

MEMORANDUM

From:	Catherine Brimble Senior Landscape Officer		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	251984
Address:	Land south of Bridge Farm, Reading Road, Arborfield, Berkshire, RG2 9HT.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent 223083 (as varied by 243190) for the erection of up to 11 no. commercial units to provide 6,986sqm GIA commercial / employment development predominantly within Class B8 and/or Class E (g) uses with supporting facilities within Class E uses comprising ancillary offices, trade counters and food/drink facilities with highway works and strategic landscaping. Details of appearance and landscaping to be considered.		
Type of Development:	Major Heavy industry/storage/warehouse		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The approved outline application (223083) was varied by application 243190. This increased the footprint of a number of the units but also reduced the integral areas of structural planting close to the units which we worked hard to incorporate as part of the original illustrative layout approved at outline. I considered the changes proposed as part of the varied layout to have a greater visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

This RM application is based on the changes to the layout as approved under application 243190.

Layout

An Illustrative Masterplan drawing (3389/P403 K) has been provided showing the layout of the commercial units and associated parking. As a RM application we will

need a site plan rather than an 'illustrative' layout as this application will be fixing the layout of the various features.

As previously identified in my comments for 243190, the parking areas have extended beyond the building line on the eastern boundary as previously shown on the illustrative layouts with several of the disabled bays extending into the landscaped areas including abutting the 15m buffer zone to the ancient woodland. Therefore, the landscape treatment along this edge needs to be robust and substantial (see comments below in landscape section).

The footpath link from the side of Unit 5 into the 15m landscape buffer strip does not need to be surfaced. This can be an informal space and will need to be shown as such on the layout drawing.

A sub-station is now included within the layout to the south of the forecourt and parking area for Unit 7. This extends development into the strategic landscape zone as identified on the Access, Land Use and Parameters Plan previously approved. The current location of the sub-station is therefore unacceptable and will need to be relocated adjacent to one of the commercial units but not further reducing the areas of landscaping. It is also noted that the current location provides no access due to location of proposed parking and fencing relating to Unit 7.

Materials

The DAS provided as part of the Outline application indicated that the units will comprise of high-quality materials consisting of dark facing brickwork, dark glazing frames, dark roof and cladding. The reason for this colour pallet was to ensure the buildings recede visually into the landscape when viewed from the west against the woodland behind. This was picked up as part of the LVIA and revisions made to the original outline application to ensure landscape impacts of the development was further reduced. This colour pallet is shown on the image below.



This RM application includes further details on material choice for the commercial units, and these are inherently different to the principles agreed through the Outline approval as it introduces lighter coloured timber type cladding and light grey roofing as indicated in the image below. This will make the units much more visible in the landscape and instead of visually receding, the lighter materials will visually stand out within landscape, which is not acceptable.



I also note the elevation drawings for the various units don't include any details for the lighter timber type cladding.

The materials will need to be revised in accordance with our expectations that were set out in the DAS approved under the outline application. These will need to consist of high-quality dark coloured materials.

Drainage

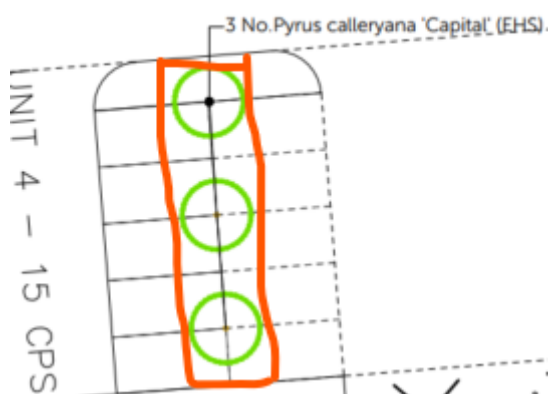
The Drainage Plans provided in Appendix V of the Foul and Storm Water Drainage Strategy document indicates a number of underground geocellular storage areas mainly within the parking or access roads, however a smaller area to the west of Unit 1 is located under a strategic landscape space. Based on the depth of the cover level minus the invert level but allowing for the depth of the crates, it appears there will only be approximately 0.3m soil coverage over the top of the crates which is not sufficient to allow for any tree or shrub planting. I'm not sure if I have understood this correctly and the drainage engineer will need to confirm how much soil coverage there will be over these crates. In any case underground geocellular storage in this area is unacceptable as it will limit the type of planting that can be planted in this location. It is essential that trees are planted on the western end on Unit 1 to reduce the visual impact of this group of commercial units in views from Observer Way and the countryside to the west. I request that this small area of underground geocellular storage is relocated outside the area of strategic landscaping.

Landscape

It is unclear what the proposed levels will be across the site. An existing topographical survey is provided but I am unable to find any details regarding proposed levels changes, and this will need to be provided as required by the landscape condition to understand possible level changes.

Detailed Landscape Proposals (Sheets 1 & 2) have been submitted with the application showing the landscape details proposed across the site. The following will need to be addressed:

1. The details provided on the approved Landscape Strategy Plan submitted for the outline application indicated that the 15m landscape buffer to the ancient woodland on the eastern edge of the site will include 7-8m of new woodland planting with the remaining outer edge of 5m, wildflower grassland, leaving a clear corridor for the Public Right of Way. This is not what is shown on the submitted landscape plans with a shrub only mix varying in width from between 2.5m to a maximum of 6m wide. There is also no buffer planting to the east of Unit 7 and part of the car park to the north of this unit. The landscape plan will need to be amended to show a substantial woodland buffer as previously agreed.
2. There will need to be a greater number of Oaks and other large-scale trees such as disease resistant Elm, proposed as specimen trees across the site in areas where space allows.
3. Birch is not a tree species that is locally found and therefore will need to be removed from the species list and drawings.
4. The ornamental tree planting within the car parking areas will need to be more diverse. At present the only tree species shown is *Pyrus calleryana* 'Capital'.
5. There are two locations with the parking layout (to the fronts of Units 1 & 4) where trees are shown between the parking bays and not in any soft planting bed, as shown in the extract below. This tree planting is essential, and I would preferably like to see these trees within a 2m landscape strip as with all the other tree planting within the parking areas. If this cannot be achieved, then the trees will need to be supported by underground soil cells to the extent I have highlight in orange below, with associated tree grilles. There will also need to be some form of above ground protection for the tree otherwise these will easily get damaged by vehicles using this space. Details of these tree pits and associated tree protection will need to be provided.



6. A greater number of trees will need to be included to the south of Unit 7 to provide better visual screening from views from the wider landscape and Observer Way to the south.
7. The planting plans show a number of different mixes, however these are not replicated in the Plant Schedule. We will need to understand what species and their percentage mix, are in which mixes.

8. I presume mix A1 & A2 are a hedgerow mix which will need to be separately identified as such. Hedgerows will need to include Hawthorn and Hazel in the mix with a reduction in the percentage of Blackthorn as this species is already very prevalent in the area and will find its way into the hedgerow naturally. Hedgerows will need to be specified as a double staggered row with 5 plants per linear m.
9. Boundary details are shown on the Boundary Treatment Plan (3389 P407 A). The post and rail fencing is shown to cut through the 15m landscape buffer and the PR0W which is not acceptable. These two parts of the fenceline should be removed from the drawing and a gap left in the fence where there is access to this space adjacent to Unit 5.

Arboriculture

An Arboricultural Method Statement by BLADE Trees Ltd and dated August 2025 is submitted with the application.

The AMS will need to include guidance and a method statement as to how the woodland plants will be planted within the 15m ancient woodland buffer zone to avoid damage and harm. Vehicle access and movements in this area will not be acceptable as this will cause soil compaction. Delivery of all plant material will need to be from the proposed parking area and transported by hand.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Possible conditions may be required depending on the level of additional information provided.

Date:	2 nd October 2025	Signed:	C. Brimble
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