Wokingham Borough Council

LAND TO THE NORTH OF MEREOAK PARK AND RIDE

Planning Statement



OCTOBER 2026

PUBLIC

Wokingham Borough Council

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Planning Statement

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Planning Statement

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1

INTRODUCTION

PUBLIC

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of our client, Wokingham Borough Council "The Applicant" and accompanies an application seeking full planning permission for an open storage facility (Use Class B8), access, levelled storage areas, internal circulation, fencing, lighting and associated infrastructure "The Proposed Development" at land to the north of Mereoak Park and Ride "The Site".

1.1.2. The application is submitted to Wokingham Borough Council as the Local Planning Authority (LPA) under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

1.1.3. A full description of the proposed development is set out in **Section 4** of this statement.

1.1.4. The site provides an opportunity for the development of an employment site on a currently unused parcel of land.

1.1.5. The statement is accompanied by a suite of drawings and technical reports as listed within the submitted cover letter, which demonstrates that there are no technical reasons nor any adverse impacts arising from the proposals, that should prevent the proposed development coming forward at the site.

1.1.6. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), this Statement considers the proposal against the relevant national and local policies and any other material considerations pertinent to the assessment of the development.

1.1.7. It is demonstrated throughout this report, and the wider application submission pack, that there are no adverse impacts arising from the development proposals which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

1.1.8. On this basis, and in accordance with the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development, the application should be supported and approved without delay.

1.1.9. The remainder of this planning statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2** describes the application site and surrounding context;
- **Section 3** provides an overview of the site's relevant planning history;
- **Section 4** sets out a detailed description of the proposed development;
- **Section 5** provides a summary of the relevant planning policy context;
- **Section 6** provides an AWE Assessment;
- **Section 7** provides a Sustainability Statement
- **Section 8** contains our planning assessment; and
- **Section 9** contains our conclusions.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1.1. The application site is approximately 1.83ha and comprises a relatively flat parcel of greenfield land which is currently unused. There is a small concrete pillbox located within the centre of the site.

2.1.2. The site is located immediately north of the Mereoak Park and Ride facility at Grazeley. The site is bounded by Mereoak Lane to the west and north, and the east is bounded by the A33 Basingstoke Road. The site is approximately 6 km south of Reading Town Centre. A PRoW runs to the southeast of the site (SHIN25).

2.1.3. The Council's Policies Map shows that the site is subject to the following designations:

- Countryside Location (Policy CP11)
- Mereoak Roundabout Shinfield (Policy SAL09)
- Strategic Development Location (Policy CP19)
- Thames Basin Heath Spa Mitigation Zones (Policy CP8 and SAL05)
- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) (Policy TB04)
- SSSI Impact Risk Zone
- Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone

2.1.4. The site is also located within Flood Zone 1, which has the lowest probability of flooding.

2.1.5. The site is not located within a conservation area and there are no listed buildings on the site. There are seven Grade II listed building within 500m of the site and the site is within 500m of an Archaeological Priority Area. In addition, there are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site.

2.1.6. Figure 1 below shows an aerial image of the site.



Figure 1 – Aerial Image (approx red line boundary).

3 PLANNING HISTORY

3.1.1. A planning history audit has been undertaken using Wokingham Borough Council's online planning search portal. The previous planning consents at the site are set out below. It is our understanding that the below consents have not been implemented within the red line boundary of this application.

Table 3.1 – Site Planning History

Application Ref.	Proposal	Decision
F/1998/68488	Proposed Bus Based Park And Ride	Approved – 30/03/1999
F/2011/1924	Temporary change of use of former temporary site compound and offices for use as a construction skills training and examination facility for a period of four years.	Approved – 11/01/2012
F/2004/1370	Proposed bus based Park & Ride. Renewal of consent 98/68488/F	Approved – 08/09/2004

4 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 APPLICATION PROPOSALS

4.1.1. Full planning permission is sought for:

> *"Change of use to provide an open storage facility (Use Class B8), including access, levelled storage areas and associated infrastructure, following demolition of existing building."*

4.1.2. A proposed site plan is presented in Appendix A.

4.1.3. The works involved include the demolition and removal of the existing concrete pillbox and the clearance of the existing scrub and grassland and provide an open storage facility which will consist of a permeable surface with associated infrastructure.

4.1.4. Access is proposed from a new bell-mouth junction from Mereoak Lane that will service an internal road through the centre of site including a proposed turning area. The rest of the site is then proposed to be laid with a permeable hard-surface for its future use as open storage.

4.1.5. With regards to landscaping, there are a number of trees and hedgerows within the site which are proposed to be retained as shown within the accompanying Landscape and Visual Statement. An area of hedgerow and trees will need to be removed to facilitate the creation of the new bellmouth junction adjacent to Mereoak Lane, including sufficient visibility splays either side of the junction, beyond this most of the existing boundary vegetation is to be retained.

4.2 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

4.2.1. A pre-application consultation exercise was undertaken during September 2026 and included engagement with local residents, the Parish Council, elected members and key stakeholders.

4.2.2. On 4 September 2026, a consultation leaflet was distributed to properties within the vicinity of the site. Leaflets were delivered to all properties where access could be gained and where there was a clearly identifiable letter box. The consultation area was focused on those properties most likely to be affected by the proposal. Given the physical separation created by the A33 corridor, properties to the east of the A33 were not considered likely to experience direct effects from the development and were therefore not included within the leaflet drop area.

4.2.3. Consultation material was also circulated to the relevant Parish Council, local ward councillors and Reading Borough Council, as operator of the adjacent Park & Ride facility. Reading Borough Council acknowledged receipt of the consultation material and was invited to comment but ultimately chose not to submit any representations on the proposal.

4.2.4. A total of two responses were received from local residents in response to the consultation. The representations raised concerns principally regarding the ecological value of the site, including the loss of grassland and scrub habitat, impacts on wildlife and bird species, the loss of mature trees, and the potential for increased traffic and disturbance in the local area.

4.2.5. The ecological matters raised are already identified and assessed within the supporting ecological documentation, including the Ecological Impact Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, which consider habitat loss, ecological impacts, mitigation measures and biodiversity compensation

requirements. No new ecological issues were raised through the consultation process that are not already addressed within the supporting assessments.

4.2.6. One respondent also referred to the presence of the Second World War pillbox within the site. This matter is separately addressed within the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment, which identifies the structure as a non-designated heritage asset and assesses the implications of the proposed development.

4.2.7. Overall, the consultation responses did not identify any issues that necessitated changes to the proposed scheme or the supporting technical assessments.

5 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1.1. This section identifies the relevant planning policies and guidance at national and local level. The proposal is then assessed against these policies in **Section 6** of this statement.

5.2 STATUTORY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

5.2.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, where an adopted development plan contains relevant policies, an application for planning permission shall be determined in accordance with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2.2. The Wokingham Core Strategy was adopted in 2010 and sets out the strategy up until 2026. The Managing Development Delivery local plan was adopted in 2014 and builds on the Core Strategy, setting out more detailed policies.

Wokingham Core Strategy (2010)

5.2.3. The following policies are relevant to the proposal:

- Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development
- Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development
- Policy CP7 – Biodiversity
- Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- Policy CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits
- Policy CP15 – Employment Development
- Policy CP19 - South of the M4 Strategic Development Location

Wokingham Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014)

5.2.4. The following policies are relevant to the proposal:

- Policy CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC02 – Development Limits
- Policy CC06 – Noise
- Policy CC09 – Development and Flood Risk
- Policy CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
- Policy TB04 – Development in Vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE)
- Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
- Policy SAL09 – Transport Site Allocations
- Policy SAL05 – Delivery of Avoidance Measures for Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

5.2.5. The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040: 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. Following the hearings the Inspectors published their post-hearing letter on 4 August 2026 which set out a number of main modifications likely to be required in order for the plan to be found sound. We expect the Council to progress these modifications over the next few months. Until this is carried out, and at the point of drafting this Statement, the policies in the draft

Plan remain only as a material consideration carrying limited weight to the determination of this planning application.

5.2.6. The following policies are of relevance:

- Policy SS1 – Sustainable Development Principles
- Policy SS5 – Development in the Countryside
- Policy SS7 – Development in the Vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishments (AWE)
- Policy SS8 – Meeting Employment Needs
- Policy ER2 – Employment Uses Outside Core Employment Areas
- Policy FD1 – Development and Flood Risk
- Policy FD2 – Sustainable Drainage
- Policy NE1 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy NE2 – Biodiversity Net Gain
- Policy NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- Policy HC5 – Environmental Protection
- Policy HC6 – Air Pollution and Air Quality
- Policy HC8 – Noise Pollution
- Policy HC10 – Odour, Fumes and Dust

SHINFIELD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2017

5.2.7. Shinfield Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2017 covering the Shinfield Parish area within which the site is located. The following Neighbourhood Plan policies are relevant:

- Policy 1 – Location of Development
- Policy 2 – General Design Principles
- Policy 3 – Sustainable Development
- Policy 4 – Accessibility and Highways Safety
- Policy 6 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland
- Policy 7 – Biodiversity
- Policy 8 – Flooding
- Policy 11 – Commercial Development

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (AUGUST 2026)

5.2.8. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in August 2026 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The new NPPF introduces national decision-making policies which should be read as a whole and indicate how much weight the government expects a particular consideration to be given.

5.2.9. NPPF Policy S3 sets out that decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, applying Policy S5 of the Framework for proposals outside of established settlements such as this. In all locations, where development proposals accord with up-to-date development plans and the NPPF, they should be approved without delay.

5.2.10. Policy S5 establishes that only certain forms of development should be approved outside of established settlement boundaries. Outside of the prescribed list, development proposals should only be approved in exceptional circumstances where the benefits would substantially outweigh the adverse effects, including of the character of the countryside. Criteria i confirms that development to of land allocated for a purpose should be approved in line with the above.

5.2.11. Section 7 of the NPPF sets out an over-arching objective to enable businesses to invest, expand and adapt in a way that reflects the opportunities, challenges and characteristics of different areas and supports long term economic growth.

5.2.12. Policy E2 gives substantial positive weight to the economic benefits of commercial development which allow businesses to invest especially where they support wider vision or strategy for an area.

5.3 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

SOUTH OF M4 SDL SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT (2011)

5.3.1. The SPD sets out that the South of the M4 SDL is a major opportunity to deliver infrastructure rich and high quality extensions to Shinfield, Spencers Wood and Three Mile Cross. The location is identified in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy as being capable of accommodating around 2,500 new dwellings with associated transport, green and community infrastructure. Within the masterplan, the site and adjoining land to the north is shown as a proposed park and ride.

6 AWE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1.1. The site is located within the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ). MDDP Policy TB04 notes that:

"Development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of "Blue light" services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield.

The applicant will need to provide this information where the proposal exceeds the scale of development detailed below for the consultation zone as defined on the Policies Map."

6.1.2. The site falls within the DEPZ and so the scale of development for the above trigger relates to all residential or non-residential applications where one or more additional person may live, work, shop and/or visit. The proposals seek planning permission for the use of the site for outdoor B8 storage purposes. The Employment Density Guide (2015) does not provide an employment density for such a proposal and, therefore, it is difficult to provide an approximate employment capacity for the proposed use of the site.

6.1.3. There is a proposed occupier identified for the site and they have indicated that there would likely be no more than 5-10 employees on the site at any one time. This is the best assumed employment figure we have for the proposal and has, therefore, informed the assessment provided below.

6.1.4. Given the site falls within the above designation it restricts the range of acceptable land uses. Engagement with Wokingham Borough Council confirms that open storage (Use Class B8) is considered a potentially acceptable use within the DEPZ, subject to appropriate emergency planning measures being secured.

6.1.5. In relation to the needs of the "Blue light" services it is proposed an on-site emergency plan is secured by way of condition or legal agreement that provides appropriate evacuation measures for the employees at the site. A selection of possible methods are set out below.

Emergency Communication Protocol

- The operator will register all on-site personnel with the AWE/WBC emergency notification systems.
- A single point of contact will be designated for receiving and actioning DEPZ alert messages.
- The site will maintain immediately accessible on-site response information, including assembly points and shelter protocols.

Shelter-in-Place Facilities

6.1.6. Although the primary use is outdoor storage, the site will include a small site office / welfare unit capable of functioning as a shelter space during an emergency.

Controlled Site Access During Emergencies

6.1.7. The new access from Mereoak Lane will be designed to allow swift closure and controlled movement, consistent with Emergency Planning Team expectations.

6.1.8. The operator will implement lockdown procedures, suspending arrivals/departures on instruction from emergency authorities.

Staff Training & Induction

6.1.9. All staff will receive annual DEPZ-specific emergency training. Training will include recognising alarms, following instruction cascades, and enacting safe stoppage of activities.

6.1.10. Induction for visiting drivers and contractors will include a brief DEPZ protocol summary, displayed at entry.

Evacuation and External Coordination

6.1.11. Although shelter-in-place is the primary expected response in DEPZ conditions, the operator will maintain a site evacuation plan aligned with WBC and AWE procedures.

Operational Design Measures Supporting Emergency Preparedness

6.1.12. Security fencing, lighting and CCTV proposed for operational needs, will assist in managing site security and enabling emergency lockdown.

6.1.13. Clear internal circulation routes ensure unobstructed movement for emergency responders.

7 SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

7.1.1. In accordance with the Council's adopted Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (May 2010), this application is accompanied by this Sustainability Statement that demonstrates the sustainability principles of the proposed development, including positive environmental, social and economic considerations.

7.1.2. As the proposed development does not incorporate any proposed buildings an energy statement / strategy has not been provided. Instead, the applicant will seek to incorporate sustainable building practices into the development works that comprise the creation of the site access and the laying of hardstanding. This will be secured by a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) that will include sustainable principles including (*inter allia):*

- Using reasonable endeavours to source material from locations that minimise the need for travel and thus reducing the embodied carbon implications of the proposed works
- Utilising local labour where appropriate
- Encouraging the use of electric vehicles and sustainable practices
- Stringent waste avoidance and circularity targets
- Nature retention, protection and enhancement through the construction process
- Sustainable drainage measures incorporated throughout the construction process to avoid runoff onto adjoining land and risk of contaminants entering groundwater

7.1.3. The operational stage of the development will support sustainability through the creation of employment and socio-economic benefits through on-site job creation as well as supporting the wider local economic supply chain.

7.1.4. Measures to ensure environmental sustainability are incorporated within the recommendations of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) with regards to biodiversity and the Transport Statement and Travel Plan with regards to trips and movements.

8 PLANNING ASSSESMENT

8.1 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

8.1.1. The site falls within the identified countryside within the adopted Local Plan Policies Map. Policy CP11 seeks to protect the wider countryside identifying that development proposals in the countryside will not be permitted unless (among other things) development "contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough".

8.1.2. Whilst the site falls within the 'Countryside' through Policy CP11, it is also within the South of the M4 Strategic Development Location (SDL) (Policy CP19) and allocated as part of the Park & Ride facility under Policy SAL09.

8.1.3. CP19 identifies that the area to the south of the M4 is to provide land for a strategic development to include around 2,500 new homes, appropriate employment and infrastructure. The area is subject to an SPD that was subsequently adopted identifying the site for the delivery of new development as shown in Figure 6-1 below. At the time this was envisaged to form part of the proposed Park & Ride facility.

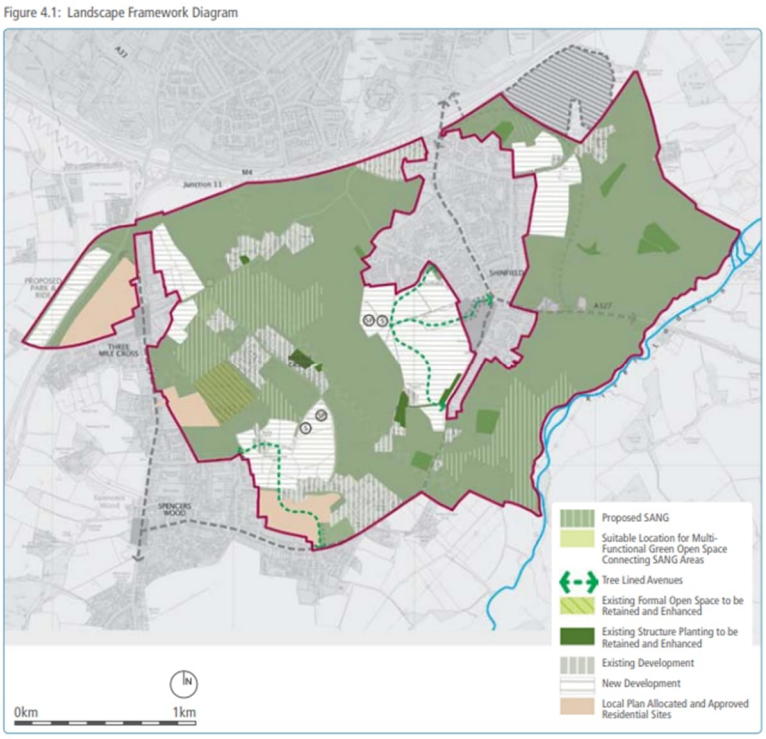


Figure 8-1 - South of M4 SPD Layout Plan

8.1.4. The application Site forms part of land identified as the Land at Mereoak site allocated within Policy SAL09 for the delivery of a Park & Ride facility. The adjacent site has been developed through a Park and Ride Facility so the aspiration of this allocation has been completed, however the site remains allocated for New Development as per Policy CS19 and the subsequent SPD as shown above.

8.1.5. As the Park & Ride facility has now been fully completed, the application site forms the remaining land identified for New Development by virtue of the SPD. The proposal for use as open storage will accord with the requirement for "appropriate employment" within Policy CS19 and the subsequent SPD allocation.

8.1.6. Given the wider allocation of the site within the SDL, it is effectively allocated for new employment / commercial development to accord with Policy S5 of the NPPF as a form of development that should be approved outside settlement boundaries, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects of the development.

8.1.7. Additionally, the site is a suitable location for open storage given its proximity to the A33 strategic highway corridor and the existing Park and Ride facility. The development will help meet local businesses and needs in accordance with Policy E2 of the NPPF

8.1.8. There has been an increased demand for the flexibility afforded by open storage and distribution space. This trend has increased since the pandemic with less reliance on just in time deliveries and operations. Therefore, the proposal aligns with the Council's commercial property strategy and responds to market demand for open storage in the local area.

8.1.9. The proposed scheme will enable the site to provide employment opportunities which will benefit the local area. This is in accordance with core strategy Policy CP15 'Employment Development'. The NPPF is clear planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.

8.1.10. Within the emerging LPU the site is allocated as countryside and the existing SDL allocation falls away. Emerging Policy SS5 (Development in the Countryside) which encourages proposals that supports the rural economy in accordance with Policy ER3. The scheme would meet these policies tests in providing suitable land for a business or enterprise of an appropriate scale and nature that would not lead to adverse impacts on the wider intrinsic characteristics of the countryside.

8.1.11. Accordingly, whilst the emerging Local Plan has only limited weight as a material consideration, its policies would not alter the conclusion that, in line with NPPF Policies E2 and S5, and Local Plan allocation CP15 and CP19, substantial weight should be attributed in favour of the principle of the proposed development.

8.2 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

8.2.1. Policy TB21 of the MDD states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. In addition, proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

8.2.2. The development proposals will have negligible impacts on the wider character of the landscape or surrounding countryside. The proposals involve the creation of an access and the laying of hardstanding to facilitate the use of the site for external storage purposes. The proposals incorporate landscaping that will retain and enhance the verdant boundary screening on the edges of the site to limit views into the site from outside.

8.2.3. The application is accompanied by a Landscaping and Visual Character Assessment which provides greater detail on these proposals and provides an analysis of the proposed development's impacts

on identified viewpoints from around the site. Overall, this clearly demonstrates compliance with Policy TB21 of the MDD of Policy N2 of the NPPF.

8.3 ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

8.3.1. Policy CP7 – Biodiversity / Policy of the Core Strategy and Policy TB23 – Biodiversity and Development of the MDD require development proposals to demonstrate how they will avoid harm to habitats and species of principle importance to nature conservation.

8.3.2. The application is accompanied by a suite of ecological surveys and reports that are encompassed into a comprehensive Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA). In addition, a Biodiversity Net Gain metric and report have been prepared by WSP to support the application.

8.3.3. The report notes that the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 5.8km south-east of the Site. It is confirmed that negative effects (recreational pressure or air quality impacts) are not anticipated because of the separation distance from the site and the SPA. Additionally, the proposal is unlikely to create a population of new residents who would regularly visit the SPA for leisure. As such no further assessment is required with regards to the Thames Basin Heath SPA.

8.3.4. The EcIA also identifies that the site is within 2km of several Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and to avoid short-term negative effects during the development process, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would be required.

8.3.5. Within the site the EcIA provides analysis of the survey work that has been undertaken in relation to bats (foraging, commuting and roosting), badgers, hazel dormouse, other mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, terrestrial invertebrates, protected/notable plants and invasive non-native species. A series of mitigation recommendations are provided within the EcIA which ensure effects on these habitats and species is kept to a minimum and where possible enhancements are also identified.

8.3.6. Subject to the implementation of the mitigation recommendations within the EcIA, the development will be in full accordance with Policies CP7 and TB23.

8.3.7. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and accompanying metric has been submitted with the application. The nature of the existing site (greenfield) and the proposed amount of hardstanding required to facilitate the development means that an initial habitat unit loss is identified within the submitted BNG metric. WBC intends to create habitats off-site to achieve a 10% net gain from the proposed development and it is anticipated that this will be secured via planning condition.

8.4 ARBORICULTURE

8.4.1. The application is accompanied by a Tree Constraints Plan and Survey Schedule and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). The survey demonstrates that the site and it surrounds has relatively few trees of note, though there are three oak trees identified as being of category A value (all located outside the red line boundary), three individual trees identified as being of category B value (two located within the red line boundary to the rear of the site), and four groups of trees identified as being of category B value (again, all of which are outside of the site boundary).

8.4.2. To facilitate the development, the proposals will result in the removal of 22 low quality existing trees on the site. All of the trees that will be removed to support the proposals have been identified as being of low quality within the AIA. The scheme will not, therefore, result in material harm to the loss of valued trees on the site.

8.5 FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

8.5.1. Core Strategy Policy CP1 states development will be acceptable where they avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater). Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan states “All sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.” It goes on to state “Development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 must take into account the vulnerability of proposed development.” This is echoed by policy FD1 of the emerging local plan which provides further detail on the expectation within a flood risk assessment, sequential and exception test.

8.5.2. A Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy has been prepared by WSP.

8.5.3. The report shows that the site falls within Flood Zone 1, indicating a very low probability of fluvial flooding. The risk from tidal, sewer, artificial, and overland flow sources is assessed as low or negligible. The principal flood risk is attributed to shallow groundwater.

8.5.4. Due to high groundwater and the low permeability London Clay Formation, which is present at the site, infiltration-based drainage solutions have been deemed unviable. Therefore, the proposed drainage strategy employs Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including permeable paving, and localised rainwater harvesting. Surface water runoff will be attenuated on-site and discharged at a controlled greenfield runoff rate of 7.2 l/s, ensuring no increase in downstream flood risk.

8.5.5. There is no public foul sewer in proximity to the site and so the foul drainage strategy proposes the use of a septic tank or packaged treatment plant for the facilities hub.

8.5.6. The development is fully compliant with national and local flood risk policies including Policy F4 of the NPPF, Policy CC09 ‘Development and Flood Risk’ and Policy CC10 ‘Sustainable Drainage’ of the Council’s local plan.

8.6 HIGHWAYS

8.6.1. The application is accompanied by a Transport Assessment which assesses the impact of the proposed development on the wider highway network. The Assessment confirms that the anticipated trips from the proposed development are unlikely to have a material impact on the wider highway network or any nearby junctions.

8.6.2. The proposed access onto Mereoak Lane has been designed to provide sufficient visibility splays commensurate with travelling speeds on the existing highway. The junction design has been tested with a Road Safety Audit (RSA) and found to be perfectly suitable for its proposed use.

8.6.3. The scheme will incorporate car and secured cycle parking for staff so as to meet the standards of Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan.

8.7 ARCHAEOLOGY

8.7.1. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment has been undertaken by WSP. The report highlights that archaeological survival across the site is expected to vary from moderate to high. The site remained an undisturbed agricultural field until the construction of the pillbox and any associated defensive features in the centre, which likely caused only localised disturbance. Between 2008 and 2010, the remainder of the site was stripped of topsoil and used for material stockpiling during the A33 road improvements. Evidence from previous nearby investigations suggests that, because

archaeological features are typically found at greater depths than the stripped topsoil, it is still possible that remains survive intact.

8.7.2. Therefore, any archaeological work would be undertaken in accordance with an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), agreed via a planning condition.

8.8 CONTAMINATION

8.8.1. A Preliminary Risk Assessment has been prepared by WSP.

8.8.2. The report concludes that the site has historically comprised undeveloped agricultural land and grassland, with no evidence of former industrial or contaminative on-site activities. As a result, only low-level diffuse agricultural residues (fertilisers, pesticides, trace metals) are anticipated in shallow soils. It is noted that future site users remain low risk due to the outdoor nature of commercial open-storage activities and the absence of significant sources. Construction workers may encounter shallow soils or isolated made-ground pockets, but exposure can be managed through standard construction controls. Off-site sources are sufficiently distant and weak that they pose low risk to the site under the proposed use.

8.8.3. Overall, no significant uncertainties remain that require immediate intrusive investigation for the proposed open-storage use.

8.9 NOISE AND AMENITY

8.9.1. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity, this broadly aligns with the detailed amenity protection requirements set out in Policy P3 of the NPPF.

8.9.2. The development is unlikely to generate any material impacts on daylight/sunlight or visual amenities to neighbouring properties. A Noise Assessment has, however, been prepared by WSP in support of the application.

8.9.3. The report notes that the nearest noise sensitive receptors are residential properties located to the north on Mereoak Lane and to the northwest on Great Lea and presents the findings of the noise assessment. The assessment confirms that noise will not comprise an adverse impact to the occupiers of the sensitive properties on Great Lea and Mereoak Lane to the north of the proposed development site.

8.9.4. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy CP1 ‘Sustainable Development’ and CC06 ‘Noise’ of the Development Plan and P3 of the NPPF, which seek to ensure that the amenity of residents from noise impacts is protected.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support an application for the change of use of 1.83ha of greenfield land at Mereoak Lane to provide B8 open storage. The application includes the provision of hardstanding, appropriate drainage measures and the creation of a new site access.

9.1.2. The Statement incorporates a Sustainability Statement outlining the sustainability measures that are embedded within the application submission to optimise sustainability through construction and operation of the development.

9.1.3. The site is located within the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Burghfield Detailed Emergency Planning Zone. Accordingly, an AWE Impact Assessment has been carried out for this application demonstrating the relatively small risk associated with the proposed development and setting out the principles for emergency procedures to be secured through planning condition.

9.1.4. The principle of the development of the site has been established through the site's allocation within the wider South of M4 strategic allocation. The development will provide suitable employment use to the site with appropriate levels of landscape and environmental impacts commensurate with its location. In accordance with the NPPF, substantial positive weight should be applied to the economic benefits of these proposals.

9.1.5. All other technical matters have been assessed within this application. A series of ecological and arboricultural surveys have informed the design of the development and mitigation measures are proposed to minimise these impacts.

9.1.6. Overall, the proposed development will not result in any adverse environmental effects, including in terms of traffic/highways, the AWE, noise, landscaping, drainage or visual impact and is therefore acceptable in technical planning terms.

9.1.7. This application is therefore compliant with both national and local planning policy, and so the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied, and planning permission granted for the scheme.



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