

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250376
Site Address:	Unit 7, Millars Business Park, Fishponds Lane, Wokingham, RG41 2TZ
Expiry Date:	6 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	13 March 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed installation of a mezzanine platform and 2 no. external Heat Pump Inverter units.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location – Wokingham
Core Employment Area – Molly Millars Industrial Area
Water Utility Consultation Zones
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Historic Flooding Points Consultation Zone
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Landscape Character Assessment Area – Arborfield Cross and Barkham Settled and Farmed Clay
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 7km Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint	The JMWP does not apply to the scale of development proposed within

Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	the site's location.
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
231839	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 210705 for changes to the description of development and to the wording of Condition 16 (mix of uses).	Approved – 08/09/2023
210705	Full application for the proposed erection of 2 no. industrial buildings (Use Class B2) comprising a total of 4 no. units together with associated infrastructure, parking, and landscaping, following demolition of 2 no. existing industrial buildings.	Conditionally Approved – 30/11/2021

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health: No objection WBC Highways: No objection
External
None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	1 comment received objecting to the proposed Heat Pump Inverter units on the following grounds: - Visibility of the units would affect the value of No.1 Oaklands Drive adjacent. <i>Officer's Comment: Loss of property value is not a material planning consideration.</i> - Additional noise impact. <i>Officer's comment: This is discussed in the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of the report.</i>

APPRAISAL
Site Description:

The application site comprises 1 of 4no. recently constructed industrial units (Use Class C2 & B8) within the Molly Millars Industrial Area a defined Core Employment Area to the south-east of Wokingham Town Centre. The site is the smallest of 4no. units in terms of floorspace (391.31m²), with a core amenity area located at ground floor level and office provision at first floor level.

Parking and servicing areas are located to the front of the site, with a soft landscape buffer to the side and rear where the site's boundaries adjoin Alexandra Grange Care Home to the north-east and residential properties on Oaklands Drive to the north-west. The site is currently unoccupied. The permitted hours of operation are 07:00-19:00 7 days a week.

Proposal:

This application proposes the installation of a mezzanine platform and 2 no. external Heat Pump Inverter units. The mezzanine platform would create an additional 72.5m² of floorspace at first floor level, accommodating additional ancillary office space, staff welfare facilities and a viewing platform. The proposed Heat Pump Inverter units would be attached to the rear elevation of the unit with a maximum height of approximately 1.3m and width of 0.9m.

The proposal partly facilitates the display, demonstration and sale of indoor golf simulators in connection with the applicant's business. Approximately 67.5m² of floorspace (circa. 17.2% of the total floorspace) would be dedicated to this use. The unit would not be open to the public, with customers attending the premises strictly on an appointment basis to view the simulators (max of 4 appointments a day). Given that more than 80% of the total floorspace would remain for the storage and distribution of these products, and visits by customers would be restricted with the unit not open to the general public, it is considered that the proposal would not result in a material change of use of the unit to a mixed use including retail (Use Class E), and that the sales and demonstration of the products would be ancillary to the B8 Use of the unit.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Core Strategy policy CP15 supports the expansion or intensification of existing employments uses located within a defined Core Employment Area. The proposed alterations would support the needs of a business located within Molly Millars

Industrial Area and is therefore acceptable in principle. There would be no net loss of floorspace in Class B use, with the proposed mezzanine level compensating for the floorspace dedicated to the display and demonstration of the products. As discussed, this use is relatively low-key in nature and would not be tantamount to the material change of use of the unit to a mixed use including retail (Use Class E). The proposal would also not prevent a future occupant from utilising all floorspace for B2/B8 uses.

The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on building a strong, competitive economy, with paragraph 85 stating that 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'*. The proposal would support the business needs of the applicant as well as wider opportunities for development and would therefore positively contribute to the viability of the Core Employment Area.

Character of the Area:

The proposed external alterations to the commercial unit are limited to the installation of 2no. Heat Pump Inverter units to the rear elevation. Due to their position at the rear, they would not affect the visual character of the industrial estate. From immediate views, their industrial appearance would be viewed in the context of the existing building and would not appear out of character.

Condition 24 of planning consent 210705 restricts the creation of additional floorspace, including mezzanine floors, without planning permission. The reason for this condition states: *"To prevent an over-development of the site and to ensure adequate parking. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07"*.

Condition 17 of planning consent 210705, as varied by Non-Material Amendment application ref 231838, restricts the B2 use of the whole development to 50% of the floorspace contained within all 4 units. This is to encourage a mix of uses and to ensure adequate parking to serve the site as a whole.

The proposed mezzanine platform would create an additional 72.5m² of floorspace at first floor level, constituting an approximate increase of 18.5%. This is a relatively minor increase in floorspace contained within the unit and given the B8 use of the intended occupier, there would be no significant impact on the requirements of condition 17 to deliver a mix of B2 and B8 uses within the development as a whole.

As discussed, the proposed mezzanine platform would partly facilitate the part use of the ground floor for the display and demonstration of the products. Given the relatively low-key nature of this function, with the unit remaining closed to the general public and visitors to the site being restricted to appointments only, the intensification of the use of the unit would be minimal with no adverse impacts arising from the restricted increase in users of the site.

Overall, the proposal is limited in scale and would not result in the over-development of the site in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3, as well as the aims

of condition 17 of planning consent 210705. To ensure that the use of the unit for display and demonstrations remains limited in nature, conditions are recommended which restricts this use to the floorspace as shown on the proposed floor plans, and visitors to the site are by appointment only.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed Heat Pump Inverter units would be positioned at ground level, circa. 4m from the closest residential boundary (No.1 Oaklands Drive). Due to the size of the units and the intervening boundary treatment, there are no concerns in respect of potential loss of light, overbearing or overlooking impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Noise: Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that LPAs should prevent new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of noise pollution.

Following discussions with the Council's Environmental Health Officer, an Environmental Noise Assessment (Clear Acoustic Design, 13/05/2025) was submitted in support of the application. The assessment concludes that the units, when fully operational, would have no impact on the existing ambient noise level in the area, and a low impact on the nearest noise sensitive window (serving Alexandra Grange), meaning a difference of less than 5dB compared to the existing noise level.

The submitted information has been scrutinised by the Council's Environmental Health Officer. They are satisfied that the units would comply with the accepted guidelines for a residential property in terms of noise impact, and the development would not be a nuisance to neighbouring occupiers. The maximum noise levels would have a low impact over and above the existing ambient noise levels, preventing an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties.

Overall, sufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the AC units would not introduce an adverse noise impact on the amenity of neighbouring amenities in accordance with MDD Local Plan policy CC06 and the NPPF.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to manage travel demand with sustainable travel modes, appropriate vehicle parking and minimisation of traffic impacts and highway safety concerns. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan set out the minimum parking requirements for development proposals.

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objections, concluding that the proposed increase in floorspace will unlikely have a significant impact on the local highway network, and the site's parking provision can accommodate visitors parking for appointments as described within the submission. The recommended condition (4) will ensure that the number of visits to the site remains limited so that there is no knock-on effect on parking provision.

Subject to conditions, the application is acceptable and is therefore recommended for **approval**.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	5 June 2025
Earliest date for decision:	21 March 2025

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	5 June 2025