

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251855
Site Address:	Heron Industrial Estate, Unit 7 & 8, Basingstoke Road, Spencers Wood, Wokingham, RG7 1PJ
Expiry Date:	14 November 2025
Site Visit Date:	12 August 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of Unit 7/8 to Use Classes E.(g)(iii), B2 and B8, plus the subdivision of the units and an associated extension to operating hours.	

RELEVANT PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Spencers Wood (Modest Development Location)
Nuclear Consultation Zone – Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield.
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
Electricity Sub Station

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB02 – Development adjoining the Green Belt TB04 – Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield TB20 - Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use
Wokingham	SS1 – Sustainable development principles

am Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS7 – Development in the vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishments SS8 – Meeting our employment needs SS13 – Loddon Valley Garden Village SS14 – Sites allocated for residential development, including residential as part of mixed use development SS15 – Securing infrastructure CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE4 – Supporting a circular economy C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER4 – Employment and skills plans FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
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
14664 (all units)	Redevelopment of the site to erect Units, Offices and Car Parking	Approved 18/12/1980
18634 (Unit 1)	Variation of condition 12 and 17 of permission 14664 for office accommodation	Approved
20357 (Units 7 and 8)	Change of use to industrial offices	Refused 17/11/1983
29700 (Unit 8)	Change of use to car rental and valet service	Approved 17/03/1988
980450 (Unit 8)	Proposed Change Of Use From B8 (Storage) To B1(C) (Light Industrial) Use And Erection Of Cooling Tower	Approved 04/02/1999
010417 (Unit 4)	Proposed temporary relaxation until 29/11/2006	Refused

	of condition 12 of consent 14664 to allow 24 hour working by Datavault only.	31/07/2001
120632 (Unit 8)	Change of use from B8 (storage and distribution) to allow either B8 or B2 (general industrial) use.	Approved 03/07/2012
172382 (Unit 4)	Full application for the closing up of existing windows and extension of cladding to match existing.	Approved 13/10/2017
242575	Application to vary condition 12 of planning consent 14664 for the retention of the existing building and development of the remainder of the site with Class III units and offices and Class X units with car parking. Condition 12 refers to the operational hours of the units forming the Industrial Estate and the variation is to extend the operational hours of Units 7 and 8 to 0500-2300 from Monday to Friday (the weekend and Bank Holiday hour restrictions will be unchanged).	Refused 05/12/2024

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – Concerns raised regarding lack of noise mitigation

WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)

WBC Emergency Planning – No objection subject to condition(s)

External

Office for Nuclear Regulation – No objection subject to condition(s)

West Berks Emergency Planning Officer – No objection subject to condition(s)

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Shinfield Parish Council has no objection to the splitting of the units back into two but the change to the operating hours are unacceptable based on the site's location near houses and opening countryside.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Nine representations received from residents, raising the following concerns: - Extended operating hours would harm nearby residential properties. - Previous extensions to operating hours have been refused. - Not a core employment area - Harm to the character of the area - Area is predominantly residential - Impact on doctor's surgery due to increase in stress and anxiety - Acoustic assessment is not a valid assessment as the

	units are empty - Light pollution - Increase in traffic leading to safety concerns - Air pollution from additional vehicle movements - Impact on property values (<i>Officer comment: This is not a material planning consideration.</i>) - Disturbance to wildlife - Precedent for further expansion
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APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of 2no. industrial units within Heron Industrial Estate. The site is accessed via Basingstoke Road to the east and whilst located within the settlement boundaries of Spencers Wood, it also lies adjacent to the Spencers Wood's southern settlement boundary that adjoins onto the designated countryside to the south.

The site immediately abuts residential dwellings and as well as Lambs Lane Primary School to the north, west and south. To the east is largely open agricultural fields lined with scattered vegetation.

Proposal Description/Site History:

This application seeks approval for the proposed change of use of Units 7/8 to Use Classes E.(g)(iii), B2 and B8. Unit 8 is currently permitted for either B2 (general industrial) or B8 (storage and distribution), whereas Unit 7 is permitted for just B8 use. Class E.(g)(iii) covers any industrial process which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area.

Further to this, the application seeks to subdivide the units into two separate planning units (as was the case originally) as in recent history, the Units were amalgamated by Holme Dodsworth Metals Ltd, a specialist metals manufacturer and supplier of metal products who have now vacated the site.

Lastly, the final element of the proposal involves an extension to Units 7/8's operating hours from 07:00-18:00 Mondays to Fridays to 07:00-23:00 Mondays to Fridays. The Units' Saturday operating hours are not affected, nor are the restrictions on Sundays/Bank Holidays.

An application was refused in December 2024 (242575) to extend the operating hours of Units 7/8 to 05:00-23:00. This application was primarily refused on the grounds of adverse noise impacts during nighttime hours (05:00-07:00). The Officer Report however does outline that an extension until 23:00, as it is recognised as daytime hours, would likely be acceptable.

The LPA are acutely aware that the Council's Planning Enforcement and Environmental Health teams have been notified in recent months about several noise complaints from these units as the operational hours listed above have been breached, with reports of activities beginning on site at 5/5:30am. It is noted however that the source of these complaints, Holme Dodsworth Metals Ltd, have now vacated

the site.

Principle of Development:

Local Plan Update (LPU):

The Council are also progressing with their Local Plan Update (LPU) which has progressed beyond the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) stage, with representations received on the plan's legal compliance and soundness between 30 September and 13 November 2024.

The Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) consultation has now closed and the Council have now analysed the representations received. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025. The Inspectors appointed to examine the LPU have now published notification of the examination hearing sessions, including the draft programme, guidance note and the Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) to be considered.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive.

The Council however acknowledge that there are unresolved objections on substantive grounds pursuant on the majority of relevant policies listed above, meaning weight attracted to these policies is limited.

Core Strategy:

Policy CP1(1) only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment.

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 CP15 of the Core Strategy states that development for business, industry or warehousing will be permitted, including the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses provided it is within one of the designated Core Employment Areas. Elsewhere within development limits the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in employment use will be acceptable in principle.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan:

MDD 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.

MDD Local Plan Policy TB11 also focuses on Core Employment Areas and mirrors the requirements of Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy.

National Planning Policy Framework:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Section 11 states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

Summary:

The site is located within the Modest Development Location of Spencers Wood and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

The site is not within a Core Employment Area. Policy CP15 considers that elsewhere within development limits, the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in employment use to be acceptable in principle. The proposals involve the extension of operating hours of 2no. industrial units already in employment and the inclusion of Class E g(iii) would suitably diversify the potential for future tenants of the site.

Character of the Area:

The site is located on the settlement edge of Spencers Wood. Basingstoke Road acts as a transition between the Countryside to the south and the settlement to the north.

Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan states that development at the edge of settlements is acceptable where it is demonstrated that it is within development limits and respects the transition between the built up area and the open countryside by taking account of the character of the adjacent countryside and landscape.

No operational development is proposed, with the only works being internal subdivisions. The extension of operating hours would result in a higher influx of vehicle movements to and from the site in the later hours of the day, but this would negligibly affect the character of the area as Basingstoke Road is a main access road in the Borough that already experiences evening/nighttime industrial and commercial traffic.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light and Overbearing:

There are no concerns on these grounds due to the nature of the development.

Noise:

MDD Local Plan TB20 states that planning permission will only be granted for commercial development proposals throughout the Borough that demonstrate:

- a) There is no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses in terms of noise, fumes and disturbance
- b) There is no significant impact on highway safety
- c) There is no significant adverse visual impact

- d) There is no significant adverse environmental impact

Policy CC06 of the MDDLDP relates to noise. It states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts in line with Appendix 1 of the MDD.

The noise impact of the development must be assessed. Where there is no adverse impact (No Observed Effect Level) then noise will not be a material consideration. Where there is an adverse effect (Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level to Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level), then:

- a) The development layout must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and mitigation measures should be incorporated accordingly.
- b) Where there is still an adverse impact then internal layout must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and measures should be incorporated accordingly.
- c) Where there is still an adverse impact then physical mitigation measures such as barriers/mechanical ventilation must be reviewed. Where this results in there no longer being an adverse impact then design and mitigation measures should be incorporated accordingly.
- d) Where there is still an adverse impact and the development falls within the significant observed adverse effect level then planning permission will normally be refused.

This application is supported by an Acoustic Impact Assessment (Hawkins Environmental, 23rd July 2025).

The initial assessment described in BS 4142 to determine whether an adverse impact is likely is based on establishing the difference between the rating level and the background noise level outside the residential property of interest. The British Standard states that the following points should be considered:

- Typically, the greater this difference, the greater the magnitude of the impact.
- A difference of around +10 dB or more is likely to be an indication of a significant adverse impact, depending on the context
- A difference of around +5 dB is likely to be an indication of an adverse impact, depending on the context.
- The lower the rating level is relative to the measured background sound level, the less likely it is that the specific sound source will have an adverse impact or a significant adverse impact. Where the rating level does not exceed the background sound level, this is an indication of the specific sound source having a low impact, depending on the context.

The units on site already operate between the hours of 07:00-18:00. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises that the time base for daytime hours is 07:00-23:00, with the hours between 23:00-7:00 being defined as nighttime hours. Therefore, it is important to highlight that the threshold for impact across the

proposed extended operating hours (18:00-23:00) is the same as that for the current operating hours.

Table 3.2: Summary of Noise Criteria: WHO

Residential Environment	Critical Health Effect	L _{Aeq}	L _{AFmax}	Time Base
Outdoor living area	Serious annoyance, daytime and evening	55	-	07:00-23:00
	Moderate annoyance, daytime and evening	50	-	07:00-23:00
Dwelling, indoors	Speech intelligibility and moderate annoyance, daytime and evening	35	-	07:00-23:00
Inside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, night-time	30	45	23:00-07:00
Outside bedrooms	Sleep disturbance, window open (outdoor values)	45	60	23:00-07:00

Recordings were taken onsite for both background and specific sound. Two separate noise measurement locations were used; one on the northern boundary shared with the dwelling known as 'Amersham' and the southern boundary shared with the dwelling known as 'Field View'.

The average background sound levels for each location between the hours of 18:00-23:00 are as follows:

- Measurement Location 1 (Amersham) – 35dB
- Measurement Location 2 (Field View) – 33dB

Whilst still considered daytime hours, the background noise levels between the hours listed above are notably lower than the levels between 07:00-18:00. This is largely due to a significant reduction in road users in the later hours of the evening.

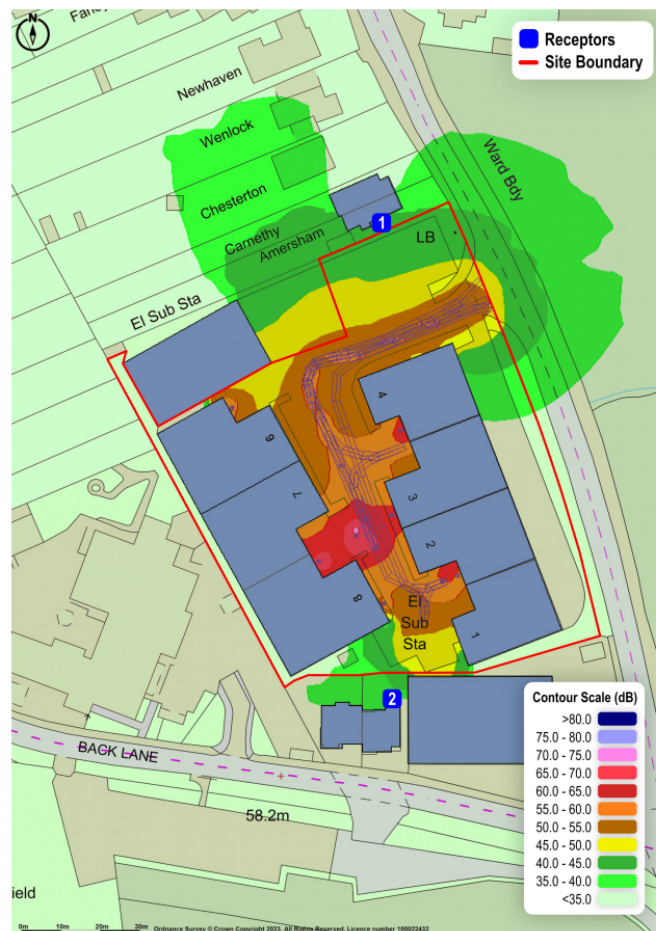
The specific activity measurements taken on site for Units 7-8 are listed below. The LPA acknowledge that the units are currently vacant, however the activity measurements are based on the previous tenant's use of the site which were recorded as part of the acoustic assessment submitted in association with application 242575:

- Opening/closing HGV curtains
- Forklifts loading lorry (Unit 8)
- General noise from windows (Unit 8)
- Shutters opening and closing
- HGV Idling
- HGV Drive-by
- HGV Start and Pull Away
- LGV Drive-by
- Sprinter Door Slam, start and pull away.

The Acoustic Assessment provides a 'NoiseMap 5 Model' which utilises the prediction methodology contained within BS 5228- 1:2009+A1:2014.

BS 5228 contains a procedure for predicting noise levels at a distance from an item of plant, taking into account parameters such as flow rate, percentage on-time and speed (if applicable) as well as the sound power level, L_{Amax} or L_{Aeq} at 10 metres. The propagation model also takes into account the effect of any intervening noise barriers and buildings and the effect of reflecting surfaces.

Figure 5.2: Noise Model Contours – Proposed Site Layout



The assessment indicates that the free-field specific noise level result at the closest receptors are as follows:

- Amersham (Receptor 1) – 41dB
- Field View (Receptor 2) – 39.1 dB

Taking into consideration the 2 dB tonality penalty and a 3 dB impulsivity penalty applied to both of these figures, the overall rating sound level for each receptor is:

- Amersham (Receptor 1) – 46dB
- Field View (Receptor 2) – 44dB

In line with BS 4142, these rating sound levels are then compared against the background noise levels recorded:

	Background Sound Level L_{A90}	Specific Sound Level L_{Aeq}	Rating Sound Level L_{Aeq}	Difference between Rating Level and Background Sound Level
Amersham, Basingstoke Road	35	41	46	+11
Field View, Back Lane	33	39	44	+11

BS 4142 indicates that a difference of at least 10dB between the background and rating levels indicates a significant adverse impact, which is the case for the results above. WBC Environmental Health have raised concern with these conclusions, largely due to the lack of any meaningful mitigation proposed; rubber matting is proposed however this is insufficient to reduce disturbance. It should however be noted that Environmental Health's threshold for impact/harm is based on the potential for statutory nuisances which is higher than those levels provided above, and subject to different legislation to the planning matters.

Consideration must be given to the fact that the extended hours proposed are still recognised as daytime, therefore the threshold for harm to the amenities of surrounding properties remains the same as that for the current operating hours; the rating sound levels recorded above fall short of the minimum level of nuisance for outdoor areas during the daytime (50/55 dB) and when taking into consideration noise attenuation in dwellings adjoining the site (Field View and the Garage were constructed with Double-glazed u-pvc doors and windows which provide sound installation around 31 db), it is likely that subject to appropriate restrictions, nuisances can be adequately avoided.

The acoustic assessment outlines other considerations, stating that it is likely that the site may not generate as much noise as observed. For example, it is likely that the site would not generate as much noise during the evening as it would during the day. Furthermore, it is likely that in the evening, the roller shutters on the units may be kept closed as opposed to left open during the day, for example, for security. These are matters that can be reasonably controlled via condition, like limiting external operations during the later hours of the evening to reduce the overall impacts.

The LPA wholly acknowledge the potential for the extended operating hours to impact the amenities of residential properties adjoining the site without appropriate noise mitigation and management. This is evident from previous noise complaints raised at the site. Consideration however must be given to the significant weight afforded to economic growth and productivity within section 6 of the NPPF, which the proposals would clearly facilitate.

As outlined above, the noise events used for the Noise Impact Assessment are based on the site's previous occupants, who were a heavy industrial steel working business. Noise levels associated with this industrial process are expectedly high, but the LPA cannot be certain that future occupants will operate at a similar level, or a level much less noticeable from adjoining dwellinghouses.

With the above in mind, the LPA consider a temporary period of three years for the proposed development would be appropriate in this instance; the National Planning Policy Guidance on the use of conditions states that such periods can be appropriate where a trial run is needed in order to assess the effect of the development on the area.

In addition, the permission will be subject to a noise management condition which would be double-pronged; the development will not be permitted to commence until a detailed noise impact assessment, accompanied by in-depth noise mitigation measures that specifically address the neighbouring properties, is approved in writing by the LPA and implemented prior to the occupation/use of the units. Within three months of occupation, a post-implementation report shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This report will assess the effectiveness of the provisions approved in association with the noise impact assessment, and the subsequent impacts on the dwellinghouses that adjoin the site. If approved, the details will be required to be maintained for the lifetime of the development.

Further to this, a Delivery and Servicing Plan will be conditioned and required prior to the occupation of the development. This will include details such as those listed below to ensure large vehicle movements are appropriately controlled to avoid nuisance to adjacent properties:

- i. Management details of proposed delivery activities between the hours of 6-11pm (Trained banksmen to be used)
- ii. Including HGV booking system (such as Fulcrum or similar).
- iii. Anticipated daily HGV nos. expected between the hours of 6-11pm,
- iv. Routing plan for HGVs between the hours of 6-11pm (avoiding any schools and weight/height restrictions on the surrounding road network);
- v. Accreditation Schemes in use (E.g. FORS and CLOCS)
- vi. Parking and Turning areas for HGVs. Turning areas to be demonstrated by swept path analysis of the largest vehicle.

The LPA consider that the temporary period and associated conditions listed above will provide sufficient assurance to both the Council and local residents that appropriate noise mitigation will need to be achieved prior to any operations within the extended hours. Any failures to comply with the mitigation measures would be monitored and enforced on accordingly.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The sub-division of the building would restore the original arrangement creating two separate units. There is no change in floor area and the proposal is not considered to have a significant impact on the highway network.

In respect of the extension to operating hours, Highways has no objection to this subject to ensuring that any delivery vehicles are quiet running with low reversing noise and engines switched off whilst stationary. The extended hours are outside of the AM and PM peak traffic periods.

The council does not have a specific parking standard for Class E.g.iii use, therefore B2 use would be considered similar, and therefore, the most appropriate WBC standard (although this is potentially a higher parking demand than Egiii or B8). On the basis that the unit is already able to operate B2 use, the worst-case scenario already exists. The submitted information demonstrates that there are 22 parking spaces available for these units and this is to be retained with a split of 11 spaces per unit. Highways consider that retention of the existing level of parking is acceptable in this instance.

Overall, subject to compliance with the parking and turning details provided, there are no objections from WBC Highways.

Flooding and Drainage:

There are no concerns on these grounds.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no concerns on these grounds.

Ecology:

There are no concerns on these grounds. The increased potential for artificial lighting during later hours of the day are however noted, and a condition will be imposed limited any further lighting without express permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Detailed Emergency Planning Zone:

Policy TB04 states development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in people living working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of “Blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

The site is located within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield. The subdivision of Unit 7/8 will create two planning units and an increased likelihood of additional employees and customers visiting the site. Furthermore, the extension to operating hours would mean that more people would be within the hazard area for longer periods of time, impacting the “Blue light” services and the emergency off-site plan.

The WBC Emergency Planning Officer, in collaboration with the West Berkshire Emergency Planning Officer and Office for Nuclear Regulation, have no objections to the proposals subject to an End User Emergency Plan being secured via condition. This will be imposed if the application is recommended for approval.

Conclusion:

Overall, subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval. This

consent is however limited to a time period of three years, triggered by the approval of noise mitigation measures that will be required prior to the commencement of the development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

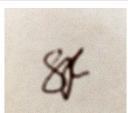
When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed 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 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:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	17 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	2 September 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	17.10.25