

Planning Statement

1. Introduction

1.1 This statement has been prepared to support the planning application to extend an existing line of berths at Willow Marina (referred to as the Site). The proposal will replace three linear berths with six parallel berths, resulting in an increase of three.

1.2 The planning statement provides background information on the application and includes the necessary details to facilitate its assessment by Council officers. It will consider the proposal in the context of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that the key material considerations, alongside the broader objectives of both National and Local planning policy, support the grant of planning permission.

1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents:

- Topo Drawing
- Environment Risk Assessment
- Eco360 Biodiversity Net Gain Report March 2025
- EA Scaled Site plan
- EA Scaled Site plan 2
- EA Scaled location plan
- EA Permit
- Document 5.0 current landscape photo album
- Document 4.0 Diagrams of proposed works
- Document 3.0 Second OS map of area of works
- Document 2.0 O_S map showing area of works
- Document 1.0 Google maps image of area of works
- Excel copy of BNG calculations
- Community Involvement Statement
- CIL statement



- Eco360 Preliminary Ecology Assessment

1.4 The relevant application fee has been paid

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 The overall 1.54 hectare Marina location is accessed from Willow Lane.

2.2 The location comprises three existing buildings, jetties, boat mooring areas, an area of hardstanding, trees, and green space.

2.3 The location is located adjacent to the River Thames, in close proximity to the settlement of Wargrave, which is situated to the south of the location. There is a Public Right of Way to the north of the location.

2.4 The location is in close proximity to the Wargrave Hill and Willow Lane bus stops, which are served by the No. 850 bus. This bus provides a regular service to Wycombe (Willow Lane) and Reading Town Centre (Wargrave Hill). Wargrave Station is a 20-minute walk from the location.

2.5 To the east of the location is Hennerton Backwater. To the north-west of the location is Lower Shiplake.

2.6 The location is located within a Conservation Area, Green Belt, a Minerals safeguarding Area and the area designated as countryside.

2.7 The site comprises of a total of 63.41 meters squared of grass riverbank to the location's East bank.

3. Development Proposals

3.1 This planning application proposes to extend the current line of moorings, by installing three new fingers on the site's East bank. These will replace the current three linear berths with six parallel berths, creating three additional moorings.

4. Planning Policy Context

4.1 The relevant national and local policies are set out below.

National Policy

4.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration to the application.



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4.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should “promote an effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.

4.4 Paragraph 85 says significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.

4.5 Paragraph 131 identifies that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”, whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to “outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.” The design outlined in the proposal will be a continuation of the existing moorings and therefore in keeping with the surroundings.

4.6 The National Design Guide builds on the above and clarifies that “well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use” (para 109).

Development Plan

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

4.8 The development plan comprises the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), the Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals & Waste Plan (2023), and the partially revoked Southeast Plan (Policy NRM6 only).



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4.9 There is no made Neighbourhood Plan for Wargrave.

Core Strategy (2010)

4.10 The relevant policies are:

- **Policy CP1 (Sustainable development)** states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that avoid areas of best and most versatile agricultural land.
- **Policy CP3 (General Principles for development)** says that planning permission will be granted for 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.
- **Policy CP9 (Scale and Location of Development Proposals)** says that the scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.
- **Policy CP11 (Proposals outside development limits including countryside)** constrains development in the countryside and sets out criteria when its acceptable.

The exception criteria are:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside
 - 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- **Policy CP12 (Green Belt)** states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in PPG2.

Managing Development Delivery (MDD)

4.11 The key policies are:

- **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.



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- **Policy CC03 (Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping)** says development proposals should demonstrate how they have considered and achieved key criteria within scheme proposals.

5. Policy Assessment

5.1 This section analyses the suitability of the additional moorings at the marina in the context of local and national planning policy.

5.2 Principle of Development: The principle of development is considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- The proposal meets the three criteria for development in the countryside outlined within Policy CP11. These are:

- The proposal relates to a rural enterprise;
- There is no encroachment into the countryside as a result of this proposal;
- The proposal includes environmental improvements via Biodiversity Net Gain.

- The proposal aligns with Green Belt policy (Policies TB01 and CP12). This is set out in the next section.

5.3 Green Belt: The proposals have been assessed against Wokingham's Green Belt policies, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and the latest green Belt Planning Policy Guidance (Updated February 2025).

5.4 In planning terms, the plan is consistent with the fundamental aim of the Green Belt which is *"to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence,"* as stated in paragraph 142 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

5.5 The NPPF, at paragraph 153, states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

5.6 This proposal meets the exemption set out within Paragraph 154 of the NPPF. These are:

b) The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries, burial grounds, and allotments, provided that the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.



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5.7 The planning history search confirms that the site has been used as a marina, supporting outdoor sport and recreational use, since at least 1948. The marina is used for mooring boats, as well as for the sale of boats. The proposals are therefore consistent with Policy CP12 and is not considered inappropriate in planning terms (Paragraph 154 of the NPPF).

5.8 Sustainable Development: The development is considered to align with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF, as it offers tangible economic and social benefits.

5.9 The economic benefits include:

- The employment of skilled tradesman throughout the construction process
- Supporting the business with the creation of additional moorings and therefore additional income;

5.10 The social benefits are:

- Additional moorings for people who use the Thames for leisure purposes.

5.11 Minerals Safeguarding Area: Although the constraints map confirms that part of the Site is within a Minerals Safeguarding Area, it is not considered necessary to undertake a Minerals Resource Assessment in this instance. This is for the following reasons:

- The Site is located within the Green Belt, adjacent to the Thames, and within a Conservation Area. As a result, minerals extraction is not considered acceptable in planning terms.
- Given that this proposal is to extend an existing facility, mineral resources will not be permanently sterilised as a result of the proposal.

5.12 Character and Appearance of the (Conservation) Area: In line with Paragraph 207 of the NPPF, a proportionate assessment has been undertaken regarding the proposal and the impact on heritage assets.

5.13 Overall, this development is considered to have no detrimental heritage impact (Policy CP3, Criterion d) and is acceptable for the following reasons:

The Site does not include any buildings that are heritage assets in themselves.

- The proposal is not considered to have any impact on Chapel House (List Entry: 1118169) and Woodclyffe Cottage (List Entry: 1303652) for the following reasons:
 - Chapel House is 85 metres from the nearest shed, and Woodclyffe Cottage is 100 metres away;



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- There is significant hedgerow screening, which prevents the listed buildings from being seen from these properties. This is confirmed by the Heritage Officer's response for application 210538, which considered the erection of a marquee to the east of the proposals.

5.14 Overall, the potential impact of the proposal on the Conservation Area is the key consideration. The Wargrave Conservation Area document, published on the council's website, does not refer to the Marina and focuses on the settlement of Wargrave.

5.15 Overall, it is considered that this investment in local facilities will improve the local environment rather than cause harm.

5.16 As the applicant owns and operates the Marina, they are keen for the development to be undertaken quickly. As a result, any harm caused by the construction process will be limited.

5.17 Trees and Landscaping: There will be no impact to trees as a result of these proposals. A small section of the riverbank will be excavated, however in line with Biodiversity Net Gain, the negligible habitat benefits plus 10% will be created to counteract this. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with Policy CC03.

5.18 Transport and Parking: Overall it is not considered that there will be a noticeable increased use of the Site as a result of the proposal. The Site is within close proximity to the bus stops and Wargrave is located within close proximity to the Site. The level of parking provided on Site is considered acceptable overall.

5.19 Ecology: As part of a separate project, the applicant has commissioned an ecologist to assess the wider site for suitability for bats and other wildlife. Please see the Preliminary Ecology Assessment report provided by Eco360, which states that no suitable habitat located within the boundary lines.

5.20 In terms of the wider ecological impacts, the report confirms that *“a large proportion of the site consists of hardstanding and man-made surfaces associated with the built environment. This includes areas of concrete and tarmac surrounding the existing buildings, as well as paved access paths and parking spaces. These surfaces offer no ecological value for flora and very limited value for fauna.”*

5.21 Biodiversity Net Gain: The Biodiversity Gain Requirements are outlined in the Biodiversity Net Gain report that has been commissioned and provided.

6. Conclusion

6.1 The proposed development aligns with both local and national planning policies, meeting the relevant exemptions for development within the countryside as outlined in



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Policy CP11 and ensuring compliance with Green Belt policies (Policies CP12 and TB01).

6.2 Ecological considerations have been thoroughly addressed, with the area of riverbank included in the proposal having a low distinctiveness rating. The negligible decrease in potential habitat will be offset plus 10% increase as instructed in the Biodiversity Net Gain report commissioned.

6.3 Given these factors, the proposal represents an appropriate form of development that balances the needs of the marina with environmental and community benefits. It adheres to both local and national planning policies and will enhance the quality of life for those who live, work, and visit the area.

6.4 Given that this proposal is consistent with the development plan it is requested that planning permission is granted promptly, in accordance with Policy CC03.



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