



Bourne Valley Associates Ltd

Planning Statement to Support

A planning application

**for the expansion and updating the facilities at Lister Wilder,
to include demolition of buildings and replacement with a
workshop building and parts/store/office building, improved
access, additional hard standing and associated landscaping
and boundary wall/fencing**

at

Lister Wilder Ltd

**White House Farm, White House Lane, Spencers Wood,
Reading, Berkshire, RG7 1HR**

Prepared by: Anna Hebard MSc Hons MRTPI

Of:

Bourne Valley Associates Ltd
Andover Lane Farm
Faberstown
Ludgershall
Andover
SP11 9PE

Tel: 01264 850159

Email: info@bournevalley.co.uk

Project: Update facilities at Lister Wilder
Reference: 00836-01
Date: 25th February 2026
Copyright Notice

Page **1** of **42**
Issue 1

The contents of this document are the copyright of Bourne Valley Associates Ltd. It is released on the condition that it will not be copied in whole, in part or otherwise reproduced (whether by photographic, reprographic or any other method) and that the contents thereof shall not be divulged to any other person other than that of the addressee (save to other authorised officers of this organisation having a need to know such contents, for the purpose of which, disclosure is made by Bourne Valley Associates Ltd) without prior consent of Bourne Valley Associates Ltd.



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Executive summary.....	4
3. Site Context	4
3.1. <i>The Applicant</i>	4
3.2. <i>The Site</i>	6
3.3. <i>Planning History</i>	11
3.4. <i>Site Factors</i>	11
4. The Proposal	12
4.1. <i>Scale and Appearance – New branch building</i>	14
4.2. Workshop Building.....	17
5. Principle of Development	19
5.1. Overview	19
5.2. Development in the Countryside (CP11)	19
5.3. Support for the Rural Economy	19
5.4. Appropriateness to a Countryside Location	19
5.5. Encroachment and Landscape Character	20
5.6. Summary of Compliance with the Principle of Development.....	20
6. Landscape and Visual Impact	21
6.1. Policy Context	21
6.2. Baseline Landscape Context	21
6.3. Response to Pre-Application Landscape Concerns	21
6.4. Scheme Evolution and Reduction of Landscape Effects	22
6.5. Visual Effects.....	23
6.6. Landscape Character Assessment Compliance and Overall Conclusion	23
7. Amenity	24
7.1. Nearest Sensitive Receptors	24
7.2. Noise Amenity.....	24
7.3. Lighting Amenity	25
7.4. Visual and Environmental Amenity.....	25
8. Flood Risk.....	26
9. Ecology.....	27
9.1. Baseline & surveys	27
9.2. Mitigation & enhancements	27
9.3. BNG.....	27
9.4. Summary	28
10. Agricultural and Mineral land designations	28
11. Minerals Safeguarding Area	30
12. Highway Safety, Access and Parking	31
13. AWE Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)	33
14. Planning Policy.....	35



14.1.	National Planning Policy	35
14.2.	Local Planning Policy.....	37
14.3.	Other Material Local Policy Documents	39
15.	Conclusion	40



1. Introduction

This Statement accompanies and supports a full planning application to Wokingham Borough Council. This planning application presents a redevelopment of the existing premises at Lister Wilder to incorporate an improved access, new workshop building and a new parts/office/store building to replace existing buildings, and additional hardstanding and associated landscaping at the existing Lister Wilder Ltd premises.

The site is Lister Wilder Ltd, White House Farm, White House Lane, Spencers Wood, Reading. The application is submitted by Bourne Valley Associates, acting as agent on behalf of Mr Charlie King of Lister Wilder Ltd, an agricultural machinery business.

2. Executive summary

Following pre-application advice, the scheme has been fundamentally reshaped to address every concern raised and deliver clear planning benefits. Floorspace is reduced from c.4,203 m² to c.2,550 m² (39%), and the workshop is re-oriented north–south, removing the previous eastward encroachment and keeping all new buildings within the established operational envelope. Lister Wilder has reorganised and amalgamated operations across its wider network, rationalising activities and reducing the facilities needed at White House Farm from what was envisaged within the pre-application proposal, thereby lowering on-site intensity.

Highway safety is materially improved: the western access is upgraded as the primary A33 HGV route with all turning internalised, while the southern access is reserved for staff and customers. The proposal is underpinned by specialist assessments LVIA, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, arboricultural survey, lighting strategy, Drainage & Flood Risk Assessment, and noise and contaminated-land reports, which demonstrate that effects are limited, well-mitigated and acceptable.

Overall, the scheme modernises a long-standing rural employer, safeguards and facilitates growth to around 57 skilled jobs up from 50, improves the site's appearance and operation, and results in no materially harmful effects. The planning balance clearly falls in favour of approval.

3. Site Context

3.1. The Applicant

Lister Wilder are a company who specialise in supplying and maintaining machinery for 4 key markets; Agriculture, Groundcare, Construction and Arboriculture. Established in 1947, it remains a wholly owned family business. Lister Wilder have been operating in the area for some 75 years, and from this site for over 40 years. The company employs 190 staff across eight sites.

Following recent restructuring of the company in 2021 and subsequent growth, the White House Farm site requires the existing facilities to be updated. Lister Wilder has developed over the years with Agriculture being at the heart of the business.



The introduction of the Kubota tractor & excavator offering White House Farm is recognised to be an important base for Agricultural machinery sold throughout Berkshire and Hampshire, and as such this site is key to Lister Wilder's business expansion plans. This has led to a need for additional facilities for storage. The company owns land surrounding the site which includes all the land between the site and the housing estate to the East. A portion of this land is to be incorporated into the existing site, extending the site but using this opportunity to enhance and update the facilities for the whole site, including landscaping and providing significant biodiversity net gain to the site peripheries.

The proposal will result in 57 employment positions at the site (there are 50 staff at present) with this opportunity to update and enhance the premises for White House Farm to ensuring the longevity and productivity of Lister Wilder.

Below are some images of the types of machinery the Lister Wilder sells and services from the site.



Figure 1 – Groundcare and Agricultural machinery



Figure 2 – Agricultural Machinery



Figure 3 – Construction Machinery



Figure 4 – Workshop, servicing and repair

3.2. The Site

The site is located South of Reading and to the East of the A33. The Client owns the land to the North and East of the site and wishes to extend the area available for the existing business by changing its use. The application site is shown within the red line on the submitted location plan, Drawing 00836-00-N, Sheet 02, however the red line site is drawn in Figure 5 below, which also shows the overall geographical context. The Rights of Way are shown as the dashed green lines.



The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and is therefore technically countryside; however, urban expansion now places it at the edge of the settlement within a clearly developed context. The combination of nearby housing, the established on-site commercial use, and adjacent mobile homes creates a long-standing employment–residential enclave at the settlement fringe. Hedgerows and tree belts enclose the yard and filter views, so the site reads as part of a consolidated developed area rather than open, undeveloped countryside.

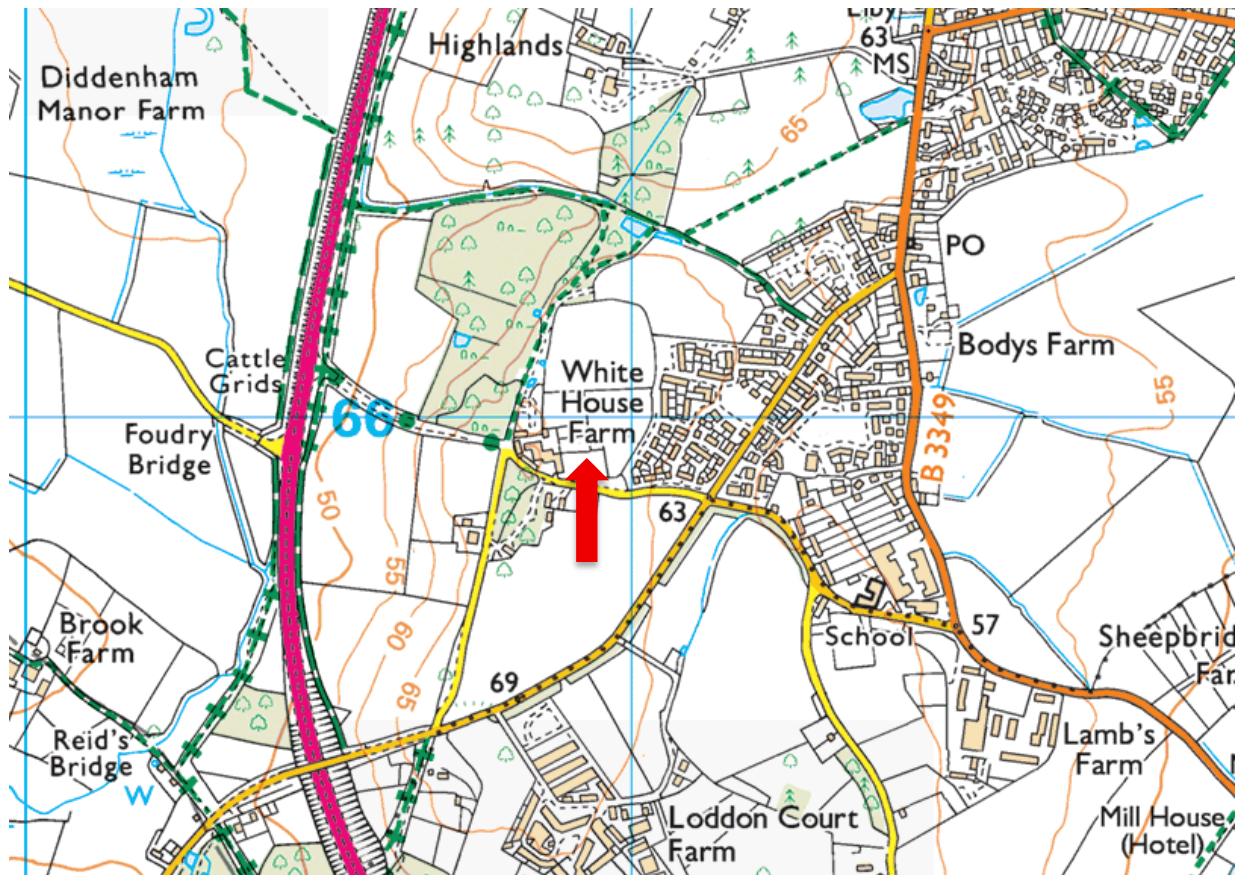


Figure 5 - Site Location

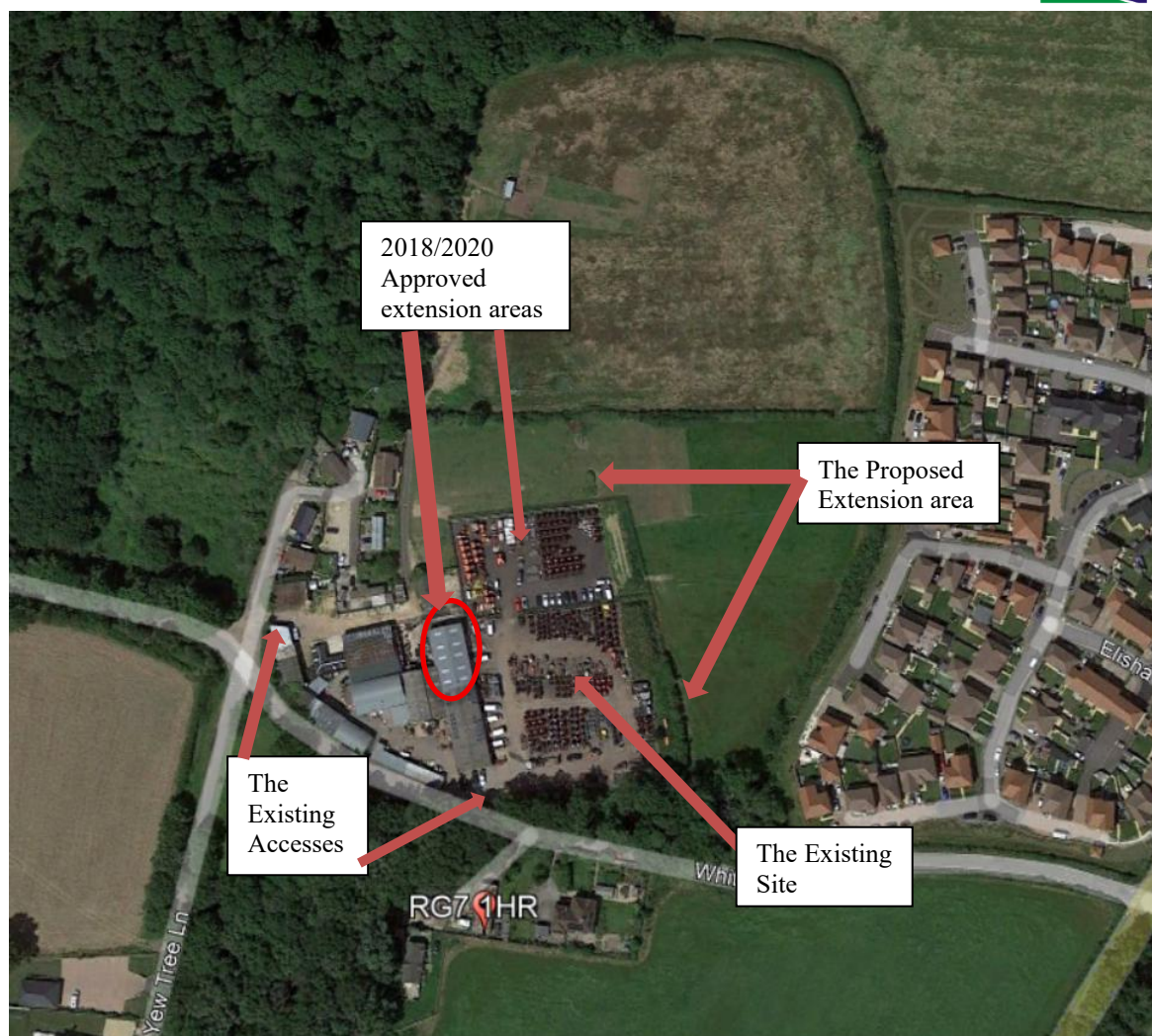


Figure 6 - Aerial photograph

The site is located to the East of the A33, on White House Lane on the outskirts Spencers Wood. The site contains many buildings and hardstanding for the existing rural/agricultural machinery business. This is made clear in the aerial photograph in Figure 6 above. The application site is central to the photograph. It has two existing accesses onto White House Lane as shown in Figure 7/8 below.

The site is currently comprised of large agricultural/industrial style buildings, which are used for sales, retail, storage, office space and servicing/workshop for Lister Wilder; and a large yard used for the storage and display of a range of agricultural, ground care and construction machinery and customer car parking. The building permitted in 2018 is visible in Figure 6, alongside the hardstanding permitted in 2020 to the north.

The site has a circa 2.5m palisade fence painted green with security wire running along the north and east of the perimeter.



Figure 7 - Existing Agricultural machinery business access, viewed from White House Lane



Figure 8 - Existing secondary access



Figure 9 – Site when viewed from White House Lane



Figure 10 – Site/Existing buildings when viewed from White House Lane

The boundary buildings comprise ageing corrugated sheds and ad-hoc walls/fencing that present a tired frontage to White House Lane. Vegetation is unmanaged and patchy, offering little visual amenity. As set out in Section 4 (The Proposal), the scheme replaces the poorest fabric (buildings and walls) and consolidates built form within the yard away from the boundaries which allows for a coherent, high-quality boundary treatment, by using continuous native hedgerow planting. Together these measures will markedly lift the street scene and deliver a cleaner, more professional external appearance.



3.3. *Planning History*

- 181649 - Full planning application for the proposed erection of B1, B2, and B8 building and change of use of land to B8 (engineering storage and parking), including hard standing and earth bund. (Part Retrospective). 23/08/2018 Approve
- 181522 - Application for a certificate of lawfulness for hard standing and its use for storage and display of machinery. 24/07/2018 Approve
- 203309 - Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use from agricultural land to storage (Use Class B8) with associated hard standing, landscaping and new earth bund, in connection with existing agricultural machinery business. Permitted 2020

3.4. *Site Factors*

The site has no landscape designations such as AONB, National Park, SINC, SSSI etc. It has no Historic classifications such as Conservation Area, Scheduled Monuments or Listed Buildings within the vicinity. The online Policy mapping systems does however show that the site is within:

- Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield – within the Nuclear Consultation Zone.
- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) – Subject to Policy CP11



4. The Proposal

- Replace existing buildings which are in a poor condition. Existing floorspace to be removed: 815m² - 13 buildings. These buildings being demolished are labelled 1-13 and can be seen in the plan below:



Figure 11 - Plan showing buildings to be demolished

- Following pre-application advice, the scheme has been fundamentally reshaped to address every concern and deliver clear planning benefits. Within the pre-application advice request the new total of building floor space was proposed to be 4203m². The scheme has been reduced considerably, and we are now proposing the total of the buildings on site post development to be 2550m² which is actually 124m less than the buildings total on site at present.
- There is proposed to be a new mixed use building incorporating showroom, office space, welfare and stores. Also, a new workshop building is proposed to the east of the existing workshop.



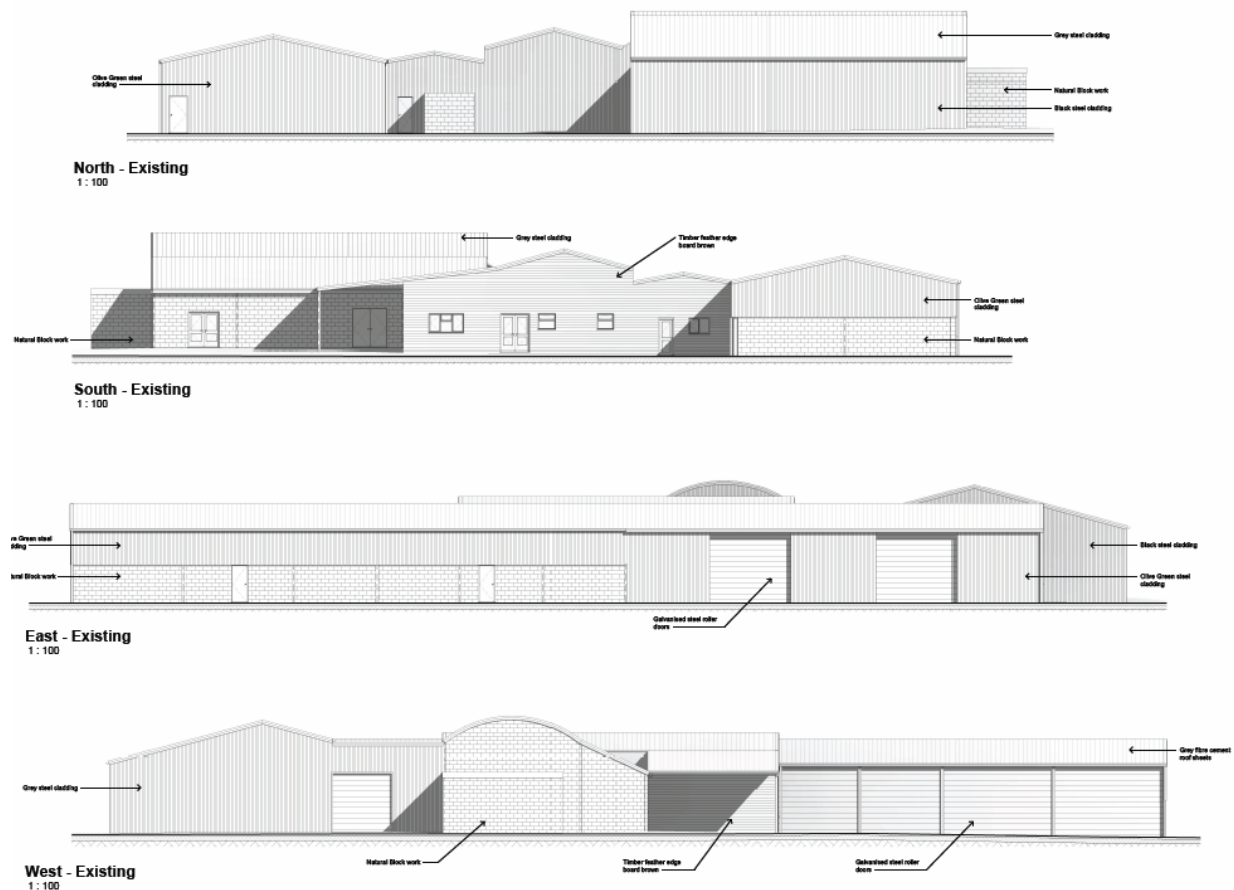
Use Class	Floorspace m ²		
	Existing	Proposed	Difference
B8	1,453	798	-655
B2	787	964	177
Office (Eg(i))	161	247	86
Retail (E(a))	197	377	180
Welfare	29	88	59
Circulation	20	76	56
Other	27	0	-27
Total	2,674	2,550	-124

- Alter and improve the existing poor secondary access, to make primary access. This will enable HGV's to enter and exit the site in a forward gear and prevent vehicle queuing on the road awaiting unloading.
- Improve the existing access to be a secondary access for staff.
- Replacement/Additional landscaping.
- Within the pre-app it was proposed to increase the stone permeable hardstanding area to circa. 5611m² and increase the concrete yard 6257m² for the storage of agricultural machinery. As stated previously, the pre-app advice has been taken into consideration and the proposal accordingly revised to provide 6396m² concrete yard and 4853m² stone yard.
- Storm water attenuation pond.
- Amount of parking as existing: 39 parking spaces as permitted in planning permission reference 203309.
- The scheme provides a balanced mix of spaces aligned to how the site operates: 29 staff bays (including 2 disabled); 16 service-van bays; 3 HGV bays; 4 commercial vehicle bays; 9 visitor bays (including 2 disabled); a motorcycle area; and secure cycle parking for staff. While Lister Wilder will employ 57 people, on-site occupancy is materially lower at any one time due to off-site servicing crews, home/remote working, part-time patterns and cycle-to-work uptake. The provision therefore meets peak operational demand without over-provision or unnecessary hardstanding.
- 2.4m palisade fence to site boundaries. 2.5m high concrete panel wall (painted green) to the southern boundary with White House Farm, this is for security purposes as the value of the goods sold and stored at the site is high. The new hedgerow will screen and soften the wall overtime.
- The new landscape buffer – 15m wide to the eastern boundary, new hedging to supplement existing around whole site boundary.
- Employment positions as existing are 50, and this will increase to 57 positions.



- The standard opening hours of the business at present are 08:00 – 17:00 Mon to Fri, 08:00 – 12:00 Saturday and closed on Sunday. These hours are extended for the harvest season, where service parts and maintenance are required earlier in the mornings and later into the evenings. At present the site has no restriction on opening hours, Lister Wilder would not wish for any restriction to be imposed with this application as this has never been deemed necessary previously, and due to the nature of the business there are times (particularly during Harvest) that Lister Wilders services agricultural vehicles, and repair and equipment sales need to be available to farmers outside of usual working hours.
- It is paramount to Lister Wilders business that they are able to remain open to clients/customers during the construction, therefore the design of the scheme has incorporated suitably size and scaled buildings to be able to be constructed whilst the business is still operational.

4.1. Scale and Appearance – New branch building



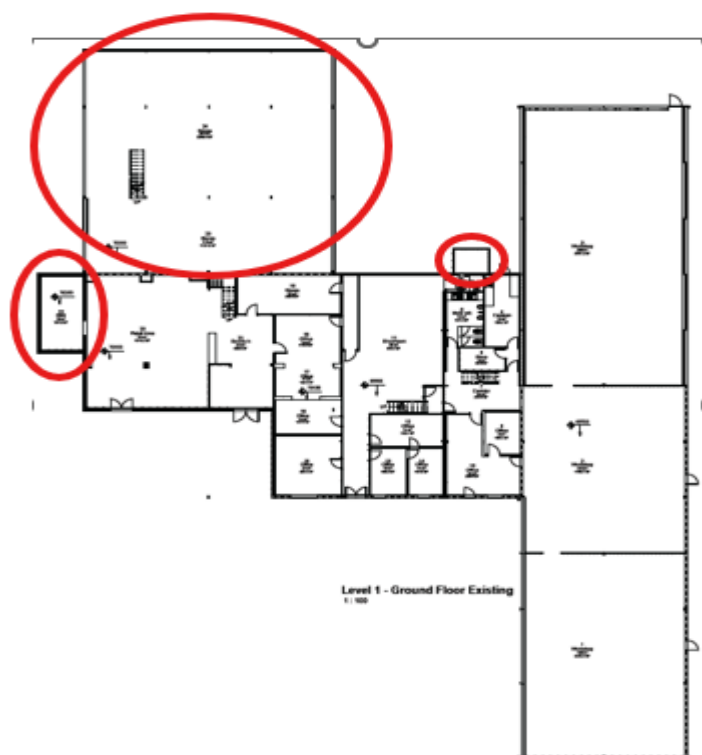
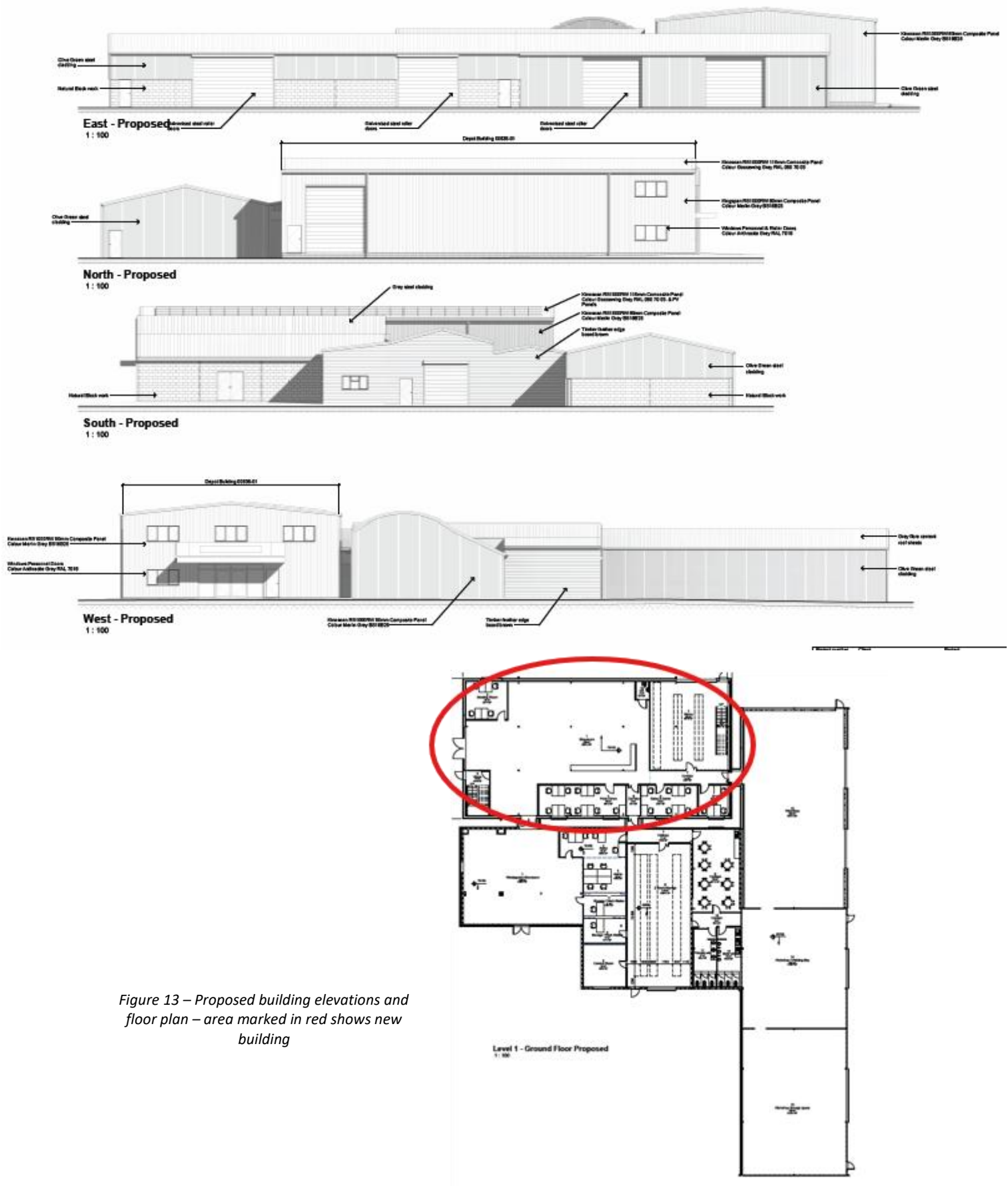
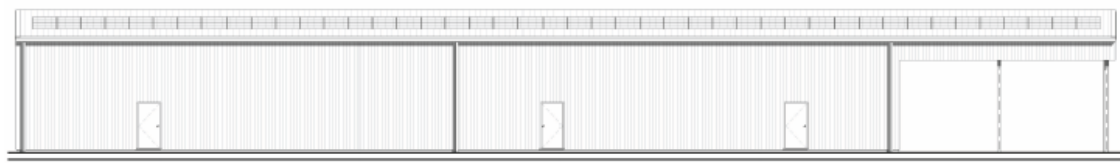


Figure 12 - The existing building elevations and floor plan – red circles mark areas to be demolished





4.2. Workshop Building



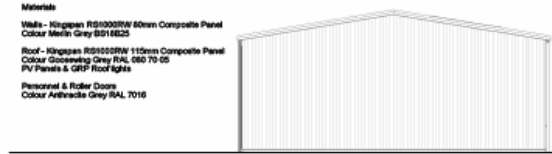
East
1 : 100



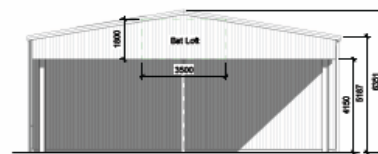
West
1 : 100

Materials

Walls - Kingspan RS1000RW 50mm Composite Panel
Colour Merlin Grey BS16825
Roof - Kingspan RS1000RW 110mm Composite Panel
Colour Greenberg Grey RAL 600 70-05
PV Panels & GRP Rooflights
Personnel & Roller Doors
Colour Anthracite Grey RAL 7016

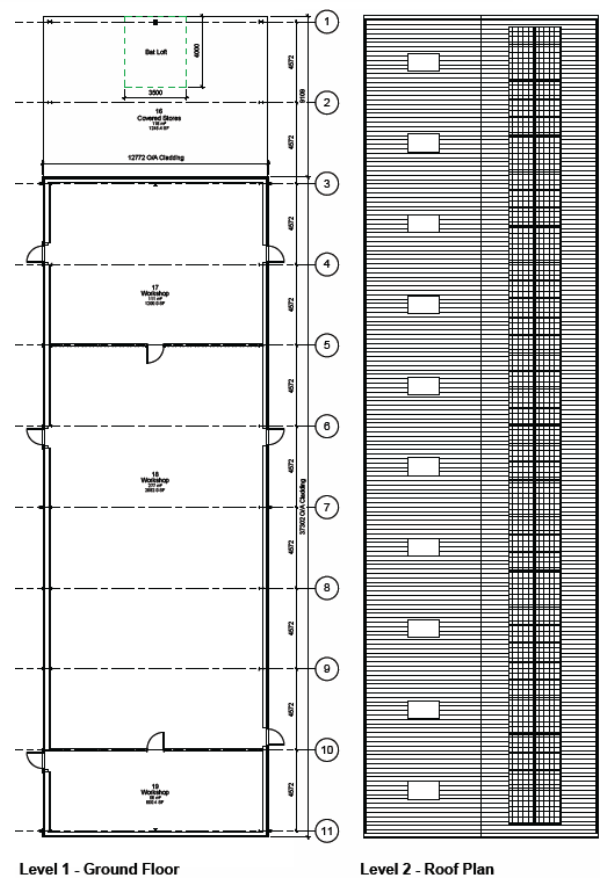


South
1 : 100



North
1 : 100

Figure 14 – Proposed workshop building elevations and floor plans





The proposed buildings will replace 13 smaller buildings throughout the site and along the site boundaries adjacent to the road. The new workshop building will be similar in height to the existing workshop building 6.4m. The new operations building is proposed to be two-storey at 7.1m in height. The remaining existing buildings will be refurbished to provide updated facilities to professionally display Lister Wilder's merchandise.

The Proposed Site plan can be seen below. The red lines outline the new buildings proposed. The new building is proposed to join the existing buildings to the north of the site. To the east of the site the proposed workshop building will stand alone on the existing hardstanding orientated north-south as the pre-application advice request stipulated.

There is proposed to be a wash bay to the east, adjacent to the new planted bund area, on an area of the new hard standing. This new hardstanding will extend further east and north than the existing hardstanding area. This area will be a mix of parking and external storage; an extension of the existing hardstanding uses.

It can also be seen on the plan that to accommodate the improved access the mobile home closest to the site will be relocated to a vacant plot within the mobile home site.



Figure 15 - Proposed Site Plan - red circles mark new buildings



5. Principle of Development

5.1. Overview

The proposal seeks the redevelopment and modernisation of the long-established Lister Wilder machinery operations and service centre at White House Farm. It provides two new purpose-built buildings with a combined floorspace totalling 2,550m² including existing buildings. Together with rationalised yard areas accommodate essential workshop, servicing, parts and operational functions. The proposal does not introduce a new planning use; it represents the evolution and upgrading of an existing rural business that has operated from this countryside site for more than 30 years.

When assessed against the Wokingham Core Strategy (in particular CP1, CP3, CP8 and CP11), the MDD DPD, the NPPF (2023/24) and the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, the principle of development is acceptable. The scheme has been substantially reduced in scale and redesigned in direct response to the pre-application advice, and each of the issues raised by officers has been addressed through proportionate design changes and robust technical evidence.

5.2. Development in the Countryside (CP11)

The site lies within the defined countryside and is therefore subject to Core Strategy Policy CP11, which allows development only where it supports the rural economy, is appropriate to a countryside location and does not cause excessive encroachment or harm to landscape character.

5.3. Support for the Rural Economy

Lister Wilder is a rural-facing machinery business which, across its network, operates from countryside or edge-of-settlement locations rather than town centres or business parks. Its customer base consists predominantly of farmers, estates, contractors, arboricultural firms, landscapers and local authorities, all of whom operate in rural or semi-rural areas. These operational characteristics make a rural location a functional necessity rather than a matter of preference. By modernising and securing the continued operation of this established business, the development clearly supports the rural economy in the manner envisaged by CP11.

5.4. Appropriateness to a Countryside Location

The redevelopment is appropriate to its countryside setting. It modernises an existing enterprise rather than introducing a new or alien land use, and it reduces the previously proposed floorspace by around 39% (from 4,203m² at pre-application stage to 2,550m² now proposed). Yard areas have been reorganised to operate more efficiently and to remain well-contained within an operational envelope that is already characterised by farm/industrial style buildings, machinery storage and associated commercial activity.

At pre-application stage, the Council expressed concern that the earlier iteration appeared to verge towards a "distribution-type" use. The revised scheme dispels that concern. It is not a B8 storage and distribution depot (at present there is 1453m² of storage available within the buildings and this is proposed to **decrease to 798m²** which is a reduction of 655m²). This level of storage does not exhibit the HGV-intensive, logistics-based characteristics associated with such distribution-type uses.



The core function remains that of a machinery sales, servicing and repair centre with associated storage; staff numbers and customer intensity are controlled and consistent with a specialist rural depot rather than a general distribution hub. The nature of the use is therefore wholly appropriate to a countryside location.

5.5. Encroachment and Landscape Character

The pre-application response also raised concerns that the previous scheme encroached too far eastwards into grazing land and that enlarged yard areas could harm the rural character of the countryside. In response, the scheme has been significantly scaled back. The building mass has been reduced, hardstanding areas have been rationalised and drawn closer to the core yard, and the building orientation and layout have been refined so that development sits more firmly within the existing developed envelope. There is no material increase in visibility from the public right of way to the west, and the proposal is supported by robust tree protection, additional landscaping and a carefully designed lighting scheme that together ensure the visual effects are contained.

On the basis of the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and lighting work already undertaken, the proposal now sits comfortably within the settlement pattern of the Spencers Wood Settled & Farmed Clay Lowland character area and will not represent excessive encroachment into open countryside for the purposes of CP11. The site forms part of the established White House Farm complex and is already characterised by agricultural/industrial character sheds, hardstanding and equipment storage; in townscape terms it reads as a working yard on the edge of Spencers Wood rather than open countryside. The proposal sits within the established built envelope on existing hardstanding and would read as part of the current yard group; public views are confined to short, close-range glimpses at the entrances and occasional filtered snatches near local paths, with no long-distance views. The 15 m landscape buffer and additional native planting will further contain and soften the scheme. Taken together, these measures result in only limited, localised change and the new buildings would be readily assimilated without harm to landscape character.

5.6. Summary of Compliance with the Principle of Development

In principle, the development is acceptable because it supports and strengthens an established rural economic enterprise and does so in a way that genuinely requires a countryside location for operational, functional and safety reasons. It respects local character and landscape sensitivities, as demonstrated in the landscape and arboricultural evidence, and has been substantially reduced and redesigned in direct response to Wokingham Borough Council's pre-application advice.

The scheme introduces no unacceptable impact on neighbours, users of the public right of way or the wider landscape and is accompanied by technical assessments showing compliance with policy frameworks relating to the SPA, minerals safeguarding, noise, lighting, arboriculture, contamination and the AWE DEPZ. It also aligns with national policy objectives to support rural productivity, modernisation and investment as set out in the NPPF and examined in detail within the Statement.

In this context, the principle of development is sound, policy-compliant and should be supported.



6. Landscape and Visual Impact

6.1. Policy Context

Landscape considerations are guided by Core Strategy Policies CP3 (General Principles) and CP11 (Development in the Countryside), MDD Policy TB21 (Landscape Character), the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (Spencers Wood Settled & Farmed Clay Lowland), and the NPPF (2023/24) requirements to protect valued landscapes and integrate development sensitively. Together, these policies require development to respect, and where possible enhance, the character of the countryside, to avoid intrusive encroachment, and to ensure that visual effects are contained and appropriately mitigated through good design and landscape treatment.

6.2. Baseline Landscape Context

The site lies within the Spencers Wood Settled & Farmed Clay Lowland character area. The Wokingham LCA describes this as gently rolling lowland farmland underlain by London Clay, with large arable and pasture fields, a sparse settlement pattern dominated by farmsteads and rural commercial clusters, wide horizons and open views partially filtered by hedgerow oaks, and a generally tranquil rural character away from major roads. The LCA also notes that the area is sensitive to large-scale industrial or agricultural structures when these are poorly sited.

The immediate context is not a remote or wholly undeveloped landscape. It already contains agricultural buildings, barns, plant yards and clusters of rural commercial activity, including the existing Lister Wilder operations that have been established on this site for over three decades. The established White House Farm complex and is characterised by large sheds, hardstanding and equipment storage; in townscape terms it reads as a working yard on the edge of Spencers Wood rather than open countryside. Enclosure is strong: mature hedgerows/trees and woodland contain views to the north and east, built form and fencing contain views to the west, and the gently undulating landform further limits the visual envelope. Clear public views are essentially confined to short stretches at the site entrance and along White House Lane; elsewhere views from nearby public rights of way are filtered or absent, as mapped in the LVIA visibility work and illustrated by the viewpoints. The proposal is therefore assessed within an already semi-developed rural context rather than an untouched landscape.

6.3. Response to Pre-Application Landscape Concerns

The pre-application response raised two principal concerns: first, that the previous scheme extended excessively eastwards beyond the established building envelope, and second, that the overall scale and massing could appear intrusive within the open countryside. Both concerns have been addressed through redesign, reduction in floorspace and a more explicit landscape-led approach.

Within the 2018 application, the Council's Landscape Officer supported a landscape strategy that reused soil on site to create a bund along the eastern edge to provide visual screening and additional security and recommended that this be reinforced with native hedgerow planting and extra trees to reflect the Wokingham LCA guidance. That bund has since been implemented. The current proposal includes repositioning and strengthening this bund and associated planting to align with the new eastern boundary, thereby retaining and updating a mitigation approach previously endorsed by the Landscape Officer.



6.4. Scheme Evolution and Reduction of Landscape Effects

6.4.1. Reduction in Built Form

The original pre-application building of 4,203m² has been reduced by approximately 39% to 2,550m². This reduction materially decreases the perceived height and bulk, the extent of roof mass visible across the countryside, and the overall landscape footprint and perception of sprawl. It represents a clear landscape benefit and responds directly to CP11's requirement to avoid excessive encroachment into the countryside.

6.4.2. Containment Within the Operational Envelope

The final layout reduces the degree of eastward projection and consolidates built form more tightly around existing structures. The development now sits within the previously developed land area and respects the historic morphology of the yard, maintaining visual coherence with longstanding rural commercial activity. The area of incursion into grazing land is therefore reduced compared with the pre-application scheme, directly addressing the earlier concern about unacceptable countryside intrusion.

6.4.3. Hard standing Rationalisation

The revised yard areas, comprising approximately 6,396m² of concrete and 4,853m² of stone surfacing, are proportionate to operational needs and have been arranged to minimise visual impact. Stone surfacing is used in the northern transition areas, and the yards are set behind the existing hedgerow to the north boundary and the proposed 15m wide planted bund and retained vegetation to the east. This arrangement reduces the perceived spread of hardstanding and limits views of operational areas from the wider landscape.

6.4.4. Tree Retention and Arboricultural Safeguarding

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that no Category A or B trees will be lost. Tree removal is limited to lower-quality Category C specimens and is accompanied by a full BS5837-compliant Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement. Mature hedgerow oaks and other key trees are retained as important landscape features. Their retention ensures continuity of character and helps soften long-distance views of the site.

6.4.5. Lighting and Night-Time Character

The Lighting Impact Assessment shows that the proposed scheme will use downward-directed, low-glare LED luminaires with no upward light spill and compliance with dark-sky principles. Field boundaries and wooded areas will not be lit, and there will be no discernible glow in the wider landscape. This avoids suburbanisation and protects the rural night environment, which is one of the LCA's key valued characteristics.



6.5. Visual Effects

6.5.1. Views from the Public Right of Way

The nearest public right of way runs northwards from Whitehouse Farm, passing to the west/north of the site; views from here are brief and heavily filtered by intervening hedgerows and trees, typically arising only at field gates or field edges rather than along the path itself. The LVIA notes that any glimpses are limited to the upper parts of stored machinery or buildings and can be further softened by reinforcing hedgerows (including a line of trees), alongside the proposed boundary wall/hedge and the 15 m planted buffer that together tighten visual containment. As such, the route's rural character and users' experience would not materially deteriorate.

6.5.2. Views from open farmland

Across the open farmland (principally the fields to the north and the agricultural land to the west), the LVIA shows views of the site are brief and filtered by hedgerows and trees, with visibility typically arising only at field edges or gateways; the photographed Viewpoints 4 and 5 illustrate the hedge line screening across these approaches. The proposal keeps built form tightly clustered within the existing developed envelope and strengthens the eastern edge with a new 15 m planted buffer, so any occasional glimpses read against the established yard rather than as new skyline-breaking elements. Given the local landform and enclosing vegetation, effects from farmland are limited and localised, and the site continues to present as a consolidated rural commercial cluster rather than an intrusive feature in the wider landscape.

6.5.3. Views from Residential Areas

For the newer housing to the east (e.g. Cook Grove), the LVIA records no views into the site because of the tall boundary fence and the established tall hedgerow/trees; the new 15 m planted buffer on this edge will deepen that screening. For the mobile homes at White House Farm on the western side, only the closest units have any potential views, and this is already filtered by onsite hedgerows, with further mitigation proposed by new hedging/trees beside the caravans and a new boundary wall with hedgerow planting to improve outlook. Overall, the LVIA concludes residential visual effects are limited and well-contained by existing and proposed planting.

6.6. Landscape Character Assessment Compliance and Overall Conclusion

The LVIA confirms the site lies within Wokingham LCA J3 (Spencers Wood – Settled & Farmed Clay), where settlement edges, hedged fields and woodland blocks already frame views; the application site is an established rural commercial yard of agricultural-style buildings set within this pattern. Existing enclosure (tall fencing, hedgerows and trees) substantially limits visibility, with no long-distance views, only brief or filtered near-distance views from White House Lane and two gate-level glimpses beside the PRow; housing to the east has no views.

The proposals tighten the cluster of built form largely within the existing footprint, reinforce northern hedgerows and deliver a new 15 m native landscape buffer on the eastern edge, ensuring any residual glimpses read against the established yard rather than as skyline-breaking elements.



On this basis, effects on landscape character are limited and well-contained; the LVIA's summary records that the arrangement can be incorporated without major adverse effects and, overall, yields a minor-to-moderate beneficial effect because the site becomes more coherent and better organised.

This accords with NPPF support for the sustainable growth of rural businesses through well-designed new buildings that are sensitive to their surroundings (paras 84–85), and with Core Strategy Policies CP3 and CP11: appropriate scale, design and amenity protection; support for diverse rural enterprises outside settlement limits without excessive encroachment from original buildings. Overall, the proposal is landscape-led, contained by mitigation planting and existing enclosure, and preserves the rural edge character while enabling an established local employer to modernise and grow in line with policy.

Taken together, the landscape and visual appraisal work demonstrates that the revised scheme is substantially less visually prominent than the pre-application iteration, has no significant adverse effect on landscape character, and sits comfortably within a longstanding rural commercial site.

7. Amenity

7.1. Nearest Sensitive Receptors

The site adjoins several sensitive receptors. To the east, at a distance of roughly 100 metres, lie the residential properties at Cook Grove. To the north-west, beyond intervening vegetation, there is a mobile home park. Along the western boundary a public right of way runs north–south past the site. At pre-application stage, the Council expressed concern that the revised layout could lead to increased noise impacts due to activity being closer to residential properties, that lighting could erode the rural night-time character, that the experience of users of the public right of way might be harmed, and that, overall, the scheme could represent a level of intensification beyond what is typical for a rural enterprise. Each of these concerns is addressed below using the detailed technical work submitted with this application.

7.2. Noise Amenity

The Noise Impact Assessment (AS14075) provides a full BS4142:2014+A1:2019 evaluation of operational noise arising from machinery movements, workshop activity and use of the external yard areas. The assessment concludes that, with the recommended mitigation in place, predicted noise levels at the nearest residential receptors fall within the “low impact” range. The baseline sound climate in the area is already influenced by agricultural activity and intermittent road traffic, and the assessment applies appropriate character corrections and tonal penalties in a robust manner.

A key mitigation measure is the provision of a 2.4m high solid, imperforate acoustic fence along the goods-in boundary. With this fence in place, the BS4142 rating level difference is sufficiently small that adverse effects on residential amenity are unlikely. This approach is consistent with Policy CC06 of the MDD and paragraph 191 of the NPPF, both of which require development to avoid noise impacts giving rise to significant adverse effects on health and quality of life.



The pre-application response was explicit that the repositioning of buildings closer to residential receptors required detailed analysis. That analysis has now been completed. It demonstrates that operational noise from the site will not cause a significant loss of amenity; that the acoustic fence will provide effective screening for workshop and equipment noise; that the reduced floorspace (down from 4,203m² at pre-app stage to 2,550m² now proposed) lowers the overall operational intensity; and that the clarified staffing level of 57, which is lower than previously anticipated, further limits vehicle and activity levels. In combination, these factors resolve the noise concerns raised at pre-application stage.

7.3. Lighting Amenity

The Lighting Impact Assessment confirms that all proposed luminaires are downward-directed LED fittings with appropriate shielding. There is no upward light spill and boundary spill is negligible; light levels do not extend to residential garden boundaries. No luminaires are aimed towards the public right of way or the open countryside. The design complies with the Institution of Lighting Professionals guidance for an E2 (rural) environmental zone.

As a result, the scheme avoids urban skyglow, glare and the illumination of nearby sensitive receptors. The rural night-time character is preserved, and there is no mechanism by which the lighting would increase recreational pressure on the SPA or harm ecological interests. The development therefore accords with Core Strategy Policy CP8 and MDD Policy CC07 in respect of artificial lighting.

7.4. Visual and Environmental Amenity

Amenity for nearby residents is preserved for several reasons. Lister Wilder has reorganised and amalgamated operations across its wider network, rationalising activities and reducing the facilities needed at White House Farm, thereby lowering on-site intensity. The building mass has therefore been reduced from c.4,203 m² at pre-app to c.2,550 m², and the revised layout pulls bulk back within the established envelope. The LVIA records that visibility is tightly contained to short, close-range glimpses at the two site entrances on White House Lane, with no long-distance views; views from the PRoW are only brief, off-path peeks over field gates and are filtered by hedgerows, while housing to the east has no views due to tall fencing and mature planting. The scheme also delivers targeted mitigation: a new 15 m native buffer on the eastern edge, reinforcement of the northern hedgerow with a line of trees, additional planting alongside the western mobile homes, and lane-side hedging that improves the White House Lane frontage.

Together with the proposed acoustic fence and a controlled lighting scheme, this ensures no unacceptable overlooking, overshadowing, noise or light spill for neighbours; the LVIA concludes the reorganised site yields a minor–moderate beneficial effect on external views due to a more coherent, better screened arrangement.



8. Flood Risk

A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by Environmental Protection Strategies (EPS) for the proposed redevelopment of the Lister Wilder site. The FRA confirms that the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of fluvial or tidal flooding. Although the site exceeds 1 ha and is therefore subject to detailed assessment under national policy, the study demonstrates that the risk of flooding from all sources – rivers, surface water, groundwater, sewers and reservoirs/other artificial sources – is low for the proposed development.

The FRA establishes that the proposals will increase impermeable area compared with the current baseline, but that a comprehensive Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) can more than offset this by providing significant new on-site storage and controlled discharge. The strategy comprises: a surface water attenuation basin in the applicant-owned field to the north, designed with vegetated sides and 300 mm freeboard; permeable paving with sub-base storage serving car parking and associated roof drainage along the southern boundary; and a buried geocellular storage tank at the site entrance. These components are linked via a new piped network to a controlled outfall to the roadside ditch on White House Lane, which ultimately drains to the Foundry Brook catchment.

The FRA confirms that, even with climate-change uplifts applied, the SuDS system provides adequate storage and manages exceedance safely within the site, directing any residual flows away from vulnerable buildings and towards lower-lying land and the ditch system. The FRA concludes that an appropriate foul drainage solution is available and that, subject to detailed design and implementation of the recommended maintenance regime for the SuDS components, the development will be safe from flooding for its lifetime and will not increase flood risk elsewhere, fully satisfying the requirements of the NPPF, the National Standards for SuDS and relevant local flood risk policy.



9. Ecology

9.1. Baseline & surveys

Independent surveys completed by Daniel Ahern Ecology confirm a low-sensitivity commercial working yard and grazed grass mosaic with boundary hedgerows/trees of higher value. The PEA records low terrestrial amphibian potential, negligible–low potential for reptiles and terrestrial mammals, and only low bat roost potential in a subset of buildings but with moderate bat foraging/commuting along the edges. Targeted bat emergence work then confirmed small summer day roosts in Buildings 1 and 9 (common pipistrelle; brown long-eared also in B1), so an EPS Licence will be secured prior to any works to affected structures. Great crested newt eDNA from the on-site pond is negative; GCN are not a constraint.

9.2. Mitigation & enhancements

The scheme is ecology-led, concentrating development on existing hardstanding and locking in green infrastructure that strengthens the site's ecological function: a new 15 m native landscape buffer on the eastern edge; reinforced hedgerows (with planting timed to avoid the bird-nesting season); a storm-water attenuation pond linked to the hedge line; and a wet/moist grassland mosaic. Bat-sensitive measures include a dedicated bat loft in Building 10 and Harlech Woodstone bat boxes; hedgehog houses and insect houses broaden habitat niches. These elements maintain and improve commuting/foraging routes and seasonal food resources while screening the yard and lifting visual quality.

Works to Buildings 1 and 9 will proceed under EPSL with licenced supervision, method statements, seasonal timing (demolition/roof works late Mar–late Oct) and immediate stop-works protocols—standard, proven measures for small day roosts. This targeted approach resolves the only material species constraint identified.

Bats - lighting

A site audit found many existing fittings were over-tilted with poor upward control. The scheme removes these and replaces them with lower-output, downward-facing luminaires to confine light to the ground plane. The existing pattern of low-level wall fixtures is broadly maintained only where operationally necessary; the eastern and northern areas beyond the buildings remain unlit to preserve dark corridors. External lights will be switched off by early evening so that circulation routes are dark or near-dark overnight. Taken together, the proposals reduce spill and skyglow at bat-sensitive edges and result in a negligible to beneficial change in lighting conditions for bats.

9.3. BNG

The Matrix shows an on-site baseline of 14.27 habitat units and 1.95 hedgerow units and demonstrates we can achieve 26.85% net gain using some of the offsite land within the blueline. This is Option A as set out within Appendix 4 BNG off-set options of 5279 7 PEA. We have also set out options for achieving the BNG gain off-site options B and C. The applicant will determine which option they prefer during the course of the application so that the relevant legal agreement can be prepared prior to determination.



9.4. Summary

Taken together, the retention of existing boundary habitats, the creation of the new eastern landscape buffer and attenuation pond, and the secured bat-roost mitigation and enhancement mean that the scheme delivers a clear ecological betterment compared with the existing baseline. With the BNG package in place, the development will result in a net gain for biodiversity and will comply with national policy and local plan requirements for protecting and enhancing ecological networks and priority species.

10. Agricultural and Mineral land designations

The NPPF requires local planning authorities to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land and, where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, to seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to higher quality land. Core Strategy Policy CP1 reflects this approach by seeking to direct development away from BMV land wherever possible. The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) system grades land from 1 to 5, with Grade 3 divided into Sub-grades 3a and 3b. National guidance defines BMV as Grades 1, 2 and 3a; Grade 3b and below are not classed as BMV and are generally less flexible, less productive and more constrained.

Council mapping identifies the application site as Grade 3 agricultural land. At present it is in low intensity use as horse grazing rather than active commercial agricultural production. In determining previous applications at this site, the Council has already concluded that expansion into this parcel of land was acceptable, noting that, given its relatively small area, the proposal would not result in a significant loss of best and most versatile agricultural land and would therefore comply with Policy CP1 and national guidance.

No site-specific ALC survey has been undertaken for this modest extension, but the landform, soils and drainage characteristics are consistent with the wider White House Farm area and with the adjoining housing site to the east. For that neighbouring site, a detailed ALC and soil resources survey (Land Research Associates, 2013) found that ‘the land comprised approximately 4.6 hectares of grassland underlain by London Clay. The majority of this—around 3.8 hectares (83%)—was classified as Sub-grade 3b, with only around 0.8 hectares (17%) comprising Sub-grade 3a on a slightly raised part of the field. Agricultural use there was constrained by slowly permeable clay subsoils and seasonal waterlogging (wetness classes III–IV)’.

The officer’s report for that housing scheme recorded that, ‘given the small and isolated pocket of 3a land within a wider area of lower grade 3b land, and the drainage constraints affecting the site, the loss of BMV land did not justify refusal’. This position was effectively endorsed at appeal: the Inspector allowed the housing development and raised no objection in respect of agricultural land quality.

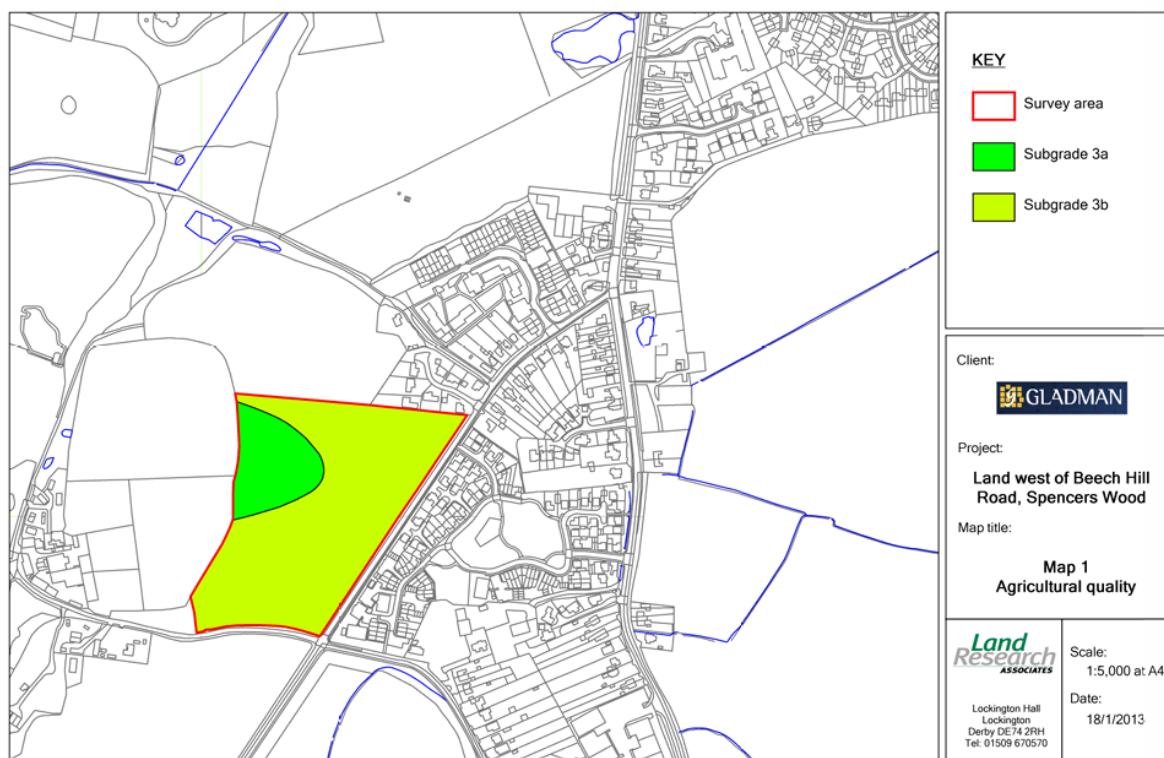


Figure 16 - Map showing adjacent housing site agricultural land classification.

Figure 14 (Agricultural Land Classification Map) shows that the Lister Wilder site sits immediately adjacent to, and forms part of, the same agricultural block as the housing site. On any reasonable planning judgement, the application land is very likely to share the same 3a/3b mix, with the majority being 3b; any area of potential 3a land within the current application is significantly smaller than that already accepted for loss on the neighbouring site; and the land suffers from the same drainage and wetness issues identified in the Beech Hill Road ALC report and explored further in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy.

When set against this context, the Lister Wilder proposal results in the loss of only a very small additional area of Grade 3 land, much of which is currently used as paddock or grazing for horses rather than productive agriculture, in a location where the Council and an Inspector have already accepted that the loss of a substantially larger area of similar-quality land does not warrant refusal.

Taking into account the previous detailed ALC evidence for the adjacent site (showing a majority of 3b land with only a limited pocket of 3a), the absence of any past policy objection to agricultural land loss on that much larger housing scheme, the modest scale of land required for this proposal, and the clear economic and employment benefits of modernising an established rural business at an existing commercial site, it is reasonable and proportionate to conclude that this development does not result in a significant loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. Any limited loss of Grade 3 land should carry very limited weight against the proposal. The scheme therefore complies with Core Strategy Policy CP1 and the NPPF in respect of agricultural land protection, and agricultural land quality does not constitute a constraint to the development or a reason for refusal.



11. Minerals Safeguarding Area

The application site lies within a designated Minerals Safeguarding Area (MSA) for sand and gravel, requiring consideration of the potential for viable mineral extraction prior to development in accordance with the Berkshire Replacement Minerals Local Plan, the emerging Joint Central & Eastern Berkshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan (Policy 18), and paragraph 210 of the NPPF. These policies seek to avoid the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources unless prior extraction is impracticable, uneconomic or environmentally unacceptable.

In the previous planning application covering a similar part of this site, Wokingham Borough Council accepted that the land in question fell well below the 3ha threshold at which prior extraction becomes potentially viable under the emerging Minerals & Waste Local Plan. The Council further concluded that the irregular shape, limited access, and constrained parcel size rendered prior extraction impractical in operational terms.

The submitted Minerals Resource Assessment for the present application reinforces and expands upon this position. The assessment demonstrates that:

- Most of the mineral-bearing strata beneath the site is already sterilised by the long-established Lister Wilder operational area, existing buildings, surfacing, and utilities.
- The remaining unworked deposit is extremely limited, with only approximately 0.3ha of potentially workable land within the application boundary.
- Even when considering the broader landholding, the total mineral volume is very modest, estimated at less than 12,800 tonnes, far below commercially viable extraction thresholds.
- Extraction would require disproportionate engineering works, haulage routing through sensitive receptors, and temporary cessation of an established rural business—rendering the operation wholly uneconomic and operationally unacceptable.
- The configuration of the site, proximity to existing operational buildings, and conflict with business continuity further confirm the impracticability of any prior extraction.

On this basis, meaningful recovery of sand and gravel is neither reasonable nor feasible. The proposed development therefore does not conflict with Policy 18 (Safeguarding Sand & Gravel Resources), as the safeguarding objective is fully met: the site contains no viable or practicable mineral resource capable of prior extraction.

Accordingly, the development accords with both local and national minerals policy, and there is no minerals-related justification to resist the proposal.



12. Highway Safety, Access and Parking

The proposal has been informed by Wokingham Borough Council's pre-application highways response and is supported by a detailed Transport Statement. That response asked for robust evidence on traffic generation, access design, visibility, parking and the management of HGVs on White House Lane. The submitted work demonstrates that the development accords with national guidance in the NPPF (safe and suitable access; no "severe residual cumulative impacts") and with the relevant local transport policies, and that it will deliver a **net improvement** in highway safety compared with the existing situation.

White House Lane is a lightly trafficked rural lane with low recorded traffic flows and measured 85th percentile speeds significantly below the posted 60mph limit. The Transport Statement shows that, even allowing for a modest increase in staff numbers from 50 to 57, the uplift in vehicle trips in the AM and PM peaks is negligible when set against background flows, and well within normal day-to-day variation on the local network. There is no evidence that the proposal would materially worsen congestion or junction performance on White House Lane or at the A33 junction. Accident records over the latest five-year period show no pattern of collisions associated with the existing Lister Wilder accesses, and no indication that the proposals would create or exacerbate a safety problem.

The key highways concern at pre-app stage related to HGV operation on White House Lane, including reversing into the existing southern access, vehicles waiting in the carriageway at busy times, and occasional unloading from the public highway. The revised scheme resolves this completely. The western access will be improved and re-purposed as the principal HGV and delivery entrance, routed directly to and from the A33. From this access, all large vehicles will enter the site, wait, unload and turn entirely within a dedicated yard, and then exit in a forward gear. The southern/eastern access will be restricted to staff and customer cars only. This separation of functions, combined with appropriate visibility splays based on measured speeds, removes the need for HGVs to wait or manoeuvre on White House Lane and represents a clear and demonstrable **road safety betterment** over the existing arrangement.

Parking provision has been reviewed against Wokingham's car and cycle parking standards but sensibly adjusted to reflect the actual B2/B8 mixed-use profile of the site. The business will increase from 50 to 57 staff positions, and the proposal provides 29 staff spaces (two disabled), 9 customer spaces (two disabled), 16 dedicated service van spaces, motorcycle parking and secure cycle parking for staff. As set out in the Transport Statement, Lister Wilder's operational model means it is highly unlikely that all staff will be on site simultaneously: a significant proportion are van-based engineers, part-time workers or staff whose primary duties are off site. Treating the modest showroom and office areas as ancillary to the main B2/B8 use, rather than as a standalone A1/B1 (Now Class E) use, is consistent with the nature of the business and avoids over-inflating parking demand. On this realistic basis, the proposed 54 spaces are sufficient to accommodate peak demand without overspill, and any minor shortfall against a purely theoretical A1/B1(Class E) standard is not expected to translate into highway issues.



The pre-app response also requested a Travel Plan, Delivery and Servicing Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan. The Transport Statement confirms that these can appropriately be secured by condition. Securing these documents by condition is a proportionate response for a modest intensification of an existing rural business and ensures ongoing control over travel behaviour.

The public right of way that runs along the western boundary will remain open and retain its rural character, and the proposal will not result in any unacceptable impact on the amenity or safety of its users. Vehicle movements across the shared section are already an established feature of the route and the development does not introduce a step-change in traffic levels; instead it rationalises and better controls how vehicles use this access. All HGVs will route slowly over a very short length of shared surface from White House Lane into the goods yard, with turning and waiting fully contained within the site. Clear signage, surface markings and internal management procedures will give priority to pedestrians and ensure drivers are aware of the presence of walkers at all times. Forward visibility at the access will be maintained and operating speeds will be low, so any interaction between vehicles and PROW users will be infrequent, slow-speed and managed. In this way, the proposal maintains the usability and enjoyment of the footpath while improving overall site access safety.

In summary, the transport evidence shows that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the operation or safety of the local highway network and that it positively addresses all concerns raised at pre-application stage. The re-engineered access strategy, internalisation of HGV manoeuvres, appropriately scaled parking and the commitment to secured management plans collectively demonstrate compliance with local and national transport policy and constitute a significant planning benefit of the scheme.



13. AWE Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)

The application site lies within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for AWE Burghfield. Under the Radiation (Emergency Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2019 (REPPPIR), the off-site emergency plan for AWE Burghfield is prepared and maintained by West Berkshire Council, which is the designated plan owner for both AWE Burghfield and AWE Aldermaston. Although the site is located within Wokingham Borough, the area of Wokingham that lies inside the DEPZ is fully covered by the West Berkshire Off-Site Emergency Plan, which sets out the actions to be taken to protect people in the unlikely event of a radiological emergency.

Policy TB04 of the Wokingham Managing Development Delivery DPD requires that development within the DEPZ be assessed in light of the AWE facility and the off-site plan, ensuring that any increase in population can be safely managed. The Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR), as statutory consultee, does not prohibit development within the DEPZ but instead considers proposals on a case-by-case basis. ONR's published approach indicates that non-residential or low-population-intensity developments can be acceptable where Emergency Planning Officers confirm that the off-site plan can accommodate the additional occupancy and where the applicant can demonstrate clear and workable on-site emergency arrangements.

In this case the proposal represents the modernisation and consolidation of an existing rural commercial operation rather than the introduction of a new sensitive land use. The total staff complement will be approximately 57 people, with no overnight accommodation and no vulnerable populations. Visitors to the site are modest in number and are easily accounted for through standard reception procedures. The nature of the use therefore produces a controlled, predictable and entirely manageable population level within the DEPZ, very different from large-scale residential developments that generate dispersed and difficult-to-shelter populations.

The application is supported by a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (ERP) that has been prepared specifically with AWE radiological events in mind. The ERP explains how the site will receive an alert, how procedures will be activated, and how all persons on site will be accounted for and protected in accordance with the West Berkshire Off-Site Emergency Plan. A key part of this approach is the identification of the proposed main operations and service centre building as the designated Place of Safety. This building contains toilets, welfare rooms, a staff canteen, potable water and suitable internal refuge areas, allowing all staff and visitors to shelter in place for the full 48-hour duration that may be required under the off-site plan. The building layout supports rapid assembly, internal zoning and secure containment, making the shelter-in-place procedure straightforward for trained staff to implement.

This level of preparedness is substantial and provides a strong degree of assurance that the site can be managed safely in an emergency. The operational characteristics of the business further support this conclusion: staff are permanent and trained; visitors are logged and guided by staff; population is concentrated within a single building; and the external yard areas do not create additional occupied space. The temporary loss of machinery during an emergency would have no bearing on the ability to protect people, which is the central requirement of the off-site plan.



When considered against Policy TB04 and the requirements of REPPiR 2019, the proposed development does not introduce any unacceptable increase in radiological risk, nor does it undermine the operation or effectiveness of the West Berkshire Off-Site Emergency Plan. The scale and nature of the population is fully compatible with the emergency planning framework, and the ERP shows clearly that all persons on the site can be sheltered and accounted for throughout the emergency action period.

Although a cautious consultation response from ONR or the Emergency Planning Officer is anticipated, the evidence demonstrates that the proposal can be integrated into the existing multi-agency emergency planning arrangements without difficulty. There is therefore no justified planning basis to resist the application on AWE safety grounds.



14. Planning Policy

14.1. National Planning Policy

The NPPF requires plans and decisions to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means approving development that accords with an up-to-date development plan without delay, and granting permission where policies are out of date unless adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole (paragraph 11). The proposal accords with the adopted Wokingham development plan and delivers clear economic, environmental and social benefits; there are no identified adverse impacts of a scale that would displace the presumption.

Chapter 6 of the NPPF (“Building a strong, competitive economy”) expects significant weight to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking account of business needs in local areas. Paragraph 89 (rural economy) recognises that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and that development in such locations may not be well served by public transport. The scheme modernises an established agricultural machinery business, safeguards and modestly increases rural employment, and does so in a location where large agricultural and construction plant can be accessed and serviced safely. It therefore accords with Chapter 6 and paragraph 89 in supporting a prosperous rural economy.

The NPPF’s town centre policies (Chapter 7) require a sequential approach and impact testing for main town centre uses located outside centres (paragraphs 91–95). In this case, the proposal is not a retail-led or leisure scheme but the redevelopment of a rural machinery operations and service centre with only limited ancillary showroom and office elements. The scale and function of the sales component fall well below the NPPF’s default 2,500m² impact threshold for out-of-centre retail and do not give rise to any realistic risk to the vitality or viability of Wokingham’s town or local centres (paragraph 94). The proposal therefore sits comfortably within the town centre policy framework.

Chapter 9 (“Promoting sustainable transport”) seeks to focus significant development in locations that can be made sustainable, while recognising that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions vary between urban and rural areas (paragraph 110). Paragraph 115 requires that safe and suitable access is achieved for all users and that any significant impacts on the transport network or highway safety are mitigated to an acceptable degree, and paragraph 116 confirms that development should only be refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety or severe residual cumulative impacts, following mitigation.

The transport evidence demonstrates low traffic volumes on White House Lane, safe visibility, and a re-planned access arrangement that removes HGV waiting and reversing from the lane and routes larger vehicles directly to and from the A33. As a result, the proposal improves highway safety and accords with paragraphs 110, 115 and 116.

The Framework requires planning policies and decisions to secure high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places (Chapter 12). Paragraph 135 expects development to be visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and landscape setting, and to establish a strong sense of place.



Paragraph 139 supports the use of design tools and assessments in reaching this outcome. The revised proposal substantially reduces built floorspace, contains development within the established operational envelope, and is supported by LVIA, arboricultural, lighting and layout work that demonstrate a well-integrated, rural industrial form. The design response therefore aligns with Chapter 12.

In relation to the natural environment, paragraph 187 requires decisions to protect and enhance valued landscapes, recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and also recognise the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Paragraph 193 expects developments to integrate opportunities to improve biodiversity and secure measurable net gains where appropriate. The application is supported by a PEA, species surveys and BNG calculations that demonstrate habitat creation, landscaping and net gains for biodiversity, together with only a modest loss of Grade 3 land in paddock use, adjacent to land where a significantly larger loss of similar quality agricultural land has already been accepted. The proposals therefore comply with Chapter 15.

The NPPF also requires that ground conditions, contamination, noise and lighting are properly addressed. Paragraphs 196–199 seek to ensure land is suitable for its proposed use, that contamination risks are properly investigated and remediated, and that noise and light are controlled so as not to give rise to significant adverse effects on health, amenity or intrinsically dark landscapes. The scheme is supported by a contaminated land assessment, asbestos survey, noise assessment and lighting impact assessment, each confirming that, with the embedded mitigation measures (including remediation, a 2.4-metre acoustic fence and fully downward-directed LED lighting), the development will operate without unacceptable environmental or amenity impacts.

Chapter 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities) expects planning decisions to create safe, inclusive and accessible places, and to protect and enhance public rights of way (paragraphs 96 and 105). The proposal retains the adjacent public footpath, maintains its rural character, and improves on-site circulation and segregation between HGVs, staff and visitors. The internal layout and new primary access arrangements therefore contribute positively to safety for workers, customers and PROW users.

Finally, the Framework emphasises public safety, defence and security (paragraph 102), requiring planning decisions to take account of wider security requirements and to ensure that operational defence sites are not adversely affected by surrounding development. The site lies within the AWE Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone and is supported by a bespoke Emergency Response Plan agreed in principle with AWE's requirements. The layout, staff management and use of the main operations and service building as a place of safety ensure compliance with paragraph 102, demonstrating that the scheme is compatible with off-site emergency planning and public safety objectives.

Taken together, the proposal accords with the key provisions of the NPPF. It delivers sustainable rural economic growth on an existing commercial site, with environmental safeguards and amenity protections in line with the Framework's overall objectives.



14.2. Local Planning Policy

The statutory development plan for Wokingham Borough comprises the Core Strategy (2010) and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) DPD (2014). The policies most relevant to this proposal are set out below.

14.2.1. Core Strategy Policies

Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development

CP1 requires development to be located and designed to contribute positively to sustainable development objectives, including the efficient use of land, supporting the economy, minimising environmental impacts, and avoiding areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.

The proposal accords with CP1 because it represents the modernisation and continued efficient use of a long-established rural commercial site, avoiding the need to develop greenfield sites elsewhere. The land affected is Grade 3 agricultural land, the majority of which is likely to be 3b based on neighbouring ALC surveys and drainage constraints, and the area involved is small. The proposal therefore avoids significant loss of best and most versatile land. The scheme supports rural economic activity and is accompanied by a full suite of environmental assessments showing that contamination, noise, lighting, trees and minerals pose no unacceptable constraints.

Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development

CP3 requires development to maintain or enhance the quality of the environment, respect the character of the area, safeguard residential amenity, provide safe access, and incorporate sustainable design.

The proposal accords with CP3 in several respects. The scale of development has been substantially reduced from the pre-application concept, limiting its visual envelope and ensuring that it sits appropriately within the existing operational yard. The Noise Impact Assessment demonstrates that, with the recommended 2.4m acoustic fence, operational noise will not harm nearby residential amenity. The Lighting Impact Assessment confirms compliant, downlit, low-spill luminaires that protect both residential properties and ecological receptors. The AIA and TPP ensure the protection of important tree cover. Safe access will be demonstrated through the Transport Assessment. Overall, the development enhances the functionality and appearance of an existing rural commercial site without causing harm to surrounding properties or the countryside.

Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA)

CP8 safeguards the SPA through mitigation measures and appropriate land-use controls. The policy is principally concerned with residential development and increased recreational pressure. The proposed development is non-residential, introduces no increased recreational pressure, and includes a lighting design that protects ecological corridors. As such, there is no impact pathway to the SPA and the proposal complies fully with CP8.

Policy CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals

Core Strategy Policy CP9 sets the overarching spatial distribution of development in Wokingham, directing major growth to the Strategic Development Locations (SDLs) and ensuring that large-scale residential or mixed-use proposals do not come forward in an uncoordinated way outside those areas. Although CP9 is primarily aimed at housing growth, its principles remain relevant to other forms of development in assessing whether a proposal would undermine the Borough's spatial strategy.



The proposed development fully accords with CP9. It is not a strategic or residential scheme and does not introduce new settlement expansion; instead, it represents the modest modernisation of an established rural commercial site with no outward sprawl into undeveloped countryside. The scale has been significantly reduced from earlier iterations, ensuring that the development remains proportionate to the existing operational envelope. It generates no unplanned burden on infrastructure and sits comfortably within the hierarchy of non-residential uses expected in rural areas. The proposal therefore does not conflict with the strategic growth distribution set by CP9 and, by securing local employment and supporting a long-standing rural business, is consistent with the policy's wider aim of maintaining a balanced and sustainable pattern of development across the Borough.

Policy CP11 – Development in the Countryside

CP11 permits development in the countryside where it supports the rural economy, is appropriate to its location, and does not cause excessive encroachment or adverse landscape effects.

The proposal strongly aligns with CP11. Lister Wilder is a rural-facing machinery business whose customers, equipment and servicing operations depend upon countryside accessibility. The company has operated from rural sites for over 70 years, and the nature and scale of equipment handled makes town-centre or business-park locations unworkable. The development consolidates and modernises an existing rural business, rather than introducing a new use. The revised layout avoids the eastward encroachment identified at pre-app stage, and the proposed development has been significantly reduced in size. The Landscape and Arboricultural assessments confirm that the scheme will not harm the landscape character of the Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay Lowland. The proposal therefore meets all three limbs of CP11 and represents a legitimate and proportionate countryside enterprise.

14.2.2. Managing Development Delivery (MDD) DPD Policies

Policy TB04 – AWE Burghfield

TB04 requires development within the DEPZ to be compatible with the AWE off-site emergency plan and population management framework.

A comprehensive Emergency Response Plan (ERP) is included within this application submission, demonstrating how all staff and visitors can shelter in place for 48 hours, in accordance with the West Berkshire Off-Site Emergency Plan. Occupancy levels are modest (approximately 57 staff), controlled, and non-residential. The main operations and service building includes toilets, canteen, welfare facilities and secure internal refuge areas, ensuring full compliance with REPPIR requirements. The development does not introduce vulnerable populations or unmanageable occupancy levels. For these reasons, the development complies with TB04 and can be integrated safely into the existing off-site planning arrangements.

Policy TB21 – Landscape Character

TB21 requires development to protect and enhance the character of the Borough's landscapes as defined in the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment.



The scheme has been landscape-led. The proposed building is significantly smaller than originally conceived, now forming a coherent cluster with existing structures. Boundary vegetation is retained, and lighting is controlled to rural E2 standards. The site sits within a semi-enclosed pocket of the Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay Lowland character area, where agricultural and rural-industrial forms are characteristic. The development respects this local context and avoids adverse landscape or visual effects, confirmed by an independent LVIA thereby complying with TB21.

Policy CC06 – Noise

CC06 requires development to avoid unacceptable noise impacts and secure appropriate mitigation.

The Noise Impact Assessment confirms that, with the installation of a 2.4m acoustic fence, noise levels at all sensitive receptors fall within the “low impact” range under BS4142. The proposal therefore accords with CC06.

Policy CC07 – Lighting

CC07 requires that external lighting avoids pollution, protects amenity and prevents adverse ecosystem impacts. The Lighting Impact Assessment demonstrates no upward light spill, no illumination of habitats, and minimal boundary spill. All lighting is shielded and responds to the rural character. Compliance with CC07 is therefore achieved.

Policy CC04 – Sustainable Design and Environmental Protection

This policy seeks to ensure development is safe from contamination and protects environmental quality. The Contaminated Land Desk Study identifies no unacceptable risks. The Asbestos Survey, Arboricultural Method Statement, and drainage strategy further reinforce that environmental risks are low and manageable. The proposal therefore satisfies CC04.

Employment Policies (TB11–TB14)

These policies support business expansion, rural employment, and modernisation of existing commercial premises where compatible with their surroundings. The proposal modernises an existing employer, increases operational efficiency, supports 57 skilled jobs, and improves the economic resilience of a rural enterprise. The development does not conflict with any employment allocation, nor does it displace compatible land uses. It is therefore consistent with MDD employment policies.

14.3. Other Material Local Policy Documents

14.3.1. Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment (LCA)

The site lies within the Spencers Wood Settled & Farmed Clay Lowland character area. The proposal respects the LCA guidelines by retaining key trees, preventing skyline intrusion, using sensitive lighting, and consolidating development within the existing yard. It follows the LCA’s direction to avoid suburbanising features and overly prominent industrial forms.



14.3.2. Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Policy 18 – Mineral Safeguarding)

Policy 18 seeks to avoid sterilisation of viable mineral deposits. The Minerals Resource Assessment demonstrates that the mineral resource beneath the site is already largely sterilised, with the remaining fraction being too small and constrained to be viable. The proposal therefore does not conflict with Policy 18.

15. Conclusion

This revised proposal has been prepared specifically to address the issues raised at pre-application stage. The development has been significantly reduced in scale, re-orientated to avoid countryside encroachment, and supported by a full suite of technical assessments. The result is a proportionate and policy-compliant scheme that modernises an established rural business without generating unacceptable environmental or amenity effects.

The earlier concern that the proposal would appear as an intrusive form of countryside development has been resolved through a 39% reduction in floorspace achieved by Lister Wilder reorganising and amalgamating activities across its wider network to reduce intensity here, reconsolidating only what is operationally essential on this site. The built form has been consolidated, replacing and extending key boundary vegetation, and designing a lighting strategy to maintain the rural night environment. The LVIA and Arboricultural reports confirm that the revised scheme will sit comfortably within the Spencers Wood Settled and Farmed Clay Lowland landscape. It therefore accords with Core Strategy Policies CP3, CP9, CP11 and MDD Policy TB21.

The pre-application misunderstanding that the use resembled a distribution operation is not applicable. The supporting evidence makes clear that the proposal is the practical modernisation of a long-standing rural machinery business whose operational needs require a countryside location. Lister Wilder sites mainly operate in rural settings for functional and safety reasons, and the reduced scale of the proposal reinforces that this is not a storage and distribution depot. The development therefore aligns directly with CP11's support for appropriate rural economic activity.

Noise and lighting concerns have been addressed through detailed technical work. With the recommended 2.4-metre acoustic fence, noise levels at all residential receptors fall within the "low impact" range, and the lighting strategy achieves rural E2 standards with no spill toward homes or the PRow. Residential amenity is therefore safeguarded and the proposal complies with Policies CC06 and CC07.

The site's position within the AWE Burghfield DEPZ was also raised at pre-application stage. The submitted Emergency Response Plan demonstrates that the development can be fully integrated into the West Berkshire Off-Site Emergency Plan. The population on site is modest, controllable and non-residential, and the main operations and service building is designed to function as a fully equipped Place of Safety, capable of sheltering all staff and visitors for 48 hours. This approach exceeds typical commercial practice within the DEPZ and satisfies the requirements of MDD Policy TB04 and the REPIR framework.



The Transport Assessment evidence shows that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the operation or safety of the local highway network and that it positively addresses all concerns raised at pre-application stage. The re-engineered access strategy, internalisation of HGV manoeuvres, appropriately scaled parking and the commitment to secured management plans collectively demonstrate compliance with local and national transport policy and constitute a significant planning benefit of the scheme.

The ecological surveys and proposed BNG have demonstrated, the retention of existing boundary habitats, the creation of the new eastern landscape buffer and attenuation pond, and the secured bat-roost mitigation and enhancement mean that the scheme delivers a clear ecological betterment compared with the existing baseline. With the BNG package in place, the development will result in a net gain for biodiversity and will comply with national policy and local plan requirements for protecting and enhancing ecological networks and priority species.

The LVIA confirms that the proposal will sit more comfortably in the landscape than the current ad-hoc arrangement. Built form is largely contained within the existing yard, with only a modest extension into agricultural land, and the creation the planted 15m buffer significantly strengthens the site's landscape structure. Existing key trees and vegetation are retained wherever possible, views from nearby roads and the PROW are better screened, and the new layout is more orderly and rural in character. Overall, the LVIA finds the scheme to deliver a small but clear landscape improvement compared with the existing situation.

The Minerals Resource Assessment confirms that viable mineral extraction is not feasible due to the limited extent and constrained nature of the remaining deposit, and the agricultural land affected is very likely to be comparable to the adjoining site where the Council and Inspector accepted that the loss of Grade 3 land did not warrant refusal. The proposal therefore complies with Policy CP1 and national minerals and agricultural land policy.

Planning Balance

When considered in the round, the proposal delivers clear and significant planning benefits. It secures the long-term operation of an established rural employer, sustains approximately 57 jobs, and provides modern facilities for a business that serves the agricultural, construction, and land-based sectors. These economic and operational benefits carry substantial weight in accordance with the NPPF's requirement to support rural productivity and economic growth.

Against these benefits, no technical evidence identifies any material harm that would justify refusal. Landscape, amenity, transport, flood risk, emergency planning, minerals, drainage, contamination and ecological considerations have all been addressed satisfactorily. The development accords with the spatial strategy in CP9, preserves the character of the countryside under CP11, protects amenity under CP3, CC06 and CC07, and meets the AWE-specific requirements of TB04. It is therefore consistent with the Development Plan when read as a whole.



In the absence of any identified harm capable of outweighing the clear economic, functional and operational benefits of the scheme, the planning balance falls decisively in favour of approval. The development represents sustainable development as defined by the NPPF and should be granted planning permission.