

5th June 2025

Our Ref: 333102228

Wokingham Borough Council,
Shute End,
Wokingham,
Berkshire,
RG40 1BN

BY PLANNING PORTAL: PP-14075401

Dear Sir or Madam,

**WHITEKNIGHTS HOUSE CYCLE STORE, UNIVERSITY OF READING WHITEKNIGHTS CAMPUS,
READING
FULL PLANNING APPLICATION**

On behalf of our client, the University of Reading, we are pleased to submit a planning application to Wokingham Borough Council ('WBC') for the erection of a cycle store at land northwest of Whiteknights House, University of Reading Whiteknights Campus, Reading.

The proposed description of development for which full planning permission is sought is as follows:

"Erection of a new cycle store"

The following documents are submitted in support of the planning application:

- Planning and Heritage Statement
- Location Plan (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1001 Rev A)
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1054 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-1055 Rev A) Site Plan
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-00-DR-A-0005 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-00-DR-A-2004 Rev A) Floor Plan
- Proposed (484-ACG-XX-RF-DR-A-2005 Rev A) Roof Plan
- Existing (484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0104 Rev A, 484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-0105 Rev A) and Proposed (484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4004 Rev A, 484-ACG-XX-ZZ-DR-A-4005 Rev A) Elevations
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan
- Biodiversity Net Gain Note
- Great Crested Newt Statement

This application has been submitted electronically via Planning Portal (ref: PP-14075401).

This Planning Statement provides an assessment of this proposal in consideration of national policy (i.e., the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and the relevant policies of WBC's Development Plan to demonstrate that the proposed cycle store is in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Site and Surrounding Area

The University of Reading's Whiteknights Campus is set in 130 hectares of parkland, featuring a lake, open grassland spaces, woodlands and the Harris Gardens, in addition to its academic and student accommodation buildings. The Campus is located to the southeast of central Reading, bounded by Shinfield, Elmhurst, Upper Redlands, Whiteknights and Wilderness Roads and Pepper Lane. The southeastern part of the Campus is situated within Wokingham Borough and the northwestern part of the Campus is located within Reading Borough.

Whiteknights House is located within the central part of the Campus, bordered by buildings such as Old Whiteknights House, International Study and Language Institute, the University Library and the URS Building.

The site comprises solely of hardstanding and is part of the car park for Whiteknights House. The site does not contain parking spaces.

There are existing trees to the south and north west of the site. There are other small cycle stores in this vicinity which are not fully enclosed.

'Whiteknights House Annexe' to the northwest is Grade II Listed, and further south the 'URS Building' and 'Blandford Lodge' are also Grade II Listed.

The Campus is subject to a site-specific planning policy within the Wokingham Local Plan. The application site is not subject to any specific planning or environmental designations and is not within an area of flood risk. Part of the Campus is identified by WBC as a local historic park and garden known as 'Whiteknights Park', and the site is in the very north western part of this.

There is no relevant planning history to the application.

The Proposed Development

Stantec has been instructed by the University of Reading to produce a detailed application for:

"Erection of a new cycle store"

The University is seeking to improve the availability, quality and security of cycle store provision on the Campus. This full planning application seeks approval for the erection of a cycle store with 40 cycle spaces.

The cycle store will be fully enclosed, with timber panels on the rear (southwest and northwest) elevations and toughened glass on the other elevations. It will have a grey PVC roof.

Due to repeated bicycle thefts from existing stores and the increasing demand for cycling on Whiteknights Campus, the University is looking to increase the quality and capacity of its cycle infrastructure on site. The new cycle store will have a modern and secure design which will optimise the space usage and seamlessly integrate into the surrounding area. The cycle store is located directly adjacent to the Whiteknights Building with easy access from the car park, allowing a range of users to use the cycle store when cycling to the Whiteknights Building and other facilities nearby. The use of the car park and servicing

of the building will not be affected. The enhanced cycle facilities will encourage more people to cycle, promoting physical activity and public health, while reducing traffic congestion and emissions. This aligns with the University of Reading's sustainability goals and WBC's Core Strategy vision and policies.

The form, massing and materials of the proposed development have been carefully designed to respond to the key characteristics of the surrounding area, with no impact on the surrounding trees and vegetation.

Planning Policy Context

This section sets out the national and local planning policy relevant to the planning application.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out that applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan

The adopted Development Plan for WBC comprises:

- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (January 2010);
- Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (February 2014);
- Central and East Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2023);
- South East Plan Policy – NRM6 (Natural Resource management)

There is no made neighbourhood plan which includes the Campus.

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy

WBC's Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010 and sets out where development will occur within the borough to 2026 and includes a range of planning policies relating to housing, retail, employment and community facilities.

The planning policies contained in the Core Strategy that are most relevant to the proposed development are provided in full below.

Policy CP1 (Sustainable development) states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that meet certain criteria including those which: maintain and enhance the high-quality environment; ensure the provision of adequate drainage; provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes; reduce the need to travel particularly by car and contribute towards the goal of reaching zero-carbon developments.

Policy CP3 (General principles for development) notes that planning permission will be granted for proposals that meet specific criteria. This includes those that have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape or geological features or water courses and maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species. Proposals must also be of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

Policy CP6 (Managing travel demand) states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that provide for sustainable forms of transport and are located where there will be a choice of transport available, and those which improve the existing infrastructure network, enhance facilities for pedestrians

and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility and other users, enhance road safety and do not cause highways problems.

Policy CP7 (Biodiversity) sets out that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. Development which may harm county designated sites, or which may harm habitats or species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna, or that compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and appropriate mitigation measures or compensation measures can be provided.

Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (MDD)

Wokingham Borough's MDD Local Plan was adopted in February 2014 and supplements the policies within the Core Strategy. The planning policies that are most relevant to the proposed development are listed below.

Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) 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.

Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) notes that development proposals should; provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks; promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between existing green corridors including public right of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways; promote the integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside, protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features; and incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.

Policy TB14 (Whiteknights Campus) outlines the Whiteknights Campus as a focus for development. The complete policy is outlined in full below:

"The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as defined on the Policies Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional student, staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, and sports and leisure facilities among other uses. There will also be improvements to access, including rationalisation of vehicle entrances and exits.

Development proposals will accord with the following criteria:

- a) They respect the historic landscape, open areas and listed buildings and their settings and the character of the area;**
- b) Areas of wildlife significance (including Local Wildlife Sites) and current or potential green infrastructure networks will be retained and enhanced;**
- c) The safety of those using the campus (including highway safety issues and designing out crime) will be maintained and enhanced;**
- d) There are no significant detrimental impacts on neighbouring residential properties from the development, including from noise or parking; and**

- e) **The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.”**

Policy TB23 (Biodiversity and Development) states that planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 of the Core Strategy and demonstrate how they provide opportunities to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites and important habitats or species, and ensure that all developments are ecologically permeable.

Policy TB24 (Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas)) sets out the criteria against which development affecting such heritage assets will be assessed. It guides that works affecting heritage assets will be expected to conserve, and where possible enhance the special interest of the assets, including their setting.

Supplementary Planning Documents

WBC has several adopted Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The relevant SPDs are set out below.

Borough Design Guide (June 2012)

The Borough Design Guide SPD was adopted in 2012 and brings together, updates, and extends previous guidance in line with the Adopted Core Strategy to help deliver the vision and objectives of the Borough. Given the type of this application, many elements of the Guide are not relevant, but it does provide general guidance on how to achieve high quality design.

Emerging Local Plan

WBC is currently preparing a new Local Plan, known as the Local Plan Update. This will include a vision, objectives, and strategy for the level and distribution of development in the borough up to 2040, including housing, economic and retail development, and new infrastructure.

The Local Plan Update was submitted for independent examination on 28 February 2025. The Inspectors submitted their Initial Questions to the Council on 17 April 2025 and hearing sessions are expected to be scheduled in summer 2025. Therefore, the emerging Plan currently has limited weight when determining planning applications.

The WBC Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan contains draft policy SS9 (Whiteknights Campus) which relates to the Whiteknights Campus. This builds on the adopted TB14 policy, outlining WBC's aim to work proactively with the University and RBC to support the continued adaptation and development of the Whiteknights Campus. It also refers to the provision of new student accommodation on or nearby the Campus. The full policy is set out below:

“The University of Reading is a national and international educational establishment of strategic importance, which will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. The Whiteknights Campus as shown on the Policies Map will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading. Such development may include additional student, staff, teaching, research and enterprise accommodation, infrastructure and services, and sports and leisure facilities, among other uses.

Access to and within the site will be improved where necessary. Wokingham Borough Council will continue to work proactively with the University of Reading and Reading Borough Council to support the continued adaptation and development of the

Whiteknights Campus as a focus for the University of Reading, to allow the university to continue to fulfil its important role in the economic success of the area.

Where development would result in a material need for additional students to be housed, it should be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation. Provision of new student accommodation on the Whiteknights Campus, or as a reconfiguration or extension of nearby dedicated accommodation, will therefore be acceptable in principle where the need of student accommodation has been established, subject to other policies in the Local Plan Update.

- a) Development proposals will accord with the following criteria:**
- b) Conserve, and where possible enhance, the historic parkland landscape, heritage assets and their settings;**
- c) The open areas and the character of the area are respected;**
- d) Areas of wildlife significance (including Local Wildlife Sites) and current or potential green and blue infrastructure networks are retained and enhanced, and will not be detrimentally affected by development, including through light effects;**
- e) The safety of those using the campus (including pedestrian and highway safety issues and designing out crime) will be maintained or enhanced;**
- f) No significant detrimental impacts on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties from the development, including from noise and parking; and**
- g) The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.”**

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was originally published on 27th March 2012, however, has since been subsequently updated in 2018, 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2024. It is a material consideration in determining planning applications and the chapters of the NPPF that are most of relevance in this instance include:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Chapter 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
- Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The key paragraphs of the NPPF relevant to the proposals are listed below.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the NPPF is outlined in paragraph 11 (within section 2). This states that for the purposes of decision-taking this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date⁸, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.”

Chapter 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 96 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, enable and support healthy lives and are safe and accessible.

Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Paragraph 109 seeks to ensure that potential impacts of development on transport networks are addressed, opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure and changing transport technology and usage are realised, appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes are identified, the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account and patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integrated into the design of schemes.

Paragraph 116 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Paragraph 117 states that applications for development should give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, and second, to facilitating access to high quality public transport. The needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility should be addressed and places should be created that are safe, secure and attractive, minimising the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles and responding to local character and design standards.

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 131 states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve, and outlines the importance of good design as a key aspect of sustainable development, creating better places in which to live and work.

Paragraph 135 emphasises that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character and history, establish or maintain a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

Paragraph 136 emphasises the important contribution trees make to the character and quality of urban environments, and can help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible.

Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Paragraph 187 states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, including minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 193 sets out that significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development must be adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for otherwise planning permission should be refused. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and that a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Paragraph 207 states that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary.

Paragraph 210 states that when determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Paragraph 212 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 215 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Paragraph 216 outlines that in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

The PPG was first published in March 2014 and, alongside the Framework, provides guidance notes on various matters including design, historic environment, natural environment, biodiversity net gain, and sports and recreation facilities.

National Design Guide

The National Design Guide sets out the fundamental principles for good design and demonstrates what good design means in practice, covering ten characteristics including context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources, and lifespan.

Planning Assessment

This section of the Planning Statement assesses the proposal against relevant national and local planning policy.

Principle of Development

Policy TB14 of the MDD sets out that the Whiteknights Campus will be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading including additional infrastructure and services, sports and leisure facilities and improvements to access. The provision of a new cycle store with 40 cycle parking spaces will provide key cycle infrastructure for a range of users on the Campus, improving accessibility and encouraging people to cycle. The new cycle store will be secure and covered, thereby ensuring the safety and convenience of campus users. Strategically located in a well-lit and easily accessible area, the cycle shelter will offer a high-quality environment for staff and students to park and secure their bicycles.

Policy TB14 further sets out that development on the Whiteknights Campus will accord with the following criteria:

- a) They respect the historic landscape, open areas and listed buildings and their settings and the character of the area;
- b) Areas of wildlife significance (including Local Wildlife Sites) and current or potential green infrastructure networks will be retained and enhanced;
- c) The safety of those using the campus (including highway safety issues and designing out crime) will be maintained and enhanced;
- d) There are no significant detrimental impacts on neighbouring residential properties from the development, including from noise or parking; and
- e) The loss of undeveloped areas on the site will be weighed against the benefits of development to the wider community.

The proposal meets these criteria as follows:

- a) The proposed cycle store has been carefully located so as not to affect the significance of any heritage assets or open areas. It is located within the north westernmost edge of the non-designated Park and Garden known as Whiteknights Park, Earley and south of the Grade II Listed 'Whiteknights House Annexe'. The cycle store is located within a built-up area already used as a car park, close to existing buildings, and does not intrude into areas which have high environmental or historic value. The proposal is small in scale and high quality in design. The new cycle store is located entirely on existing hardstanding. The proposal will therefore respect the historic landscape, open areas, and listed buildings and their settings and the character of the area.
- b) The proposal is not located within an area of ecological significance and will not have any direct impact on the Local Wildlife Site located on the Campus. The nature of the proposal which is on existing hard landscaping means that it would not impact biodiversity and does not require Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). A Great Crested Newt (GCN) Statement has been submitted and concludes that there is an absence of GCNs and very low risk of an offence being committed, nonetheless works will follow a method of working as set out in the statement.
- c) The proposal will improve the safety of those using the Campus through the provision of a new secure and covered cycle store, which will discourage theft. The proposal will not have an impact on highway safety and no changes to access are proposed. Appropriate safety measures during and after

construction will be implemented to ensure the development does not affect the safety of those using the Campus.

- d) The application site is located away from neighbouring residents. The proposal will not have any impact on vehicular parking or traffic on the Campus. Noise during construction will be minimal and no noise impacts are anticipated during operation.
- e) There will be no loss of undeveloped areas. The proposal is to provide a new cycle store within an existing car park.

Furthermore, this proposal is consistent with policy CP6 of the Core Strategy which explicitly states that “planning permission will be granted for schemes that...improve the existing infrastructure network, including road, rail and public transport, enhance facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including provision for those with reduced mobility, and other users”. National policy is also supportive of development which support healthy lives, promotes sustainable transport modes and which prioritises pedestrian and cycle movements.

As set out in draft policy SS9 of WBC's emerging Local Plan, Whiteknights Campus will continue to be a focus for development associated with the University of Reading and will continue to adapt and expand over the plan period. This thereby necessitates the support of enhanced infrastructure, such as cycle facilities. This cycle store will encourage site users to switch to more sustainable modes of transport, reducing dependence on private vehicles.

The proposal supports the strategic importance of the University of Reading Whiteknights Campus through the provision of improved, high quality, secure cycle infrastructure thereby encouraging the use of cycling as a means of transport into and through the Campus. The development proposal is therefore considered appropriate development within the Whiteknights Campus in accordance with MDD policy TB14. The provision of cycle parking is also consistent with Core Strategy policy CP6. Furthermore, the proposal complies with national planning policy relating to sustainable transport and healthy communities. The principle of development of the erection of a new cycle store on the Site is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Design

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that meet specific criteria, including those that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. Chapter 12 of the NPPF emphasises that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

The proposed development is to provide a total of 40 cycle parking spaces, in the form of a covered and secured shelter. The proposed cycle store is situated on existing hard landscaping, and the development will not project into any grassed areas. The new cycle store is located adjacent to an existing building, and will therefore integrate successfully into the Site, maintaining its character and appearance. The scale of the cycle store is appropriate to its function and sits within the context of existing buildings on the Campus.

As detailed in the Proposed Elevations Plans, the frame and pads will be galvanised steel, and the cladding partly timber (*Sustainably Sourced European Redwood PAR Slat with Pressure Treated (Green) Preservative*) and partly toughened glass. The roofing sheets will be made out of PVC Plastisol coated steel strips. It is considered that these contemporary materials are high quality and appropriate to the location.

The design of the proposed development has been informed by an analysis of the Site and surrounding area, ensuring it maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area and comprises high quality design in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3 and chapter 12 of the NPPF.

Arboriculture

Policy CC03 of the MDD notes that development proposals should provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement have been prepared by Challice Consulting Ltd in support of this application and have been carried out in compliance with BS 5837:2012. The report includes a Tree Protection Plan which sets out the surveyed trees and hedges around the Site and their Root Protection Areas (RPAs), as well as the tree protection measures required.

The report identifies two trees in total – one category B tree and one category A tree which are located outside the application site immediately to the south and northwest. The trees are not located within a conservation area nor are they subject to Tree Protection Orders. The RPAs of these trees do not extend into the site as they are restricted by the existing area of hardstanding.

The proposed development is restricted to the extent of the current hardstanding and no additional hardstanding will be constructed in closer proximity to the trees. The arboricultural impact of the proposed scheme is minor as no trees are to be removed as a result of the development and minimal pruning is required to enable construction works to be completed.

The Arboricultural Method Statement identifies the measures that will be taken to safeguard the surveyed trees during the development works. This includes tree protective fencing and ground protection to safeguard RPAs.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with policy CC03 set out in the MDD, which seeks to protect and retain existing trees. It also accords with paragraph 136 of the NPPF which seeks the retention of trees wherever possible.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Policy CP07 of the Core Strategy and policy TB23 of the MDD set out the policy requirements in relation to biodiversity, and the conservation and enhancement of habitats and species. Policy TB23 sets out that planning permission will only be granted where developments provide opportunities to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing features, provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites and habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation, and ensure that they are ecologically permeable.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Note and Great Crested Newt Statement have been prepared by EPR and are submitted as part of the planning application.

The Site is not subject to any ecological designations, and it is considered that the development will not affect any nearby designated sites. The Site is comprised entirely of hard standing and there are no habitats with a biodiversity value greater than zero. Therefore, in accordance with The Biodiversity Gain Requirement Regulations 2024 (No. 47, Regulation 4), the Site meets the conditions of the de minimis exemption, rendering a full BNG metric calculation unnecessary.

The Site lies within a red risk zone in relation to the Great Crested Newt (GCN), as identified on the NatureSpace Partnership Impact Risk Zones. The Site consists entirely of hardstanding, however there are suitable habitats for GCN in the wider Campus. There are no records of GCN within the Site or the wider Campus. The works would not damage any terrestrial habitat within 500m of potential breeding ponds. There is a very low risk of an offence being committed even if GCN were present within nearby ponds. However, in the unlikely event that GCN are present, the development will follow methods of working set out in the GCN Statement to avoid harm or injury.

The proposed development will not result in the loss, deterioration or harm to habitats or species of importance to biodiversity and is therefore in accordance with policy CP07 of the Core Strategy and policy TB23 of the MDD and chapter 15 of the NPPF.

Heritage Assessment

There are no specific heritage policies within the adopted Core Strategy, however Policy CP3 provides the most relevant policy considerations in heritage terms guiding that development proposals should not have a detrimental impact on important heritage features within the Borough. Policy TB24 within the MDD sets out the criteria against which development affecting such heritage assets will be assessed. Chapter 16 of the NPPF sets out the requirements for when development affects heritage assets.

It is considered that the proposals have the potential to affect the significance of two heritage assets - Whiteknights Park (non-designated Park and Garden) and Old Whiteknights Annexe (Grade II Listed). The URS Building and Blandford Lodge (both Grade II Listed) have been scoped out of the heritage assessment due to the distance between the proposed development, the presence of intervening buildings and the small scale of the proposal. In accordance with Step 1 of the methodology recommended by Historic England guidance (GPA3. 2017), it is not considered that any of the designated heritage assets within the wider environs of the Site would experience any material changes to their setting and significance.

Significance of Heritage Assets

Whiteknights Park

The Site is located on the north westernmost edge of Whiteknights Park, which is considered to be a non-designated asset and is recorded as a local historic park and garden in WBC's planning policies and constraints map and in the Historic Environment Topic Paper (September 2024) for the emerging Local Plan Update.

The Park was owned by the Manor of Earley Whiteknights during the medieval period, and after passing through a series of owners it was sold to George Spencer-Churchill, Marquis of Blandford in 1798. During the Marquis of Blandford's ownership, the park was laid out, and included a series of garden features and buildings, including bridges, grottos fountains.

The estate was sold to the Cholmondley family in the early 19th century and much of the landscape features were sold. The Manor House was demolished in 1840 and only some of the original features survive, including the lake, listed garden feature, and the North and South Lodges at Earley Gate. The park was subdivided in 1867 and seven individual houses were constructed within the parkland setting. Today, four of these properties remain, together with some outbuildings.

During the Second World War, the Site and area of parkland to the south was used for temporary government buildings and after the war, the Region 6 War Room was located within the park. The Grade II listed War Room was constructed in the 1950s.

The University of Reading acquired the park in 1947 and it became its Whiteknights Campus. The campus comprises administration buildings, academic departments, and halls of residence. There was subsequent development on the park to the west and north of the Site as a result of the University's occupation and expansion within the park.

There is historic interest in the park for its connections to George Spencer and its importance as an 18th century planned estate, in addition to further associative connections with the Second World War effort and civil defence in the Cold War. There is high architectural and artistic interest in the park for its designed landscape features such as the lake and woodland and how they connect with the remaining houses built within the park, including Foxhill House, Old Whiteknights House and Park House.

Whiteknights House Annexe

The Whiteknights House Annexe is Grade II listed and was listed in 1978. It was built in the late 19th century and is one of the houses built when the park was subdivided. It is two storeys with accommodation in the gables and constructed of red brick with grey brick quoins and dressings. It has a central turret and detailing. Although the house was set into the landscaped park as a residential dwelling, it is currently in use as part of the University and is appreciated within the wider Campus setting, surrounded by many other University buildings and development.

The building has undoubted architectural interest and historic interest for its connection to individuals such as Alfred Waterhouse and is a clear example of how the park has developed and changed over time. It may have archaeological interest due to the possible presence of a previous building in this location and evidence of development of the park. It is considered that the wider setting of the building contributes to the building's significance, although this has changed significantly over time. This includes the construction of a car park and other cycle stores and associated University development to the south of the building.

Impact Assessment

Impacts to the historic environment and its associated heritage assets arise where changes are made to their physical environment by means of the loss and/or degradation of their physical fabric or setting, which in turn leads to a reduction in the significance.

Change, including development, can sustain, enhance, or better reveal the significance of an asset as well as detract from it or leave it unaltered. The design of a development affecting the setting of a heritage asset may play an important part in determining its impact. The contribution of the setting to the historic significance of an asset can be sustained or enhanced if new built form buildings are carefully designed to respect their setting by their scale, proportion, height, massing, alignment, and use of materials.

The significance of the Whiteknights Park is primarily linked to the surviving elements of the 18th century landscaped park, including the lake and areas of surrounding woodland and how it is connected to the historic houses. Its integrity as a designed landscape has been diminished through the expansion of the University of Reading and other associated buildings within the grounds, however this adds to a new layer of history and significance to the park.

The significance of Whiteknights House Annexe is in its architectural quality, which will be unaffected by the proposal, its historic associations and through its connections to the surviving elements of the landscaped park within which it was built.

The application site is in the north westernmost corner of the non-designated Park and Garden, within an area containing a mix of buildings, car parks, and other University development. It is to the south of Whiteknights House Annexe, with intervening features including a car park, trees and landscaping. The proposals are small in scale in comparison to the buildings around the application site and will be seen in this context. There are other, lower quality cycle stores in this location already. The erection of a new cycle store within an area of hardstanding already used as a car park is considered to integrate successfully with its surroundings. Given the small-scale localised nature of the proposal, in an area already defined by modern development associated with the campus, as well as its high quality design and materials it is not considered that the proposal would result in any meaningful change to the character or appearance of the locally important Park and Garden or to the special architectural or historic interest of Whiteknights House Annexe.

Overall, it is considered that there will be no harm to the significance of the Heritage Assets. The development is therefore in accordance with policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and policy TB24 of the MDD, as well as chapter 16 of the NPPF.

Summary and Conclusion

This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full planning application at the land northwest of Whiteknights House, University of Reading Whiteknights Campus, for:

“Erection of a new cycle store”

The proposed development will provide a new cycle store with secure storage for 40 bicycles, increasing the cycle storage capacity at the University. Through the provision of dedicated cycle storage spaces, the proposal encourages transport by more sustainable modes thereby reducing private vehicle usage and its associated adverse effects. It will also provide high quality and secure cycle storage provision in this location.

It has been demonstrated that the principle of development within this location is acceptable, that the proposed design is appropriate to the character of the Site and surrounding area, and that there are no unacceptable impacts on trees or biodiversity, meeting the requirements of WBC’s Local Plan and the NPPF.

We trust that the submission is in order and that the planning application can be validated promptly. However, should you have any queries in relation to any of the enclosed, please do not hesitate to contact me on 01189 520337 or by email – ilaria.sutton@stantec.com .

Yours sincerely,



ILARIA SUTTON
Graduate Planner
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