

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Application Number:	251907
Site Address:	Crane House And Unit 1 The Business Cent, Molly Millars Lane, Wokingham, RG41 2RZ
Expiry Date:	8 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	2 September 2025
Proposal: Full application for the erection of an electricity switch and housing enclosure following demolition of the existing smoking shelter, plus changes in ground levels and associated landscaping.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

- Core Employment Area – Molly Millars Industrial Estate
- Earley – Major Development Location
- Flood Zones 2 and 3
- Green Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Core Employment Areas
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 TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS16 – Safeguarded routes CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings

(LPU)	CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development ER1 – Core Employment Areas FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history for the site.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received
WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Highways – No objections
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received
WBC Waste Services – No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received

External

Office for Nuclear Regulation – No comment
Natural England – No comments received
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
Health and Safety Executive – No comments received
The Environment Agency – Refer to NPPG standing advice on FRA's
South East Water – No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue – No comment

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site currently consists of a small smoking area which includes a wooden gazebo installed upon an area of raised paving stones. The gazebo lies adjacent to the rear parking area of Unit 1 The Business Centre on Molly Millars Lane.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed erection of an electric switch and associated housing, following the demolition of the existing smoking shelter. The switch/housing would have a footprint of 3 x 3.3 metres and would largely be situated on the existing shelter's footprint. It would also have a height of approximately 2.4 metres.

Further to the above, the proposals involve minor alterations to ground levels at the site's entrance, including additional provision for landscaping; a small area of grassland to the north of the application red-line will be increased in size, with the floor levels in this area marginally changing from 49.93m AOD to 49.79m AOD.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Local Plan Update (LPU):

The Council is currently progressing their Local Plan Update (LPU). The Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on Friday 28 February 2025. Two independent Inspectors were appointed, with Part 1 examination hearings held in November 2025. Part 2 hearings commenced in March 2026.

As a result of the above, the weight applied to the LPU policies listed below is currently limited.

Character of the Area:

The electric switch, associated housing and other land level/landscaping changes would have a negligible visual impact on the character of the industrial estate and are therefore acceptable on these grounds.

Neighbouring Amenity:

There are no adverse neighbouring amenity concerns. Noise emissions from the

switch are unlikely to be significant, with any potential emissions blending in with the background noise of the surrounding industrial estate. There are no nearby residential properties either.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

There are no highway safety concerns.

Flooding and Drainage:

Surface Water Drainage:

Due to the site's presence within Flood Zone 2, the application site risk of surface water flooding ranges between a 1 in 1000 year risk to a 1 in 30 year risk. The development proposals would be sited in an area of 1 in 100 year risk.

WBC Drainage have reviewed the most recent version of the Flood Risk Assessment (Infrastruct CS Ltd – March 2026) and have no objections to the proposed development in terms of surface water flooding risk, subject to a condition that secures a drainage strategy prior to the commencement of development.

Fluvial Flooding:

The entirety of the proposed development would be situated within Flood Zone 2, with only the northern car park located in Flood Zone 3 due to the proximity to Emm Brook.

In terms of vulnerability classification, the proposed development reasonably falls under the definition of essential infrastructure. Such development is permitted within Flood Zone 2, subject to compliance with the NPPG's standing advice on Flood Risk Assessments (which is what the Environment Agency advise in their most recent response to this application). In short, the main aim is to ensure the proposed development does not increase the fluvial flood risk on site or elsewhere.

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment (Infrastruct CS Ltd – March 2026) has been reviewed by both WBC Drainage and the Case Officer in line with the standing advice. To summarise, the proposed will be installed on a raised platform to ensure it remains operational during flood events (elevated 600mm above average ground level), including the 1 in 100-year fluvial flood with a 25% allowance for climate change.

While the raised platform initially displaces a small volume of floodwater, the associated alterations to ground levels and landscaping to the immediate west of the electricity housing would increase the floodplain storage on site by 4.291m³.

This increase in floodplain storage ensures no net loss of floodplain capacity and provides a small enhancement to the floodplain's ability to store water during extreme flood events, thereby contributing positively to flood risk management. Matters of access and escape are not considered relevant due to the nature of the proposals.

Overall, it is considered that the submitted FRA complies with the standing advice contained within the NPPG. Compliance with the FRA will be secured via condition.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no arboricultural or landscape character concerns. WBC Landscape and Trees have requested a condition which requires all retained vegetation to be protected from removal.

Ecology:

Great Crested Newts (GCNs):

The site is located within a Green Risk Zone for GCNs, which indicates that the surrounding environment is unlikely to be suitable for this protected species. This is logical given the site's industrial estate surroundings.

Due to the limited scale of the development and the low risk to the species in the area, there are no anticipated impacts on GCNs.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

Due to the limited scale of the proposed development (de minimis), the scheme is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gains.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:

Yes

Recommendation:

Approval

Date:

8 May 2026

Earliest date for decision:

10 September 2025

Recommendation agreed by:

(Authorised Officer)



Date:	8 May 2026
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