- 6.1.2 The NPPF calls for significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth (paragraph 85) and for substantial weight to be given to proposals which use suitable brownfield land within settlements to accommodate identified needs (paragraph 125). As demonstrated by this Statement and the suite of supporting technical documentation which are submitted in support of the planning application, the proposals will not give rise to substantial harms and the application should therefore be approved in line with NPPF paragraph 125.
- 6.1.3 This Statement also demonstrates that the proposals are in general accordance with the Development Plan and represents sustainable development as set out within the NPPF. The proposal will deliver mutually supportive net gains for each of the overarching objectives of sustainable development (NPPF paragraph 8), as summarised below.
- a) **Economic** – provision of high-quality employment floorspace for which there is a clear and identified need within the Borough. This will in turn generate jobs and positively contribute to the local economy both within the short-term (during construction) and long-term (once operational).
 - b) **Social** – creation of jobs within a well-designed, safe, attractive and accessible working environment. The proposed landscape has been designed to support employee health and well-being whilst also softening the edges and interface with adjacent uses, ultimately allowing for moderate beneficial visual effects over the long-term.
 - c) **Environmental** – delivery of significant ecological enhancements including improved measures to safeguard the ancient woodland and veteran tree (relative to existing), significant net gains in biodiversity (in excess of policy requirements) and positive approach to landscape design. The proposals also support an overall reduction in vehicular trips relative to the existing use, alongside the introduction of measures to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel.
- 6.1.4 Overall, the Proposed Development is capable of delivering substantial benefits which meet the objectives of the NPPF. There are no development management considerations which cannot be acceptably mitigated against, and the proposals are in general accordance with the

Development Plan. In accordance with the presumption in favour, planning permission should be granted without delay.

Appendix 1

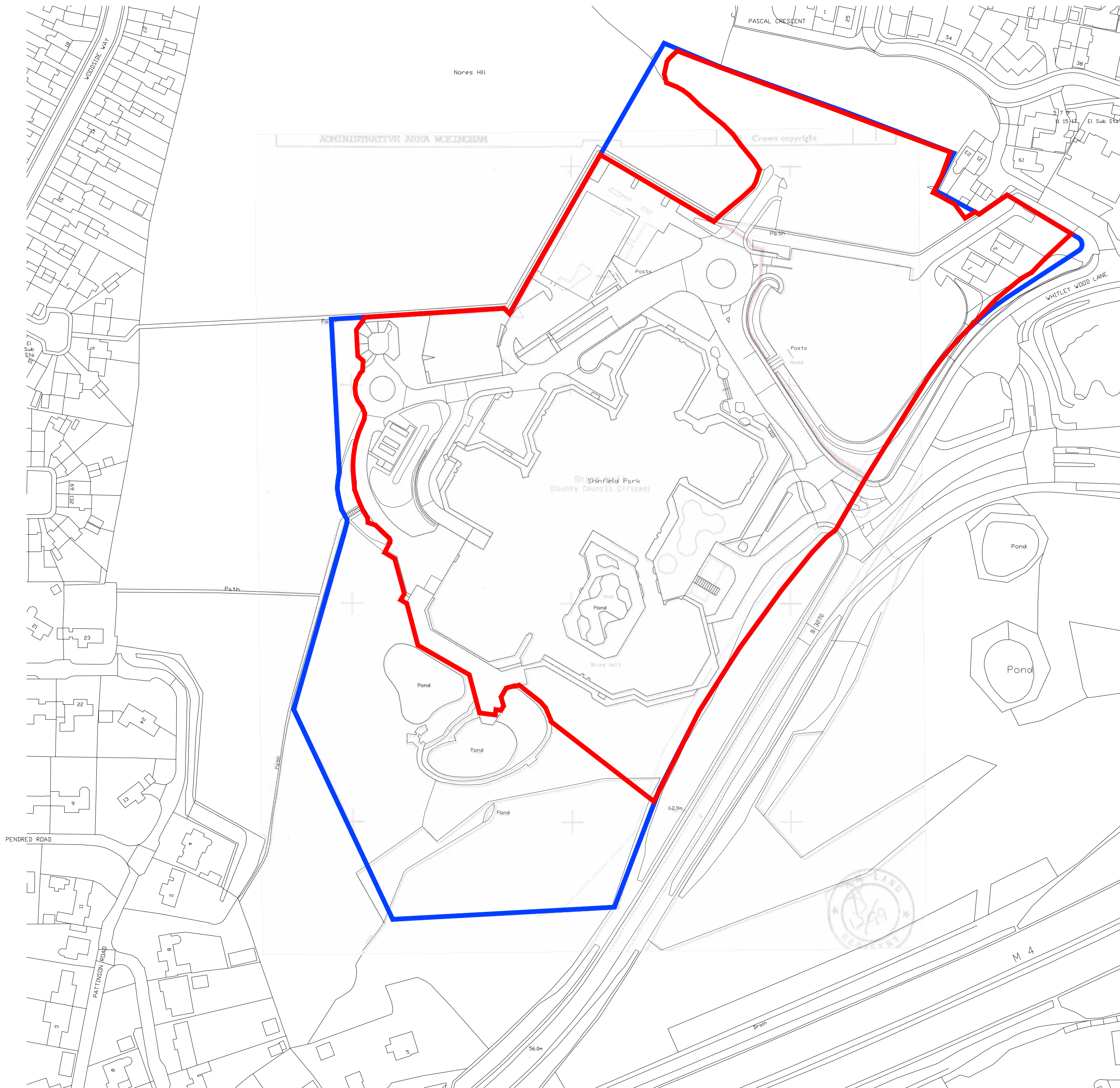
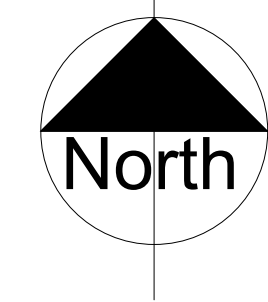
Drawing Schedule

Drawing Title	Drawing Reference	Revision
Site Location Plan	5704-CA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00050	P1
Existing Lower Basement Plan (Level B2)	5704-CA-00-B2-DR-A-00101	P01
Existing Upper Basement Plan (Level B1)	5704-CA-00-B1-DR-A-00102	P01
Existing Ground Floor Plan (Level 00)	5704-CA-00-00-DR-A-00103	P01
Existing First Floor Plan (Level 01)	5704-CA-00-01-DR-A-00104	P01
Existing Second Floor Plan (Level 02)	5704-CA-00-02-DR-A-00105	P01
Existing Third Floor Plan (Level 03)	5704-CA-00-03-DR-A-00106	P01
Existing Fourth Floor Plan (Level 04)	5704-CA-00-04-DR-A-00107	P01
Existing Fifth Floor Plan (Level 05)	5704-CA-00-05-DR-A-00108	P01
Existing Elevations (Sheet 01)	5704-CA-00-ZZ-DR-A-00171	P01
Existing Elevations (Sheet 02)	5704-CA-00-ZZ-DR-A-00172	P01
Proposed Site Layout Masterplan	5704-CA-ZZ-00-DR-A-00051	P5
Unit 1 Warehouse GA Plan	5704-CA-01-00-DR-A-00100	P4
Unit 1 Office Floor GA Plan	5704-CA-01-ZZ-DR-A-00101	P4
Unit 1 Roof GA Plan	5704-CA-01-RF-DR-A-00102	P4
Unit 1 Proposed Warehouse GA Sections	5704-CA-01-ZZ-DR-A-00150	P4
Unit 1 Proposed Office Sections	5704-CA-01-ZZ-DR-A-00151	P4
Unit 1 Proposed Elevations	5704-CA-01-ZZ-DR-A-00170	P4
Unit 2 Warehouse GA Plan	5704-CA-02-00-DR-A-00100	P4
Unit 2 Office Floor GA Plan	5704-CA-02-ZZ-DR-A-00101	P5
Unit 2 Roof GA Plan	5704-CA-02-RF-DR-A-00102	P4
Unit 2 Proposed Warehouse GA Sections	5704-CA-02-ZZ-DR-A-00150	P4
Unit 2 Proposed Office Sections	5704-CA-02-ZZ-DR-A-00151	P4
Unit 2 Proposed Elevations	5704-CA-02-ZZ-DR-A-00170	P4
Unit 3A and 3B Warehouse GA Plan	5704-CA-03-00-DR-A-00100	P4
Unit 3A and 3B Office Floor GA Plan	5704-CA-03-ZZ-DR-A-00101	P5

Drawing Title	Drawing Reference	Revision
Unit 3A and 3B Roof GA Plan	5704-CA-03-RF-DR-A-00102	P4
Unit 3A and 3B Proposed Warehouse GA Sections	5704-CA-03-ZZ-DR-A-00150	P4
Unit 3A and 3B Proposed Office Sections	5704-CA-03-ZZ-DR-A-00151	P4
Unit 3A and 3B Proposed Elevations	5704-CA-03-ZZ-DR-A-00170	P4
Unit 4 Warehouse GA Plan	5704-CA-04-00-DR-A-00100	P4
Unit 4 Office Floor GA Plan	5704-CA-04-ZZ-DR-A-00101	P4
Unit 4 Roof GA Plan	5704-CA-04-RF-DR-A-00102	P4
Unit 4 Proposed Warehouse GA Sections	5704-CA-04-ZZ-DR-A-00150	P4
Unit 4 Proposed Office Sections	5704-CA-04-ZZ-DR-A-00151	P4
Unit 4 Proposed Elevations	5704-CA-04-ZZ-DR-A-00170	P5
Unit 5 Warehouse GA Plan	5704-CA-05-00-DR-A-00100	P5
Unit 5 Office Floor GA Plan	5704-CA-05-ZZ-DR-A-00101	P5
Unit 5 Roof GA Plan	5704-CA-05-RF-DR-A-00102	P4
Unit 5 Proposed Warehouse GA Sections	5704-CA-05-ZZ-DR-A-00150	P4
Unit 5 Proposed Office Sections	5704-CA-05-ZZ-DR-A-00151	P4
Unit 5 Proposed Elevations	5704-CA-05-ZZ-DR-A-00170	P5
Typical Cycle Shelter Details	5704-CA-XX-XX-DR-A-97001	P1
Proposed Service Yard Fence Layout	5704-CA-ZZ-00-DR-A-01100	P1
Typical Paladin Fencing Detail	5704-CA-00-XX-DR-A-00301	P1
Overall Landscape Reference Plan	333101463-RG-LD-100	P1
Landscape Hard and Soft GA Plan (1 of 4)	333101463-RG-LD-201	P1
Landscape Hard and Soft GA Plan (2 of 4)	333101463-RG-LD-202	P1
Landscape Hard and Soft GA Plan (3 of 4)	333101463-RG-LD-203	P1
Landscape Hard and Soft GA Plan (4 of 4)	333101463-RG-LD-204	P1
Planting Schedule	333101463-RG-LD-205	P1
Typical Details Soft Landscape	333101463-RG-LD-300	P1

Appendix 2

NOTES:
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Subject to statutory approvals and survey.
Building areas are liable to adjustment over the course of the design process due to the ongoing construction detailing developments.
Please note the information contained within this drawing is solely for the benefit of the employer and should not be relied upon by third parties.
The CDM hazard management procedures for the Chetwoods aspects of the design of this project are to be found on the "Chetwoods - Hazard Analysis and Design Risk Assessment" and/or drawings. The full project design teams comprehensive set of hazard management procedures are available from the Principle Designer appointed for the project.



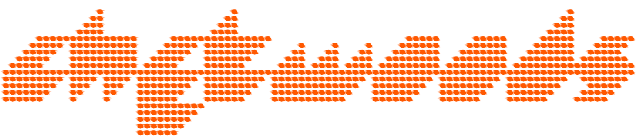
P1 PLANNING ISSUE 18/12/24 SKT

Rev	Revision Description	Date	Author/Reviewer
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PLANNING

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Project

SHINFIELD PARK
READING

Client

WRENBRIDGE

Drawing Title

SITE LOCATION PLAN

Scale	Size	Drawn	Checked	Date
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1:1250	A1	SKT	TM	18/12/24
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Project	Originator	Zone	Level	Type	Rate	Number	Rev
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Appendix 3



ACCOMMODATION SCHEDULE

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 1 Warehouse	85.5%	6,862	73,863	7,238	77,910
GF Entrance & Core	2.3%	188	2,024		
FF Office	12.2%	980	10,549	1,120	12,056
Total	100.0%	8,030	86,435	8,358	89,966

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 2 Warehouse	76.8%	2,917	31,399	3,192	34,359
GF Entrance & Core	4.2%	158	1,701		
FF Office	19.1%	724	7,793	835	8,988
Total	100.0%	3,799	40,892	4,027	43,347

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 3A Warehouse	79.8%	883	9,505	982	10,570
GF Entrance & Core	3.8%	42	452		
FF Office	16.4%	181	1,948	205	2,207
Total	100.0%	1,106	11,905	1,187	12,777

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 3B Warehouse	79.8%	883	9,505	982	10,570
GF Entrance & Core	3.8%	42	452		
FF Office	16.4%	181	1,948	205	2,207
Total	100.0%	1,106	11,905	1,187	12,777

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 4 Warehouse	76.0%	1,970	21,205	2,205	23,735
GF Entrance & Core	5.3%	137	1,475		
FF Office	18.7%	486	5,231	587	6,318
Total	100.0%	2,593	27,911	2,792	30,053

	%	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Unit 5 Warehouse	83.3%	2,889	31,097	3,140	33,799
GF Entrance & Core	3.6%	124	1,335		
FF Office	13.1%	455	4,898	556	5,985
Total	100.0%	3,468	37,330	3,696	39,784

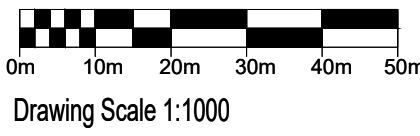
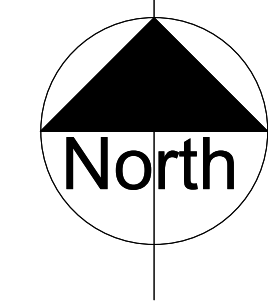
	GIA sqm	GIA sqft	GEA sqm	GEA sqft
Total Development	20,102	216,378	21,247	228,703

Total Site Area: 5.5ha
Note - Unit 1 haunch height of 12m, all other units 10m

LEGEND:

- Unit 1 remote parking
- Unit 5 remote parking
- Ancient Woodland
- 15m Buffer to Ancient Woodland
- Existing Public Right of Way
- Proposed Retaining Structure
- Refer to engineer's drawings for details

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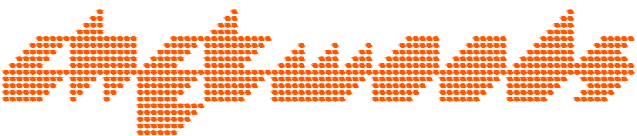
P5	EV spaces revised.	10.02.25	SKT
P4	Unit 5 fence line revised.	24.01.25	SKT
P3	Further co-ordination with Civils and Landscape drawings.	22.01.25	JC
P2	Further co-ordination with Stantec drawings	20.01.25	SKT
P1	ISSUED FOR COMMENTS.	18/12/24	SKT

Rev	Revision Description	Date	Author/Reviewer
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PLANNING

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Project

SHINFIELD PARK
READING

Client

WRENBRIDGE

Drawing Title

PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT MASTERPLAN

Scale	Size	Drawn	Checked	Date
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Project	Originator	Zone	Level	Type	Rate	Number	Rev.
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