

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261358
Site Address:	Land South of Oldhouse Farm, Shinfield Studios, Wokingham, RG2 9AE
Expiry Date:	12 October 2026
Site Visit Date:	
Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed erection of a temporary Film Studio Backlot (for a period of 5 years).	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Strategic Development Location
Special Protection Area Linear Mitigation Zone
Overhead cables 15m buffer
Flood Zones 2 and 3
Local Authorities
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Ground Water Zones
Minerals Site Consultation Area
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Replacement Mineral Local Plan
Borough Wards
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones
Safety Hazard Areas MAH Pipelines
PRoW Within WB Consultation Zone
Gas Pipes
Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

	CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB12 – Employment Skills Plan TB15 – Major Town, and Small Town/District Centre development TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB25 – Archaeology TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document South of M4 SDL SPD Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

SDL Drainage
SDL Environmental Health
SDL Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service
SDL Trees & Landscape
SDL Heritage
SDL Highways
SDL Ecology

External

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks
Scotia Gas Network
Environment Agency

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Shinfield Parish Council (support)
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

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 the South of M4 Strategic Development Location 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:

The application Site extends 1.05ha and is located to the south of Oldhouse Farm, which itself is accessed via Oldhouse Lane. Immediately to the north of the Site lies a collection of farm and light industrial buildings, compounds, and areas of hardstanding forming 'Oldhouse Farm', which includes two Grade II Listed buildings known as Oldhouse Farmhouse and Oldhouse Farm Barn.

Further to the north lies the existing Shinfield Studios film stages and associated workshops and office space, granted under the planning permission reference 211841, and the British Museum Archaeological Research Collection (ARC) building. Further beyond this is the M4 motorway which separates Shinfield from Earley, and Whitley Wood.

The applicant has prepared a LVIA to consider the impact on the surrounding Loddon Valley Landscape. This considered the density on site, maximum structure height and listed building sensitivity.

The LVIA mentioned that due to the transient and temporary nature of the sets, a wide variety of forms, colours and materials will be on site. Though the impact this has on the character of the area is not simply assessed due to how temporary each set is, judging the site at maximum capacity and with maximum height used it would remain subservient to the wider context of the wider Shinfield Studios.

Prior approval consent to use the area for external filming purposes including the construction of temporary film sets was granted by Wokingham Borough Council on 14 February 2025 (WBC application number 243097). The prior approval consent expired in April 2026 however a further prior approval application has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority to extend the use of the land for an external backlot for a further 3 months (until July 2026).

This backlot will be associated with the wider Shinfield Studios proposals which have planning permission (Ref. 210387 and 211841), with studios and workshops on land located south of Cutbush Lane already built out and in use. The land abutting the site

to the east was granted temporary permission for film backlot in February 2024 (ref. 222906). This proposed backlot is required to support the operations of global film production companies who use the space at Shinfield Studios.

The proposal is of temporary nature and therefore any impact the proposal may have on wider character, though in keeping with the direct character of the area will not be in perpetuity. To ensure this, a condition has been attached to ensure that the site is returned to its original state and quality after the 5-year period with all remedials necessary implemented within 3 months of use ceasing.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Overbearing and Loss of Light:

The proposal at the closest point would be located within c70 metres from the nearest residential dwelling. This separation distance, combined with the sets nature and maximum height would have no significant impact on neighbouring amenities. The Council intends to attach a planning condition to ensure that any structures do not exceed 15 metres in height to ensure no impact on neighbouring amenities.

The Strategic Development Location team monitors complaints sent into the compliance officer and no complaints have been logged regarding the current use of the land. In addition, no neighbour responses have been received for this application proposal.

Noise:

The proposal is currently used as an outdoor filming backlot, and filming intensity has not been claimed to be any more significant than existing. Therefore, the noise levels coming out of site despite the area being larger is not considered to have a detrimental effect on the locale.

In terms of noise the main activities will be the construction and erection of film sets which will be formed predominantly from timber and plaster. This will involve the use of plant including cranes, fork lift trucks and telehandlers. There will be traffic movements arising from the process of erecting film sets with further vehicle movements comprising of vans, production vehicles and minibuses to transfer personnel between the film backlot and rest of the site.

A noise assessment was submitted with this application, it undertook an assessment near residential properties to determine noise levels. A detailed assessment of typical set activity, including set building, has been carried out and concluded that noise will not cause adverse impact to local residents.

The site's location c70 metres away from the nearest residential dwelling further mitigates this impact however it is acknowledged that filming at night could result in amenity issues for nearby residents. Given the nature of the film industry, night filming and overruns are likely. However, to mitigate impacts, a condition limiting hours of operation has been imposed on the development

Lighting Impacts:

The proposal is currently used as an outdoor filming backlot, a landscape and visual technical note (LVTN) has been submitted for this application.

As advised the wider Shinfield Studios development was considered as part of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) forming part of a previously submitted Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in 2021, accompanying a detailed planning application for the development of a new film studios facility on land south of the M4 at Thames Valley Science Park, to the east of Shinfield, which was approved (Ref. 211841).

Development within the maximum parameters will be temporary in nature and changing constantly, exhibiting a variety of materials and colours. Generally, development within Backlot 3 will occupy an area much smaller than the maximum parameters, in terms of both footprint and height, extending across a limited area of the Site at any one time and varying in height.

Backlot 3 is set within the context of the existing temporary permission for Backlot 1, which includes a 5m wide strip of mitigation planting along the eastern extents of the southern boundary of the Backlot 3 Site. This will help to integrate Backlot 3 into the receiving landscape of the Loddon Valley. The buffer will deliver vegetation where planting will mature to create a dense visual screen as well as helping to restore the field boundaries, forming a connection between existing trees on the Site boundary.

The maturing mitigation planting on the south-western boundary, associated with the temporary permission for Backlot 1, continues to provide a characteristic landscape buffer, filtering views from the south. Visual receptors will experience a continuation of the current transient views for the duration of the five-year permission. Where visible, the Backlot 3 elements will remain below the established skyline of vegetation within the Loddon Valley.

Due to the short duration of filming sets and existing vegetation around the site, there should be no significant adverse impact from lighting.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

This application has been supported by a transport statement which is welcome. Highways is content that any traffic generated by this temporary application would not have an adverse impact on the highway network and would be part of the traffic generated by the entire site.

Highways would normally have expected a construction management plan to have been submitted however, in this instance, any construction and remediation would need to follow the principles of the approved Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) (Abbey Letchford partnership Ltd, Reference A282-R015/D dated 15/09/21) that was submitted with the application for the full studio site. A condition will be recommended to secure this.

The site of the backlot is adjacent to Old House Farm to the east. Highways have no problem with the site location given it is located to the back of the existing studios. The route from the studio to the backlot would be via Cutbush Lane East and then Oldhouse Lane as there are no alternative routes.

It has been stated that minibuses will transfer staff and actors from the parking from the main studio sites to the backlot which is welcome. As such no issues with access to the site.

Flooding and Drainage:

No objection has been raised by either the drainage officer nor the Environment Agency, who responded to the consultee request and stated they had no issues with the proposal.

A letter was sent from the Environment Agency (EA) to the planning officer on 30.06.2026 confirming that the EA have reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment submitted by the planning agent and that they have no objection to the proposal.

Landscape and Trees:

No objection has been raised by the trees and landscape officer, they have recommended that a condition be attached to the decision notice for the re-instatement of the site back to agricultural land after the 5 years has elapsed, which is noted.

Built Heritage:

WBC's Built Heritage Officer concurs with the assessment and conclusions reached in the heritage statement prepared by Stantec submitted as part of this application.

Whilst the proposal through the further loss and development of agricultural around and associated with the historic Oldhouse farm would to some extent diminish the wider historic traditional setting of the listed buildings there would be no adverse harm to their significance or their immediate setting. What harm there may be in terms of the wider setting to the designated heritage assets is considered at most to be very much at the lower range of less than significant harm.

From a heritage stance, what limited harm to the setting of the designated heritage asset is such that it would not be sufficient to object to in this case.

Public Rights of Way:

The site adjoins Shin Foot Path 4 public right of way. There is clear buffering between the site and surroundings and there is no changes proposed to the route of FP4

Ecology:

This application has been supported by an Ecological Statement (ES) which is welcome.

The Ecology officer has commented that 'considering the proposals in light of the evidence presented in the submitted Ecological Statement (EPR May 2026), They have no ecological objection to this application and can recommend that no ecological conditions (other than the statutory biodiversity net gain condition which would automatically be applied, should permission be granted) need to be applied.

Scotia Gas Network (SGN):

An initial objection was received by SGN as a high pressure pipeline is located under the ground in the vicinity, after discussions with SGN engineers and explaining that no

groundworks or removal of soil would be undertaken, the objection was lifted but an informative will be added to ensure that the objection is covered.

Other:

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	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approved
Date:	12 October 2026
Earliest date for decision:	

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	Connor Corrigan
Date:	12 October 2026