

## DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

|                                                                                                                |                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b>                                                                                     | 242151                                                              |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                                                                                           | Phoenix Unit, Wokingham Hospital, Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 2XR |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>                                                                                            | Extended until 8 November 2024                                      |
| <b>Site Visit Date:</b>                                                                                        | 16/09/2024                                                          |
| <b>Proposal:</b> Full application for the proposed erection of a log cabin building to provide a sensory room. |                                                                     |

### **PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS**

Major Development Location  
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone  
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability  
Nuclear Consultation Zone  
SSSI Impact Risk Zones  
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 5KM Zone  
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone  
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone

### **PLANNING POLICY**

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Policy</b>          | National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<br>National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Core Strategy (CS)</b>       | CP1 – Sustainable Development<br>CP2 – Inclusive Communities<br>CP3 – General Principles for Development<br>CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements<br>CP6 – Managing Travel Demand<br>CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>MDD Local Plan (MDD)</b>     | CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development<br>CC02 – Development Limits<br>CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping<br>CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction<br>CC06 – Noise<br>CC07 – Parking<br>CC09 – Development and Flood Risk<br>CC10 – Sustainable Drainage<br>TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use<br>TB21 – Landscape Character |
| <b>Joint Minerals and Waste</b> | DM1 - Sustainable Development<br>DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation<br>DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity<br>DM14 - Ancillary development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

|                    |                                                                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Plan (JMWP)</b> | DM15 - Site History                                                             |
| <b>Other</b>       | Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document<br>CIL Guidance + 123 List |

| <b>PLANNING HISTORY</b> |                                                                                                                                                                         |                        |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Application Number      | Description                                                                                                                                                             | Decision and Date      |
| F/2000/0856             | Proposed single storey extension to hospital for use as art therapy clinic                                                                                              | Approved<br>28/04/2000 |
| F/2001/3337             | Proposed three storey extension to hospital to form lift shaft and entrance hall                                                                                        | Approved<br>02/04/2001 |
| F/2001/4321             | Proposed extension to car park and ambulance turning area (retrospective)                                                                                               | Approved<br>22/08/2001 |
| F/2001/5553             | Proposed single storey extensions to hospital plus erection of a detached pre-fabricated building for use as a medical store                                            | Approved<br>12/02/2002 |
| F/2002/6126             | Proposed erection of wooden shed to be used for storage                                                                                                                 | Approved<br>24/07/2002 |
| F/2003/9524             | Proposed single storey extension to hospital to form glazed pavilion for use as a meeting/refreshment area                                                              | Approved<br>25/07/2003 |
| F/2005/5367             | Proposed erection of replacement building for use as day nursery and removal of existing buildings                                                                      | Approved<br>12/09/2005 |
| F/2006/8083             | Proposed installation of a modular building to provide office accommodation                                                                                             | Approved<br>18/08/2006 |
| F/2007/0874             | Proposed installation of bolt on modular building extension plus on free standing modular building for healthcare office use                                            | Approved<br>22/05/2007 |
| 193230                  | The removal of the existing medical gas (oxygen) bottle storage cage and the proposed installation of a modular pre-built medical gas (oxygen) bottle storage unit      | Approved<br>13/02/2020 |
| 222369                  | Full application for the proposed installation of 1 no. car park pay station and erection of 2 no. ANPR camera columns at the site entrance and exit.                   | Approved<br>29/09/2022 |
| 222370                  | Application for advertisement consent for 34 no. non-illuminated car park signs, consisting of: 20 no. post mounted T&C signs, 3 no. wall mounted T&C signs, 2 no. post | Approved<br>29/09/2022 |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|  | mounted Blue Badge Holder signs, 1 no. wall mounted Blue Badge sign, 1 no. post mounted entrance sign, 1 no. post mounted exit sign, 1 no. wall mounted EV charge point sign, 3 no. wall mounted staff T&C signs, 1 no. wall mounted NOP sign and 2 no. post mounted Tariff and T&C signs. |  |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Internal

WBC Highways – No objection  
WBC Trees & Landscape – No objection subject to condition  
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions

### External

None consulted

## REPRESENTATIONS

|                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| Parish/Town Council | No comments received |
| Ward Member(s)      | No comments received |
| Neighbours          | No comments received |

## APPRAISAL

### Site Description:

The application site is part of the Phoenix Unit within the grounds of Wokingham Community Hospital, where the surrounding area is characterised by hospital buildings and extensions with residential properties at Meadow Road to the west of the site.

### Proposal:

The proposal is for the erection of a log cabin building to form a sensory room. The cabin will contain also a small store for equipment storage. The dimensions of the proposed cabin are 5.6 metres (depth) x 5.1 metres (width) x 3.2 metres (height) with a floor area of approximately 30m<sup>2</sup>. The cabin will be sited on a plinth approximately 30cm above ground level.

It is noted that the original Site Plan included a new pavement for disabled access to the cabin from the main Phoenix Unit. However, this was outside the submitted red line, so the applicant has been advised to remove it and submit a separate application for the new pavement. Accordingly, a revised Site Plan has been submitted without the access pavement.

The supporting Design and Access Statement refers that currently the layout of the Phoenix Unit does not easily lead itself for breakout areas where patients can relax or engage in a specific sensory area. The proposal for a sensory room would offer

additional and enhanced facilities to the patients, particularly those with neurodevelopmental needs.

**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.

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy ensures that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities to meet long term needs and address the requirements of, *inter alia*:

- b) Children, young people, and families including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs
- c) People with special needs including those with a physical, sensory, or learning disability or problems with accessing services

In this case, the use of the proposed cabin building as a sensory room for hospital patients serves a recognised need which facilitates to support the hospital and wider community and thus complies with the provisions of CP2.

**Character of the Area:**

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design.

The site is located along Barkham Road which is a Green Route, and the mature trees to the front of the hospital adjacent to the road contribute to the Green Route character. The tree cover extends into the lawns in front of the main hospital building facing Barkham Road.

The cabin would be positioned approximately 6.7 metres from the boundary fence fronting main Barkham Road, which is considered an adequate separation distance from the building to the footpath, as it would be partially screened by existing trees with restricted views of the roof of the building. It would not appear out of character with the surrounding built environment including the buildings within the hospital grounds. The use of timber material is considered adequate for this type of structure, without resulting in any visual harm to the appearance of nearby buildings and thus is considered to be acceptable.

**Neighbouring Amenity:**

The cabin would be located within the existing site boundaries and as such there would be no impact on nearby residential properties on grounds of overlooking, overbearingness, loss of light or noise disturbance.

**Highway Access and Parking Provision:**

Due to the scale of the development, and the fact that there will be no changes on the numbers of patients and staff, there would be no implications in terms of site access, traffic generation and parking demand. No objections are raised by the WBC Highways Officer.

**Landscape and Trees:**

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

The application is supported by an Arboricultural Implications Report SJA air 24061-01 Jun 24. Two dead trees are to be removed. The site is open to some views from the Green Route (Barkham Road), so replacement planting would 'mitigate the tree losses, improve the age class balance of the trees on site, enhance the local landscape, and strengthen the existing arboricultural character of the site' as it rightly states in the arb submission. The WBC Trees & Landscape Officer has reviewed the information and raises no objections subject to conditions for landscaping details and to secure the protection of trees within the site.

**Ecology:**

The WBC Ecology Officer has been consulted on the proposals, who advises that this application will result in greater than 25m<sup>2</sup> of scoring habitat change. The Officer agrees that it therefore would be subject to the general biodiversity gain condition, should permission be granted. A completed statutory metric has been submitted (dated: 16 August 2024; iteration 1) and this is accompanied by a technical note (Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, LHB Ecology, no ref, 16 August 2024).

The Location Plan submitted is of a scale that it is not possible to accurately measure the red line boundary area, although it does indicate that the red line boundary is square. The Site Plan submitted does not show the red line boundary and so cannot be used to confirm the area either. Looking at the Proposed Plan and Elevation of the Cabin the area of the cabin can be calculated (5.12m x 5.62m = 28.77m<sup>2</sup>).

The biodiversity net gain metric that has been submitted considers a survey area of 47m<sup>2</sup> – indicating a red line boundary area of just under 7m x 7m. The Officer agrees with the habitat type and condition identified at baseline.

It is not appropriate to approve a detailed biodiversity net gain plan at this stage (this needs to be via condition discharge). However, it is helpful to understand the strategy for achieving biodiversity net gain, which is indicated in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment. The strategy relies on delivery on-site (via tree planting adjacent to the log cabin). Necessarily, this relies on there being space within the red line boundary for the development and the tree. Although the tree planting, log cabin and red line

boundary are not currently shown in any plan, the Ecology Officer is of the view that the measurements for the log cabin and the area given in the baseline implies that there is space for tree planting on-site.

Delivery of on-site biodiversity net gain should be secured by condition, planning obligation, or conservation covenant. In this instance, the Officer recommends that a condition is a proportionate approach. Providing that implementation of the on-site landscaping to deliver biodiversity net gain is secured (via a soft landscaping condition), this proposal is considered acceptable in ecological terms.

**Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area:**

Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that where development is likely to have an effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA), it is required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered. The site is located within 5km of the TBH SPA; however, the scope of the works are minor whereby there will be no foreseeable impact upon the SPA.

**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 indication that persons with protected characteristics (such as those with different sensory needs) 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. The proposed development would allow the users to undertake sensory activities in a purpose built equitable environment.

| RECOMMENDATION              |                   |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Conditions agreed:          | Yes               |
| Recommendation:             | Approval          |
| Date:                       | 25 October 2024   |
| Earliest date for decision: | 24 September 2024 |

|                                                               |                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation<br/>agreed by:<br/>(Authorised Officer)</b> | <i>HMM</i>             |
| <b>Date:</b>                                                  | <b>25 October 2024</b> |