



**DALCOUR
MACLAREN**

Planning Supporting Statement

Client: O'Connor Utilities (OCU) Group
Scheme Name: Church Lane Compound - Shinfield
20 February 2025



Project Details

Project Name	EP – OCU Church Lane Compound, Shinfield
Scheme Number	24002549

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Drawings

Drawing No.	Title	Scale
24002549_PLN_LOC_3.1	Location Plan	1:1250 @ A3
24002549_PLN_EL_2.1	Elevation Plan	1:200 @ A1
24002549_PLN_SI_4.1	Site Layout Plan	1:500 @ A2

1 Introduction

1.1 The Site

- 1.1.1 Dalcour Maclaren (DM) has been instructed by O'Connor Utilities Group Limited (OCU) to seek planning permission for the continued use of land off Church Lane, Shinfield (nearest postcode: RG7 1HB; National Grid Reference: SU 72374 68416), hereafter referred to as 'the Site' as a works compound to support the provision of utilities in the region. OCU is requesting permission to use the site is extended for a further 8 years.



Figure 1 The approximate Site Boundary (red line) of the temporary works compound located on land off Church Lane

- 1.1.2 Currently, the Site is operated as a works compound, providing a central location to store materials and plant from which OCU's operations across the region undertaking works to utilities and infrastructure are carried out. The Site currently includes office and welfare buildings, as well as storage containers, site lighting and CCTV towers in addition to vehicle parking. OCU is not seeking to alter the general layout within the Site itself, nor change any of the boundary features.
- 1.1.3 The existing temporary compound is situated off Church Lane, within the proximity of industrial and commercial developments. The site is bordered by agricultural fields on the east, north, and west sides. Further to the North is the M4; the Site is located between the settlements of Shinfield and Three Mile Cross and has been operating already for several years.
- 1.1.4 To the south of Church Lane, is Pulleyn Transport, a company specializing in temperature-controlled transport and warehouse storage, and the Reading

Caravan & Motorhome Centre, a retailer of new and pre-owned caravans and motorhomes.

- 1.1.5 The nearest residential properties and public convenience at c.150m to the east, including the Six Bell public house and 51 Church Lane. To the southwest of the Site are residential properties, most of which are oriented facing away from the Site, and the Reading Gospel Hall.

1.2 OCU

- 1.2.1 OCU, established in 1994, specializes in regulated infrastructure markets and supports utility companies across the UK. At Church Lane, OCU has taken over the compound from SSEN to continue to carry out works on SSEN's behalf local to Wokingham and further afield in the region. The Site offers a strategic location from which to support OCU's future works on behalf of SSEN and therefore, seeks to extend the site occupation for an additional 8 years to support projects such as enhancing electrical supply capacity, decarbonizing infrastructure, and removing aging assets which might contain harmful and toxic substances such as Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆) and Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB).

1.3 Need for the Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 RIIO-ED2 (Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs for Electricity Distribution) is the regulatory framework set by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) for the electricity distribution networks in the UK, covering the period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028. This framework aims to ensure that Distribution Network Operators (DNOs) such as SSEN have sufficient revenue to operate efficiently while delivering high-quality services and supporting the transition to cleaner, more secure energy sources. The RIIO-ED2 framework focuses on incentivising innovation, improving customer service, and achieving environmental and social goals. It includes specific targets and allowances for DNOs to enhance network reliability, reduce carbon emissions, and support the integration of renewable energy sources.
- 1.3.2 The final determinations for RIIO-ED2 were published after extensive consultation with stakeholders, ensuring that the framework addresses the needs and expectations of consumers, businesses, and the wider community. Key components of the determinations include setting output targets, establishing cost allowances, and implementing efficiency challenges to drive performance improvements. The framework also emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement and transparency, requiring DNOs to regularly report on their progress and performance. Overall, RIIO-ED2 aims to create a more resilient, sustainable, and customer-focused electricity distribution network.
- 1.3.3 This temporary compound at Church Lane is vital for the successful execution of RIIO-ED2 projects, as it greatly enhances operational efficiency and project management for the roll-out of projects with the ED2 workbook. By locating the compound at Church Lane, OCU can minimize travel times for staff, equipment, and materials, thereby reducing delays and boosting productivity. This strategic

placement improves communication and coordination among teams, ensuring quick resolution of issues and adherence to project schedules. Additionally, the Church Lane compound streamlines logistics, enabling efficient storage and distribution of resources, which is crucial for meeting the stringent targets and deadlines set by the RIIO-ED2 framework.

- 1.3.4 The Church Lane compound also encourages greener practices and helps OCU and SSEN complete upgrades whilst reducing their impact on the environment. The central location ensures that workers can meet and travel to site together, reducing the need for individual cars. Whilst all land will be returned to a state matching the surrounding undeveloped land once the compound is no longer required, this approach means that less land is used throughout the RIIO-ED2 period and the environmental impact and land take is limited to this Site. A central hub for operations also supports the implementation of safety protocols and emergency response plans, creating a safer working environment.
- 1.3.5 The compound is appropriately located within Wokingham as Wokingham borough and the surrounding areas will benefit from the works completed from this central hub. The heat map below (figure 1) shows the locations for works which have been and will be completed as part of SSENs RIIO-ED2 program. As part of these works, OCU propose to undertake over 150 separate projects on behalf of SSEN across the region, including throughout Wokingham Borough. All in all, the works will benefit a total of 1939 people across 633no. in Wokingham Borough and the surrounding area.

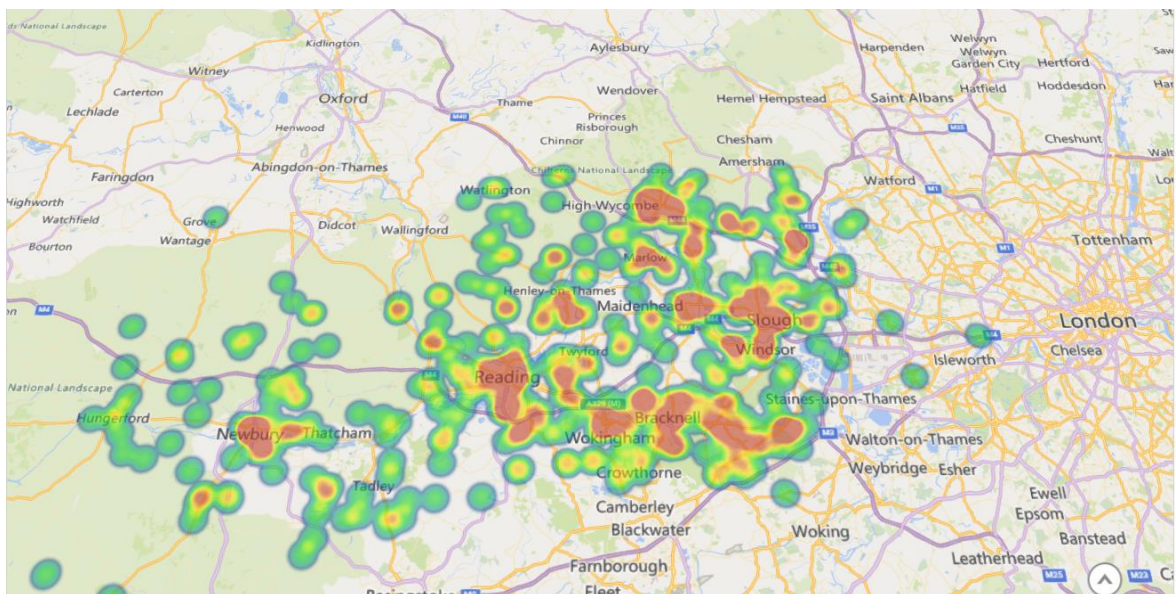


Figure 2 Heat map showing the location of works which will utilise the Church Lane Compound as a base (provided by OCU)

- 1.3.6 In summary, the Church Lane temporary compound is essential for achieving the goals of RIIO- ED2 by enhancing efficiency, safety, green practices and effective project execution.

1.4 Background to the Planning Application

- 1.4.1 The Site has operated as a works compound for several years, supporting electrical supply infrastructure projects across the region. The compound was originally required by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) to provide upgrades and development to the surrounding electricity supply network. The Site was then handed over to Instalcom Limited to complete the same upgrading electricity upgrades of the area. For context, OCU brought out Instalcom Limited in 2002 which helped to expand OCUs presence in the south of the UK.

1.5 Proposed development

- 1.5.1 The proposed development seeks to continue the use of the temporary works compound on a permanent basis. Whilst OCU, the Applicant are seeking to retain the site permanently, it is likely the Site will only be required for 8no. years after which OCU will demobilize from the Site and will return the land to the landowners' use.

2 Planning History

2.1 Planning History

- 2.1.1 The principle of a temporary compound at this location was established with permission granted in 2020 (ref: 193248), initially granted for 24 months and specifically for SSEN. This permission was later extended through application ref. 231260, allowing the site to be used for a total of 5 years, expiring in May 2025. Both permissions were granted based on their temporary nature. Subsequently, application 222623 allowed Instalcom Limited, a division of OCU, to occupy the compound for electrical supply infrastructure. After the permission expires, the land must be restored to its original condition.
- 2.1.2 Below is a table detailing relevant planning applications associated with the Church Lane Temporary site as provided in Appendix 2 of the pre-application response (ref. 241953):

Table 1 Previous Planning Application at site

Application Number	Description	Decision & Date
222623	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 193248 for the proposed erection of a temporary compound to facilitate infrastructure works, including hardstanding, parking, fencing and gates, cabins and storage units. (Part retrospective). Condition 2 refers to personal permission and the variation is to include Instalcom in the wording of the permission along with the original operators (part retrospective).	Approved 16/11/2022
221727	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 213260 dated 10/05/2022. Condition 9 AWE DEPZ - End User Emergency Plan.	Approved 15/08/2022
213260	Application to vary condition No 1 of planning consent 193248 for the Full application for the proposed erection of a temporary compound to facilitate infrastructure works, including hardstanding, parking, fencing and gates, cabins and storage units. (Part retrospective). Condition No1 refers to the temporary use period of 24 months and the variation is to extend the use period to 60 months.	Approved 10/05/2022

202908	Application to remove condition 5 of planning consent 193248 for the proposed erection of a temporary compound to facilitate infrastructure works, including hardstanding, parking, fencing and gates, cabins and storage units (part retrospective). Condition 5 refers to the provision of bicycle/motorcycle parking and the proposal is to remove this requirement.	Approved 24/12/2020
202107	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 193248 dated 26/05/2020. Conditions - Condition 4 - Visibility Splays Condition 5 - Cycle Parking Condition 6 - Routing Condition 7 - Drainage	Split Decision 09/09/2020
193248	Full application for the proposed erection of a temporary compound to facilitate infrastructure works, including hardstanding, parking, fencing and gates, cabins and storage units. (Part retrospective)	Approved 26/05/2020
173046	Full application for the proposed erection of a 1.8m high green mesh fence and gates to existing field entrance, replacing existing palisade fence.	Approved 13/12/2017

- 2.1.3 Although the land was originally low-quality grazing land and its overall loss is not considered significant, it has been agreed in previous planning applications and conditions that the land will be reinstated to its original state. Once the temporary compound is no longer needed, the land will be restored to open fields, matching its previous state.
- 2.1.4 There have been several planning enforcement notices and rejected planning applications concerning the adjacent temporary compound site located immediately to the south-west. It is important to note that OCU is not involved in any of these issues. Unlike the neighbouring sites, OCU has been diligently managed in accordance with all the stipulated planning conditions.

2.2 Pre-app advice

- 2.2.1 The compound was initially intended to support SSEN's electricity infrastructure upgrades in Reading. Due to its accessible location near major roads and ongoing regional works, OCU found it ideal for continued operations. Consequently, OCU instructed DM to seek pre-application advice from

Wokingham Borough Council on retaining the site as a works compound for a longer period.

- 2.2.2 The site occupiers, initially SSE and now OCU, have complied with all permission conditions, including routing heavy goods vehicles via the east and maintaining safe visibility splays. Although WBC's Enforcement Team issued a notice earlier this year for non-compliance regarding two shelters between temporary containers, the issue was resolved quickly by removing the shelters, and the case was closed.
- 2.2.3 DM contacted Wokingham Borough Council in 29th July 2024 to seek pre-application advice. Rowan Reynolds (Planning Officer) responded on 17th October 2024 (ref. 241953) and discussed the proposal to extend the use of land off Church Lane, Shinfield, for a works compound supporting utility infrastructure. The response acknowledged the current use of the site by OCU and their request to extend the existing temporary permission by an additional 8 years. The Planning Officer raised concerns about the long-term impact on the countryside and suggested that a permanent permission might be more appropriate given the multiple temporary approvals already granted.
- 2.2.4 The pre-application response details the Site's location within designated countryside and its role in supporting utility companies, particularly SEN, during the RII-ED2 price control period (2023-2028). The pre-application response highlighted planning constraints such as contaminated land, bat roost habitat suitability, and Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs). The officer emphasizes the need for robust justification for the extended use, noting potential conflicts with local policies aimed at protecting the countryside's character and appearance.
- 2.2.5 The response also addresses various considerations, including the impact on the character of the area, neighbouring amenity, highway access, and environmental considerations. The officer advises that any future application should include detailed project plans, a drainage strategy, and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA).
- 2.2.6 As of the time of writing, we are not aware of any complaints from local residents regarding the use of the site. This indicates that the temporary compound is not causing any issues within the local community or among its residents.
- 2.2.7 In response to the Environmental Health Officers questions:
- **Proposed Operational Hours:** 06:00 – 18:00
 - **Sewage Handling on Site:** Through an existing septic tank which is emptied on a weekly basis
 - **Lighting:** see 24002549_PLN_EL_2.1

3 Environment and Planning Considerations

3.1 Landscape

- 3.1.1 The site is not within any statutory landscape designations such as Green Belt, National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), or National Park. It is located within the Thames Valley National Character Area (NCA) (ref: 115), a mainly low-lying, wedge-shaped area that widens from Reading to the southwest London fringes. The compound has been in place for the past 5 years, maintaining the extensive vegetative screening around the site. It is situated between Shinfield to the east and Three Mile Cross to the west. To the south is a transport depot, and the land immediately to the west has also been used as a works compound, though it is not associated with OCU's site. The nearest residences and public amenities, including the Six Bells public house and 51 Church Lane, are 150 meters to the east. Along Church Lane to the southwest are residential properties, most of which do not face the site, and the Reading Gospel Hall. To the north is the M4, which is elevated and effectively blocks views of the site from further north of the motorway.

3.2 Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.2.1 The land on which the compound is situated was considered to have low ecological value before its occupation, as it was used for animal grazing, similar to the surrounding fields. Since SSEN first occupied the site, it has been kept free of vegetation due to its active use by construction vehicles. However, the earth mounds at the northern and eastern boundaries, created when the topsoil was removed, have been allowed to re-wild. This has enabled scrub species to establish, creating an effective barrier to encroachment on the established hedgerows and trees beyond.
- 3.2.2 Retaining the Site as a working compound would not change its current condition. The vegetated boundaries would remain effectively protected, except for the hedgerow on the southern boundary, which requires management to prevent it from obstructing highway visibility.
- 3.2.3 The Site has been maintained as per the approved plans for the several planning applications, and this site has been maintained as an operational compound with little to no ecological value since 2020.
- 3.2.4 As the temporary compound was originally consented prior to the requirement of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain on 12th February 2024 and as the site has previously been cleared of any useful habitat by the previous granted application, this planning application is exempt from requiring Biodiversity Net Gain.

3.3 Arboriculture

- 3.3.1 The Site is not located within an Ancient Woodland or Conservation Area. The Site is bordered by a number of trees with a mixture of hedgerow boarding the

site to the north, east and southern edges. These trees and vegetation act as an important visual screen to blend the compound into the surrounding landscape and the trees also diffuse the noise from the nearby M4 to provide a quieter neighbourhood for the locals.

- 3.3.2 Four English Oak trees are located on the south-western boundary of the site are protected by a TPO (1577/2017). As stated within the pre-application response, these trees must be retained and protected for the duration of any permission on site. No trees have been removed to facilitate the development of the temporary compound.
- 3.3.3 Following pre-application advice and as a responsible operator, a tree survey was undertaken by Ligna Consultancy Ltd in January 2025 in accordance with BS 5937:2012, following the survey an AIA has been produced.
- 3.3.4 The AIA concluded that the impacts to the majority of hedgerow and trees on the boundary is acceptable. Furthermore, whilst there are 6 individual instances of trees being affected by the retention of the permeable surfacing (Type 1MOT), 4 no. category B trees (T11, T12, T13 and T14) and 2 category C trees (T4 and T10), these mature trees are located outside of the boundary of the Site. The AIA highlights that during the initial installation of the site compound, surfacing was placed within the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) which has resulted in root loss and soil compaction within the RPAs of some trees. The RPAs of T10, T11 and T14 exceeds tolerable limits, affecting 28%, 46% and 32% of their RPAs, respectively. As the compound is proposed to remain for another 8 years, the mitigation measures should be implemented to prevent further harm to the affected trees.
- 3.3.5 For the individual mature trees, located outside of the boundary of the Site and in the control of the adjacent compound operator, OCU can undertake works to improve the conditions around the root ball. This mitigation will be achieved through soil amelioration via 'vertical mulching' and Cellweb Tree Root Protection (TRP). The AIA found that the overall arboricultural impact is acceptable
- 3.3.6 OCU will implement all mitigation measures suggested within the AIA to minimize any damage to the health of the trees on site. However, since the trees are located outside the site boundary and beyond their control, OCU cannot be held accountable for any potential damage to the trees or western extent of the RPZ. OCU will also remove any compounds or materials within proximity to the RPZs to ensure that there is no further compaction of the RPZ.

3.4 Archaeology and Heritage

- 3.4.1 The Site is not within a Conservation Area, and there are no designated heritage or archaeological assets nearby. The closest Listed Building is the Grade II Listed 'Milton Sandford Restaurant,' located 391 meters southeast of the Site. Given the existing compound, the separation distance, and the extensive screening provided by hedgerows, trees, and agricultural fields, it is not expected that the listed building or its setting will be adversely harmed by retaining the compound

beyond May 2025. As the Site has been established for approximately five years, there are no new heritage impacts or considerations resulting from the works.

3.5 Water Environment

- 3.5.1 The National Planning Framework (NPPF) requires a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) for sites in Flood Zone 1 over 1 hectare (ha) in size, and those in Flood Zones 2 and 3. As the planning application boundary is over 1ha in size (1.74ha) and situated within Flood Zone 1, a Flood Risk Statement has been produced by Aegaea in January 2025. This is also in accordance with the pre-application response.
- 3.5.2 The nearest EA Main River is the River Loddon, which is approximately 1.7km southeast of the site. There are no other mapped watercourses according to OS Mapping. The Site lies wholly within Flood Zone 1 and the nearest Flood Zone 2 extent is approximately 1.4km southeast of the site which is associated with the River Loddon.
- 3.5.3 EA Surface Water Mapping indicates that about 10% of the site is at 'medium risk' of surface water flooding. Additionally, approximately 40% of the northern part of the site is at 'low risk' of surface water flooding. Consequently, around 50% of the site is at 'very low risk' of surface water flooding. In accordance with this statement and the pre-application response, there will be no stockpiling of materials or obstruction along the surface water flow path.
- 3.5.4 The Site is also not located within a drinking water or groundwater protection area. It is also not located near an identified aquifer and as such, there would be no anticipated adverse impacts on the water environment.
- 3.5.5 As this application is for the retention of the temporary compound as is and there will be no addition footprint or surface alterations, there should be no change in runoff from the proposal. As such, runoff can be discharge via existing drainage system on site as per the existing scenario.
- 3.5.6 Furthermore, there have been no instances to date of the compound resulting in flooding of adjacent property or any reported issues with drainage or surface run off at site.

3.6 Highways and Traffic

- 3.6.1 Throughout the active use of the temporary compound, all highways and traffic conditions have been adhered to. During the pre-application response (ref. 241953), Highways were consulted and raised no concerns. The original permission (ref. 213260) included Conditions 4 and 6, which addressed highways and traffic.
- 3.6.2 Condition 4 stated:

The visibility splays for this condition (as approved and discharged under application 202107) shall be maintained free of obstruction to vision for the length of the permission hereby granted.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and convenience.

Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

3.6.3 Accordingly, the works have ensured that the visibility splays remain unobstructed, maintaining highway safety.

3.6.4 In addition, Condition 6 states:

Routing All traffic above 7.5T serving the development hereby permitted shall enter and leave the site only from the east via Church Lane and Brookers Hill and not via Church Lane to the west.

Reason: This is to prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off.

Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.

3.6.5 Furthermore, in line with the original planning application consent, all vehicles arrive at and depart from the site to the east. All highways and traffic works have been maintained within the bounds of the original conditions.

3.7 Noise

3.7.1 The compound has been in operation for the past five years, during which time there have been no known complaints regarding excessive noise from the site. OCU does not propose to change the use of the site nor regularly work unsociable hours so no significant increase in noise is anticipated.

3.7.2 Nevertheless, best practice methods will be employed to minimize any noise impacts. This includes maintaining all plant and machinery in good condition and ensuring they are switched off when not in use to minimise potential noise pollution to nearby receptors.

3.8 Dust, Air Quality and Odour

3.8.1 As the proposed development involves maintaining the Site as a temporary compound, there will be no changes or impacts regarding dust, air quality, or odour. Nonetheless, best practice methods will be employed to suppress any dust generated by vehicles entering and leaving the site. As mentioned earlier, all plant and machinery will be maintained in good condition and switched off when parked in the temporary compound

3.8.2 Due to the nature of the site and the extremely low likelihood of air pollution, no long-term or adverse impacts on air quality are expected from the works.

3.8.3 Similarly, due to the nature of the site, no additional odour impacts are anticipated as a result of the extension of permission. Furthermore, dust, air quality, and odour were not identified as constraints in previous applications or the pre-application response.

3.9 AWE Burghfield

- 3.9.1 UWE Burghfield, located in Burghfield, Reading, Berkshire, is a 225-acre site operated by the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). Historically a munitions factory, it now serves as a critical facility for the assembly, maintenance, and decommissioning of nuclear warheads. The site plays a vital role in the UK's national security, supporting the lifecycle of nuclear warheads from initial concept and design through to disposal. The operations at UWE Burghfield are conducted in accordance with stringent safety and regulatory standards, ensuring minimal environmental impact and adherence to all relevant planning conditions. The Site falls within a Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ), which mandates comprehensive emergency preparedness and response plans to protect the public and environment in the event of an incident.

4 Planning Policy Review

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued in March 2012 and was most recently amended in December 2024. The NPPF sets out the planning policies set by the Government for England and how they should be applied to planning decisions. The NPPF supersedes all previous planning policy and guidelines. Additionally, it sets out that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The planning policies within the NPPF relevant to this planning application are given below:

4.1.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making this means that all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to.. align growth and infrastructure.”

4.1.3 Section 11 discusses ‘Making Effective use of land’. Paragraph 124 states:

“Planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other users, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensure safe and healthy living conditions”.

4.1.4 Paragraph 128 goes on to say:

“Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.”

4.2 Supporting delivery of Net Zero

4.2.1 In July 2019, Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency and committed to do as much as possible to become carbon neutral by 2030, as outlined in the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP). This plan includes key priorities such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions from transport, generating more renewable energy, and minimizing emissions from new developments.

4.2.2 This compound is required to support the implementation of RIIO-ED2 works. The works are designs to achieve net zero by modernizing and enhancing the electricity distribution network to support the integration of renewable energy sources. This includes upgrading infrastructure to handle increased loads from electric vehicles and heat pumps, improving energy efficiency, and reducing carbon emissions across the network. As such, the works the compound are facilitating will help Wokingham to reach its carbon neutral target.

4.3 Local Planning Policy

- 4.3.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Act 2004 replicates the provisions of Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and requires that where in making any determination, regard is to be held to the Development Plan, and that determination shall be made in accordance with the Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3.2 The current adopted Local Plan for the area is Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is a high-level document setting out our strategy for managing development until 2026. This includes policies and strategies to provide new housing, schools, roads, places to work and other services. It was adopted by the council on 29 January 2010.
- 4.3.3 In addition to the core strategy, Wokingham Borough Council has also adopted a Management Development Delivery Local Plan. The Managing Development Delivery local plan builds on the strategy set out in our Core Strategy and sets out more detailed policies for managing development. It was adopted by the council on 21 February 2014.
- 4.3.4 The proposed development has also been evaluated in relation to two other key planning documents:
- South of M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL) Strategic Planning Document (SPD) (adopted October 2011): This SPD outlines the strategic planning framework for the South of M4 area, including infrastructure and development guidelines.
 - Shinfield Parish Neighbourhood Plan (Made version February 2017): This plan sets out the vision and policies for development within Shinfield Parish, reflecting the community's aspirations and ensuring local needs are met.
- 4.3.5 Wokingham Borough Council is currently updating its Local Plan, which will define the planning strategy for the area until 2040. This new Local Plan will replace the existing Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans once it is adopted. The update aims to meet the growing need for housing, create new job opportunities, and provide essential infrastructure such as schools, roads, parks, shops, and community facilities, all with the goal of building vibrant and sustainable communities.
- 4.3.6 The policies relevant to the proposed development are listed in Table 2 below, with a full planning policy appraisal provided in Section 5.

Table 2 Relevant Planning Policies

Policy No.	Policy Description
Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted 10th January 2010)	
Policy CP1	Sustainable Development
Policy CP3	General Principles for Development
Policy CP4	Infrastructure Requirements

Policy CP11	Proposals Outside Development Limits
Policy CP15	Employment Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023 - 2040 Proposed Submission Plan	
Policy SS2	Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy
Policy SS5	Development in the countryside
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted 29th January 2010)	
Policy CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
Policy CC09	Development and Flood Risk
Policy CC10	Sustainable Drainage
Policy TB04	Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield
South of M4 SDL SPD	
Shinfield Neighbourhood Plan (Made Version February 2017)	
Policy 2	General Design Principles
Policy 6	Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland

5 Planning Appraisal

5.1 Principle of Development

- 5.1.1 While the principle of development was established in previous permissions, these were granted on a temporary basis. Any further temporary impact on the character and appearance of the Site and surrounding countryside must be balanced against the benefits of the proposal, specifically its role in facilitating the continued delivery of essential utilities infrastructure to support existing and future sustainable development for Wokingham Borough and the surrounding areas.
- 5.1.2 Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that development should make effective use of land. Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) says that planning permission will be granted for the proposals 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”.*
- 5.1.3 The temporary compound is appropriate for its location. It is situated on under-utilised land and the use of the Site is similar to adjacent parcels, such as Pulleyn’s Transport Ltd. This fact is acknowledged in the pre-application response highlighting that this pocket of land is atypical. The compound efficiently utilises the land to support numerous ongoing projects to benefit the local community. It is well-screened from the road and positioned away from residential properties. Located in the open space between the villages of Three Mile Cross and Shinfield, the compound is used solely for the storage of materials and welfare facilities, with no active work taking place on-site. Therefore, it does not impact any residents.
- 5.1.4 The Site is located within the South of the M4 SDL which is also supported by Policy CP19 (South of the M4 SDL) which highlights plans to develop a sustainable, well designated mixed-use development of around 2,500 dwellings. By supporting the electrical infrastructure, the compound indirectly contributes to the provision of appropriate employment, retail facilities, and social and physical infrastructure, including new primary schools and expanded existing provisions. There are around 600 schemes already identified which this compound will support and the ED2 funded schemes are there to provide a more resilient supply network to support net zero goals. The reliable electricity supply is crucial for the operation of these facilities and services, which are integral to the development of a sustainable, well-designed mixed-use community.
- 5.1.5 This also accords within Policy SS2 of the Emerging Local Plan as the works the temporary compound support will aid in creating a strong, cohesive and inclusive community and mitigates the impact of climate change.

- 5.1.6 Policy CP4 (Infrastructure Requirements) discusses the infrastructure requirements for the borough with paragraph 4.27 confirming that electricity utility suppliers are included within this definition. Paragraph 4.25 continues to state:

“Where improvements are required by the development, the planning obligations or condition will ensure that they are provided at the appropriate time to ensure the proper planning of the area. Development proposals will not be allowed where the necessary infrastructure required by the scheme is either not available or will not be delivered in line with the phased approach identified for the development concerned, including those in a master plan or development brief.”

- 5.1.7 To facilitate development and enhance Wokingham as per policy, infrastructure development is essential to remove any obstacles. As such, this compound supports the boroughs development and accords with CP4.

5.2 Sustainable Development

- 5.2.1 The proposal aligns with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) and Policy CC01 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development) through a demonstratable accordance with the principal of sustainable development. The NPPF sets out three objectives of sustainable development; economic, environmental and social. The proposal fills each objective as follows:

Social and Economic: The temporary compound is in place to enable OCU, on behalf of SSEN, to implement critical improvements to the local electricity network, ensuring a consistent and reliable supply of electricity to the surrounding areas. This is essential for maintaining the stability and efficiency of the electrical infrastructure, which directly impacts the daily lives of residents and businesses. Furthermore, the compound will play a pivotal role in supporting future development aspirations within the local area. By facilitating the necessary upgrades and maintenance of the electrical network, the compound enables growth and development in the region. This, in turn, fosters economic expansion by attracting new businesses and investments, creating job opportunities, and enhancing the overall economic vitality of the area, all according with CP15 (Employment Development). Additionally, the improved infrastructure supports social development by ensuring that community facilities, schools, healthcare services, and other essential services have a dependable power supply. Therefore, the presence of the temporary compound not only addresses immediate infrastructure needs but also contributes to the long-term social and economic improvement of the region.

Environment: The continued use of the existing compound represents a more effective and sustainable approach to land use compared to developing a new, undeveloped greenfield site. By utilising an already

established site, the proposal minimizes the environmental impact associated with new construction, such as habitat disruption, soil erosion, and increased carbon footprint from construction activities. This approach aligns with sustainable development principles by reducing land disturbance, minimizing resource use, and lowering carbon emissions. Additionally, the efficient use of under-utilized land supports multiple ongoing projects and benefits the local community, while protecting the character and quality of the surrounding environment. Therefore, it is considered that the proposals will provide significant environmental benefits, contributing to the overall sustainability of the development.

5.3 Countryside

- 5.3.1 The extension of permission for a temporary compound to support utility provision aligns with Policy CP11 (Proposals Outside Development Limits) by addressing the need for essential community facilities that cannot be accommodated within development limits. This compound is vital for maintaining and upgrading the local and regional electrical supply, which is crucial for both current and future development of the borough. By ensuring the reliability and efficiency of electrical infrastructure, it significantly enhances the well-being and quality of life for residents.
- 5.3.2 The temporary nature of the compound, albeit for clarity OCU are seeking permission for the permanent use of the Site, ensures it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion beyond the original buildings. Furthermore, the compound is well-screened and located away from residential properties, minimizing any potential environmental impact and preserving the quality of the surrounding countryside. It could also be argued that the land the site is located in is functional countryside as there are similar atypical developments within close proximity. Therefore, the proposal meets the criteria of Policy CP11 by providing a crucial service while maintaining the character and identity of the area.
- 5.3.3 Policy SS5 (Development in the countryside) within the Emerging Local Plan states:
- “Development proposals in the countryside will in general only be supported for the types of development set out below:*
- f) The replacement, extension or alteration (including sub-division) of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction, and which do not lead to disproportionate increases in scale, form or footprint beyond the original building;*
- k) The provision of essential utilities and infrastructure”*
- 5.3.4 As this development is for the extension of the previously granted permission at the Site and there will be no change in the structures or footprint of the

development and the temporary compound is to assist in electricity provision in the area.

5.4 AWE Burghfield

- 5.4.1 Burghfield AWE is situated 3.4km west of the Site. Therefore, the site is situated within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). The DEPZ is a defined zone around the sensitive site where it is necessary to pre-define protective actions to mitigate the likely consequences of a radiation emergency. Whilst the proposed development does not exceed the scale of development listed in Policy TB04, the existing Action Plan which was approved for the temporary use of the Site (ref: 221727) would continue to be utilised and updated as required, and as such the development does accord with TB04.
- 5.4.2 The pre-application response consulted the Emergency Planning Officer who emphasized that whilst there is low risk of an incident affecting the site, recovery from an incident could prevent access for a long period.
- 5.4.3 The Site is also located within the submitted sites allocation for Housing development within the Emerging Plan under site ref: 5SH024. Nevertheless, this has not been considered in depth due to the site being in the AWE Burghfield exclusion zone. As such, as this Site will not be development for housing, this means that the land is available for alternative uses such as a temporary compound.

5.5 Drainage and Surface Water

- 5.5.1 Policy CC09 (Development and Flood Risk) and Policy CC10 (Sustainable Drainage) of the MDD Local Plan emphasizes that all developments must consider flood risk, and the pre-application response consulted the Drainage Officer who had no objections to the extension of use of the land as a works compound.
- 5.5.2 In response to these comments a Drainage Strategy has been produced by Aegaea. The report confirmed no significant flood risks or impacts on the water environment. The existing drainage system will handle runoff, and there have been no reported flooding issues or drainage problems to date.

5.6 Trees

- 5.6.1 Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping) and Policy 2 (General Design Principles) and Policy 6 (Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland) from Shenfield Neighborhood Plan discuss the importance of protecting and retaining existing trees within the borough. Following pre-application recommendations, an AIA has been conducted to support this application. OCU will implement all necessary mitigation measures to ensure no further harm comes to the four TPO-designated English Oak trees on site from OCU's activities. It is noted however, that the trees are outside of the planning application boundary and are in control of a third party who are independently undertaking works in proximity to these trees. OCU cannot, therefore, be entirely held responsible for the current health

of the trees, and it should be noted OCU will act appropriately to improve the ground conditions where they can assist the trees' recoveries. Further diminishing health of the trees would therefore be at the responsibility of others.

6 Conclusion

- 6.1.1 The proposed development involves retaining the site off Church Lane, Shinfield, as a works compound for utilities infrastructure for an additional 8 years beyond the current permission. This compound is crucial for the efficient and timely progression of RIIO-ED2 works, supporting development within the borough. Retaining this compound ensures that there is no further land take within the countryside. OCU will continue to comply with all conditions.
- 6.1.2 This statement and supporting information supplied within this application have demonstrated that the proposed development accords with both national and local planning policy and guidance and that it aligns with the sustainable development principles of the NPPF.
- 6.1.3 In view of this information provided within this statement, it is considered that there are no material reasons why planning permission should not be granted.



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