

MEMORANDUM

From:	Catherine Brimble Senior Landscape Officer		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	251984
Address:	Land south of Bridge Farm, Reading Road, Arborfield, Berkshire, RG2 9HT.		
Proposal:	Application for approval of Reserved Matters pursuant to Outline Planning Consent 223083 (as varied by 243190) for the erection of up to 11 no. commercial units to provide 6,986sqm GIA commercial / employment development predominantly within Class B8 and/or Class E (g) uses with supporting facilities within Class E uses comprising ancillary offices, trade counters and food/drink facilities with highway works and strategic landscaping. Details of appearance and landscaping to be considered.		
Type of Development:	Major Heavy industry/storage/warehouse		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The approved outline application (223083) was varied by application 243190. This increased the footprint of a number of the units but also reduced the areas of structural planting close to the units which we worked hard to incorporate as part of the original illustrative layout approved at outline. I considered the changes proposed as part of the varied layout to have a greater visual impact on the surrounding landscape.

This RM application is based on the changes to the layout as approved under application 243190 and revision have now been provided following initial comments dated 2nd October 2025.

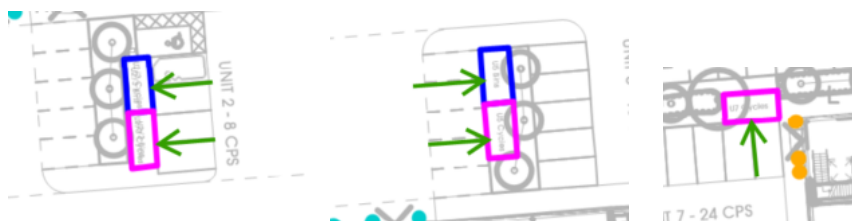
Layout

A revised Masterplan drawing (3389/P403 M) has been provided showing the layout of the commercial units, associated parking and landscaping.

The footpath link from the side of Unit 5 into the 15m landscape buffer strip is still shown as being surfaced with compacted hardcore on the Masterplan, although this has now been changed on the detailed Landscape Plans in line with my request. These drawings will need to co-ordinate with each other.

The sub-station has now been relocated to the west of unit 6. This is now outside the strategic landscape zone as identified on the Access, Land Use and Parameters Plan previously approved, but does still reduce the area of landscaping around the units which was to provide some visual mitigation from the countryside to the west.

I have noted on the plan showing the cycle and bin store details that in some locations access to these will be through the adjacent parking. It is not clear how this will work if cars are parked in these spaces. Extracts are given below with green arrows I have added to show what I assume to be the access in these locations. I'm concerned that this lack of access could impact on the proposed landscape behind these structures which ultimately will need to be removed to allow access. The routes into the bin stores and cycle sheds will need to be clearly marked to ensure the small amount of landscape planting within the car park areas will be maintained.



Materials

I have no objections to the proposed dark brown cladding now specified on the Elevation drawings for each of the units. I would prefer to see the roof colour to be a darker grey which is more recessive in the landscape than the lighter grey as indicated on the drawings (RAL 7038).

Drainage

It is disappointing that the underground geocellular storage area to the west of Unit 1 as identified on the Drainage Plans provided in Appendix V of the Foul and Storm Water Drainage Strategy document (Rev C), cannot be relocated. As previously indicated this is located under a strategic landscape space and therefore limits tree planting over the underground storage crates.

Landscape

The cumulative effect of the location of the sub-station and underground storm water crates at the ends of the units is to reduce the land available even further for appropriate landscape mitigation planting which will help reduce the visual impact of this group of commercial units in views from Observer Way and the countryside to the west. These areas were highlighted in the LVIA as essential to the landscape scheme including tree planting and therefore these additional features have weakened what can now be achieved through the landscape mitigation.

Existing and proposed levels are now included on the landscape drawings which is helpful. I presume that the finished floor levels that are indicated for each of the units should give the level +/- 50mm rather than 500mm as indicated. This will need to be amended on the landscape plans.

Revised Detailed Landscape Proposals (Sheets 1 & 2 V3) have been provided to address my earlier comments the majority of which are acceptable. The following issues are outstanding and require further information / explanation:

- a) It is not clear why the native woodland mix (Mix E) in the 15m landscape buffer narrows down and to a point to the east of Unit 7 and also includes a staggered break in the woodland. The 7.5m width should be continued along this edge without narrowing and without the gap between E2 & E3. There is canopy overhang from the existing woodland but not as extensive as shown on the landscape drawings and the new woodland mix can be planted in this area.
- b) It's good to see that underground soil cells are proposed for the tree pits where there is no space for an appropriate planting bed in between the parking bays. The location of these and their extent will need to be indicated on the planting plan by a dashed line, so it is clear where these are located.
- c) A full landscape specification will need to be provided in order to comply with the landscape condition and can be submitted separately through a conditions application. As this is a rural location the plants will need to be protected from rabbits and possibly deer by guards and or fencing or a combination of both. Details of this will need to be included in the specification.
- d) The boundary details as shown on the Boundary Treatment Plan (3389 P407 C) have now been amended and updated to remove all the post and rail fencing and to be replaced with 4m high solid timber fencing to the back of the parking bays between Units 3 & 5 and 6 & 7. This is completely unacceptable from a landscape perspective as this is not only an incongruous feature within the landscape but it significantly reduces visual permeability to the ancient woodland behind the site which was the reason why the units were orientated east /west to allow some views to the woodland to be maintained. This fencing will need to be removed and replaced with paladin fencing which is visually permeable.

Arboriculture

A revised Arboricultural Method Statement (V4) by BLADE Trees Ltd and dated December 2025 has been provided. This is now acceptable as contains details of the proposed planting within the Ancient Woodland Buffer Zone as requested.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

No additional conditions required.

Date:	13 th January 2026	Signed:	C. Brimble
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