

## DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 251827                                                          |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | University Of Reading Library, Shinfield Road, Reading, RG6 6EB |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 15 October 2025                                                 |
| <b>Site Visit Date:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 2 September 2025                                                |
| <b>Proposal:</b> Full application for the proposed installation of a new substation, standby generator and associated below ground cabling to serve the Library and Park House, plus removal of end of service life substations to Library and Park House. |                                                                 |

### **PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS**

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability  
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Earley  
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – Red Risk Zone  
Local Historic Park and Garden – Whiteknights Park, Earley  
Core Employment Area – Whiteknights Park, Earley

### **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>CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability<br>CP6 – Managing Travel Demand<br>CP7 – Biodiversity<br>CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals<br>CP15 – Core Employment Areas                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <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>TB11 – Core Employment Areas<br>TB21 – Landscape Character<br>TB23 – Biodiversity and Development<br>TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets<br>TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character |

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|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)</b> | SS1 – Sustainable development principles<br>SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy<br>SS9 – Whiteknights Campus<br>SS17 – Transport improvements<br>CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation<br>C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility<br>C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design<br>C3 – Active travel<br>C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging<br>ER1 – Core Employment Areas<br>FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources)<br>FD2 – Sustainable drainage<br>NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity<br>NE2 – Biodiversity net gain<br>NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows<br>NE5 – Landscape and design |
| <b>Other</b>                                     | Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document<br>CIL Guidance + 123 List<br>Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document<br>Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

## PLANNING HISTORY

The Whiteknights Campus/University of Reading has an extensive planning history, however none of it is considered relevant to the development proposals.

## CONSULTATION RESPONSES

### Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objections  
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition(s)  
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition(s)  
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objections  
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections  
WBC Ecology – No comments received

### External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received  
The Garden Trust – No comments received  
SSE Power Distribution – No comments received

## REPRESENTATIONS

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

## APPRAISAL

### Site Description:

The application site consists of a small area of grassed amenity land that lies adjacent to the University of Reading Library. The land is well enclosed by dense vegetation that provides a legible amount of screening. Adjacent to its northern edge is the location of the existing substation.

**Proposal Description:**

This application seeks approval for the proposed installation of a new substation, standby generator and associated below ground cabling to serve the Library and Park House buildings, facilitated by the plus removal of end of service life substations located adjacent to the Library and Park House buildings.

**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.

**Character of the Area/Heritage:**

Policy Context:

Paragraph 124 of the NPPF 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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Similarly, paragraph 130 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. This is supported by paragraph 129 of the NPPF too, which states:

*“Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.”*

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Paragraph 68 follows on from this stating that houses and streets should establish an appropriate relationship with the pattern, sizes and proportions of existing houses in the local area.

Policy CP1(1) only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces.

**Assessment:**

The new substation building, standby generator and associated boundary treatments are proposed to be sited upon the existing area of grassed amenity land. The new substation building would be single storey and would have a shallow mono-pitch roof, with the walls finished in a mixture of red-brick and vertical cladding. The fencing enclosing the generator and associated equipment would be standard 6-feet tall close boarded fencing.

The proposed development would result in a loss of an area of current grassed amenity land which whilst noted, would not adversely harm the character of the Whiteknights campus, nor the surrounding area. The new building and associated infrastructure would acceptably assimilate into the campus’ architectural vernacular and do not appear out of character for the University. The existing structures the development is replacing are visually less pleasing and have deteriorated appearances due to their end of service life. Combined with the remaining screening around the development, the impact on the character of the area would be acceptable.

From a Heritage perspective, the Built Heritage Officer has responded to the application concluding they have no objections; the proposals are considered to have a neutral impact with respect to Whiteknights Park being an identified Local Historic Park and Garden and would not affect the setting of the neighbouring listed URS Building.

**Neighbouring Amenity:**

There are no neighbouring amenity concerns. There are no nearby residential properties and noise generation from the substation and associated generator are not expected to be adverse, nor disrupt the educational/commercial use of the Whiteknights campus as per the Noise Impact Assessment submitted (CPW, July 2025). WBC Environmental Health have also raised no objections on these grounds.

**Highway Access and Parking Provision:**

There are no concerns raised on these grounds.

**Flooding and Drainage:**

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and at a low risk of surface water flooding. WBC Drainage have no objections subject to securing a drainage strategy via a condition. The Case Officer does not consider this necessary to approve the scheme due to the low flood risk of the site and the modest footprint of the proposals.

**Landscape and Trees:**

There are no concerns raised on these grounds; WBC Landscape and Trees are satisfied with the proposed Hard and Soft Landscaping plan and subject to compliance with it, there are no objections.

**Ecology:*****Bats:***

The site is located within a Bat Roost Suitability Habitat. The application is supported by a Bat Building Inspection Statement (EPR, July 2025). This statement concludes that the existing buildings are deemed to have negligible suitability to support roosting bats and therefore no further surveys are required. No objections are raised to these conclusions.

***Great Crested Newts:***

The site is located within a Red Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts (GCN) and is supported by a GCN statement (EPR, July 2025). WBC Ecology Newts have reviewed this report and have no objections to the development's impact on this protected species, subject to compliance with the statement.

**Biodiversity Net Gain:**

As of 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This can be achieved through either on-site or off-site mitigation.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition").

"The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted to and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

The habitat baseline for the existing site is 0.17 habitat units. The number of units required to achieve a 10% gain would be 0.187 (+0.017) habitat units. The proposals indicate a 26.41% gain (0.05 units). As the University of Reading's land ownership around the application red line is substantial, it is the applicant's intention to provide the required net gains through on-site planting.

The LPA consider that an S106 legal agreement to secure LPA monitoring of the

gains over a thirty year period is onerous for the very minor scale of this development. Instead, final details will be secured via the Biodiversity Net Gain Plan, automatically applied to the permission if approved.

**Conclusion:**

The proposal is acceptable and accords with local plan policy and the NPPF.

**Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):**

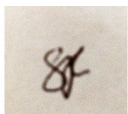
When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed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

|                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Conditions agreed:</b>          | Not required      |
| <b>Recommendation:</b>             | Approval          |
| <b>Date:</b>                       | 14 September 2025 |
| <b>Earliest date for decision:</b> | 11 September 2025 |

|                                                           |                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation agreed by:<br/>(Authorised Officer)</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>                                              | <b>15.10.25</b>                                                                     |