

ET Planning

Client:

Westwood Cottage

Westwood Cottage, Sheerlands
Road, Arborfield, Reading, UK

Erection of a commercial barn

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the erection of a commercial barn at Westwood Cottage, Sheerlands Road, Arborfield, Reading, UK.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of 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 prepared by Murray Steel Buildings and Heritage Fusion:
 - 2176 E100 Location Plan
 - 2176 E101 Site Block Plan
 - Cross section
 - Elevations
 - Frame
 - Westwood Cottage Planning Commercial AMENDED

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 The site is located within an established residential area, which is defined as a modest settlement of Arborfield Green under the emerging Local Plan of Wokingham Borough Council. Arborfield is a village in the parish of Arborfield and Newland. It is a village on the A327 road in Berkshire about 4.5 miles (7 km) south-east of Reading, about 4 miles (6.4 km) west of Wokingham.
- 2.2 The site comprises a Grade II Listed Building, Westwood Cottage and various outbuildings.
- 2.3 The site is located within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5km Zone and also a valued landscape area under the emerging local plan.
- 2.4 The site is located to the south of the M4 and Southwest of Wokingham. It is accessible via Sheerlands Road, which connects onto Reading Road.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 **Application Ref. 260179.** Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed renovation works including minor adjustments to internal layout, new electrics and heating, repair of windows and front door, replacement staircase along with internal and external redecoration. Approved 2026.
- 3.2 **Application Ref. 241969.** Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the use of Buildings 1 & 2 as storage and workshop use; Building 3 as office use, and land as storage use. Approved in 2025.
- 3.3 **Application Ref. 241639.** Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed temporary stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes. Approved in 2024.
- 3.4 **Application Ref. 172689.** Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the use of site for B1(a) business and ancillary storage uses. Withdrawn 2017.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The National Design Guide (2019) identifies that *"well-designed homes and buildings are functional, accessible and sustainable. They provide internal environments and associated external spaces that support the health and well-being of their users and all who experience them. They meet the needs of a diverse range of users, taking into account factors such as the ageing population and cultural differences. They are adequate in size, fit for purpose and are*

adaptable to the changing needs of their occupants over time” (paragraph 120-121).

- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposal provides the site with additional commercial storage floorspace through the erection of a new steel framed outbuilding measuring approximately 10m x 25m. The proposal is intended to support the ongoing commercial use of the site and would remain ancillary and related to the existing commercial operations on site.
- 4.4 **Scale and Height:** The proposal seeks for the erection of a single-storey steel framed outbuilding with a pitched roof form and an approximate ridge height of 5.1m without disrupting the amenity of neighbouring properties. The scale and proportions of the building are considered appropriate within the established commercial context of the site.
- 4.5 **Landscaping:** The existing landscaping surrounding the site will not change as a result of the proposal. Additional landscaping can be secured by condition in the event of a grant of planning permission if this is deemed necessary.
- 4.6 **Appearance:** The proposed building adopts a simple agricultural/commercial appearance with profiled metal cladding and roller shutter doors. The design is functional and reflective of the existing commercial character of the site whilst remaining visually subservient within the wider rural setting.

- 4.7 The site already has lighting, signage and paraphernalia associated with the existing commercial use and therefore the proposal would not introduce an incongruous form of development within the site or surrounding area.
- 4.8 The proposal is found to be sympathetic to the established character of the area. The proposal has been designed to be ancillary to the existing built form on site and positioned within the established commercial area accessed via the existing shared driveway.
- 4.9 **Access & Parking:** The proposal does not seek to alter existing access arrangements. The building would be served via the existing shared access drive and existing hardstanding areas within the commercial site. Sufficient space remains within the site for vehicle manoeuvring and parking associated with the proposed use.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 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”.

- 5.3 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.”*
- 5.4 In supporting the rural economy, paragraph 88a highlights the importance of planning policies and decisions in enabling *“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings”*.
- 5.5 Paragraph 89 states that *“planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport”*.
- 5.6 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” (paragraph 109).

- 5.7 Paragraph 165 confirms that *“inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere”.*

- 5.8 **Principle of Development:** 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. The National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration in all planning applications. In this instance, the relevant development plan documents are:

- **Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework: Adopted Core Strategy Development Plan Document - January 2010**

- 5.9 Wokingham Borough 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. The Inspectors have now written to confirm the examination can progress to Part 2 hearings. As a result of the above, it is expected that the weight applied to the LPU policies is currently limited but nonetheless comprises a material consideration with any

planning applications to be submitted in the near future. Please could the council confirm the weighting of the LPU.

- 5.10 Policy CC01 of the Managing Development Delivery states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations.
- 5.11 **Policy CP1 – Sustainable Development** grants planning permission for proposals which maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment while avoiding negative impacts such as additional flood risks and pollution. The proposed development utilises steel, a largely recyclable and highly sustainable material, as the basis of the development. The site is situated in a low flood-risk area, keeping flooding concerns at a minimal.
- 5.12 **Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development** is also a key overarching policy relevant to this proposal, highlighting the need for development to be appropriate to the character of the area, provide satisfactory access and be of good design. The proposed development meets all the criteria mentioned, being of a high-quality design that integrates with the commercial zone which it is situated in. The site will retain and utilise the existing access from Sheerlands Road to the commercial zone.
- 5.13 **CP7 – Biodiversity** resists development which harms habitats, county designated sites and compromises the implementation of national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans. The proposal at hand is situated in an existing commercial yard on an area of hardstanding. The existing boundary vegetation is also to be retained, therefore no significant ecological harm is to be expected.

- 5.14 **CP8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area** requires the addition of residential development located within 5km (linear) of the SPA to be assessed for whether there is likely to be significant impacts. Despite being located within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA 5km Zone, the proposal is for the erection of a commercial barn instead of a residential unit, eliminating the relevance of this policy.
- 5.15 Due to the proposal being located outside settlement boundaries, **Policy CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits** is engaged, which prohibits proposals outside of development limits unless they contribute to the contribution of sustainable rural enterprises and does not lead to the encroachment of development away from original buildings. This proposal supports the addition of a commercial building in the countryside, directly engaging to the contribution of rural enterprises. The proposed site is also located in an established commercial zone, with commercial buildings existing within the immediate vicinity. The site is also surrounded by hedgerows and mature trees, limiting the expansion of further development and the encroachment of the outskirts of the settlement boundary.
- 5.16 **Character and Appearance:** Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy states that development proposals should be of an appropriate scale, layout, built form, height, materials and character having regard to the surrounding area. The proposed development is situated in an established residential area and has been carefully designed to respect this and its surroundings. The commercial barn will lie towards the north-west of an existing commercial site, which is physically separated by trees and hedgerows from existing residential dwellings in the area and accessed through a shared

access. In this context, the proposed commercial barn is considered compatible with the immediate character and operational activity of the area. The scheme seeks to retain and enhance the established commercial character of the site.

- 5.17 Externally, the proposal comprises of a design typical of modern agricultural and commercial buildings, measuring approximately 10m by 25m with a dual-pitched roof reaching approximately 4.8m in total height. Materials comprise of Steadmans AS35 insulated PIR wall panels, maintaining a simple appearance appropriate for commercial storage buildings. The building will remain recessive within the wider landscape through the use of its vertically profiled insulated steel cladding, matching roller shutter doors and a straightforward portal frame. This detail reflects the appearance of existing rural commercial buildings found throughout the borough.
- 5.18 Furthermore, the building is positioned to minimise its visual prominence from Sheerlands Road, ensuring it reads as part of the existing clutter of commercial structures in the small commercial zone. As such, the proposed barn is considered proportionate and visually compatible with the surrounding built environment and will preserve the established character of the site while maintaining the existing spatial relationship with surrounding development.
- 5.19 **Listed Buildings:** Within the immediate curtilage of location of this proposal lies a Grade II listed building, Westwood Cottage. As such, a heritage statement has been produced by Heritage Fusion to be submitted alongside this application.

- 5.20 **Residential Amenity:** The site is located within a wider area of residential use; the closest residential property is 19 Chaucer Grove, Reading, RG2 9US, existing approximately 50m to the north-west of the site. Despite its close proximity, it is separated by a row of mature trees and as such, the proposal will not have an adverse effect on residential amenity.



- 5.21 The site adjacent, Westwood Farm, closely resembles this proposal due to its dwelling and commercial use outbuildings. As such the proposal is considered to be in keeping with the immediate character of the area.
- 5.22 Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy seeks to ensure that development proposals do not result in a detrimental impact upon the amenities of neighbouring uses and that development is appropriately sited within its plot having regard to separation distances and surrounding context. In this instance, it is considered that the proposals accord with the aims of Policy CP3 given the substantial separation distances to nearby residential dwellings, the

absence of significant external alterations and the established commercial character of the locality.

- 5.23 **Trees and Landscaping:** A relevant tree survey has been submitted by GHA Trees arboricultural consultancy demonstrating the impact the development will have on trees.

- 5.24 In terms of landscaping, the site exists as an area of hardstanding, meaning there will not be a significant landscaping harm. Policy CP3 touches on the need to avoid landscape harm and using appropriate landscaping methods if there is a concern of such.

- 5.25 **Transport and Parking:** Access to the site is not being altered and will remain the same off Sheerlands Road. Parking is also available at the site and is not proposed to be altered.

- 5.26 CS Policy CP6 states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that inter alia provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice and are located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel.

- 5.27 Policy TB20 of the MDD states that planning permission will only be granted for commercial development proposals throughout the Borough that demonstrate there is no harmful impact on the amenity of adjoining land uses, and no significant impacts on highways, visual or environmental terms.

- 5.28 **Ecology:** Policy CC03 requires development to protect, enhance, and integrate with the Borough's green infrastructure by safeguarding existing natural features, improving connectivity, and incorporating high-quality landscaping. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

has been prepared by Ecology Works Ltd in support of the application to assess the ecological value of the site, identify any protected species constraints and recommend appropriate mitigation and enhancement measures. The assessment comprised a desk study together with a site survey undertaken in May 2026.

- 5.29 The report confirms that the habitats present on site are common and of relatively low ecological value, with no statutory designated nature conservation sites are located within 1km of the site. While the site falls within the Impact Risk Zone of Bramshill SSSI, Natural England's Impact Risk Zone assessment confirms that the proposed development is unlikely to have any harmful effect on the SSSI or other nationally designated sites and consultation with Natural England is therefore not required.
- 5.30 Due to the site's existing hardstanding, it offers a negligible habitat for great crested newts, despite the site being located within Wokingham Borough Council's Great Crested Newt District Licensing area. Similarly, reptiles are considered unlikely to be present, although a precautionary approach has been recommended during site clearance works.
- 5.31 The report concludes that the proposal will not result in significant adverse effects on protected species, with recommended measures including undertaking demolition outside of the bird nesting season, implementing sensitive lighting according to Bat conservation trust guidance, protecting retained trees during construction and adopting certain working methods for reptiles and great newts. The appraisal also recommends a series of biodiversity enhancements to provide an overall ecological benefit, including the installation of bat and swift

boxes and the creation of a log pile adjacent to the existing pond for amphibians and reptiles, with the aim to deliver a biodiversity net gain. The site's area of less than 0.2 hectares exempts it from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements introduced under the Environment Act 2021.

- 5.32 **Drainage and SuDS:** The site is within Flood Zone 1 which is at the lowest risk of fluvial flooding and as such it is not considered that a flood risk assessment is required as part of this application.
- 5.33 Policy CC09 of the MDD states that development proposals in Flood Zones 2 or 3 must take into account the vulnerability of proposed development. Whereby the proposal seeks for a conversion of existing floor space, as opposed to an increase in floor space, a flood risk sequential test is considered to be not required. Please could the council confirm.
- 5.34 **Contamination:** A Phase I Geo-Environmental Desk Study was undertaken by Earth Environmental & Geotechnical (Southern) Ltd, assessing the suitability of the site in terms of contamination for the proposed development. The assessment included a review of the site's historical and current uses, geology, hydrology, environmental records and a detailed site walkover.
- 5.35 No significant signs of contamination were detected within the existing commercial storage area where the proposed barn is to be located. Whilst a former small heating oil tank was identified within an outbuilding, it was located internally on a concrete floor, being bunded, and showed no detection of leaks or spills. The report concluded no significant contamination sources were present due to

this, and no other significant sources of contamination were identified during the assessment.

- 5.36 The Preliminary Conceptual Model concludes that the risk to current and future site users is low, reflecting the site's limited development history, the absence of significant on-site contamination sources and the fact that the proposed commercial barn does not introduce new contamination pathways or increase exposure.
- 5.37 Risks to adjacent land is also very low, whilst potential risk to construction workers can be mitigated through standard health and safety procedures in accordance with the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations.
- 5.38 The proposal therefore raises no unacceptable land contamination concerns, meaning the site is suitable to adopt a commercial barn. The development therefore accords with the NPPF, as there is no risk to human health or the environment.
- 5.39 **Sustainability:** The proposed commercial barn has been designed to provide a durable, efficient and long-lasting building that will support the continued operation of the existing commercial use while minimising future maintenance requirements. It makes efficient use of the land within the established commercial area, avoiding further extension into the wider countryside.
- 5.40 The building will be constructed using insulated steel sandwich wall panels manufactured by A Steadman & Son. The proposed AS35/1000 PIR wall panels have been independently certified by the Loss Prevention Certification Board (LPCB) and tested in accordance with LPS 1181 Part 1 for use as the external envelope of buildings.

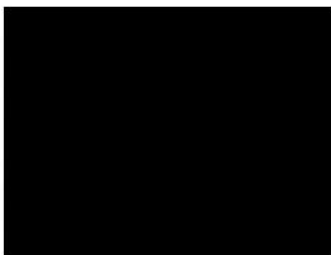
The selected 60mm/80mm PIR insulated panels provide an appropriate level of thermal insulation whilst offering a robust and durable building envelope that is designed for long-term commercial use. The certified cladding system is manufactured under an ISO 9001 quality management system and is subject to ongoing surveillance by BRE Global, ensuring that the product continues to meet recognised standards of quality and performance throughout its manufacture.

- 5.41 The use of insulated metal cladding also contributes to reducing operational energy demand by improving thermal efficiency of the building compared with traditional single-skin agricultural structures. Combined with the building's simple steel-frame construction and durable external materials, the proposal is expected to have a long service life with relatively low maintenance requirements, thereby reducing the need for future replacement materials and associated environmental impacts.
- 5.42 Overall, the proposal represents a sustainable form of development by providing a modern, high-quality commercial building that makes efficient use of an existing commercial site, incorporates durable certified materials and supports the ongoing economic use of the property in accordance with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.
- 5.43 **Archaeology:** The site does not lie within an area of identified archaeological potential. If any concerns are raised during the course of the application, it is considered that these can be dealt with via condition.

- 5.44 **Refuse Provision:** The proposal does not seek for any changes to the existing refuse collection arrangements.
- 5.45 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant forms are submitted alongside the application.

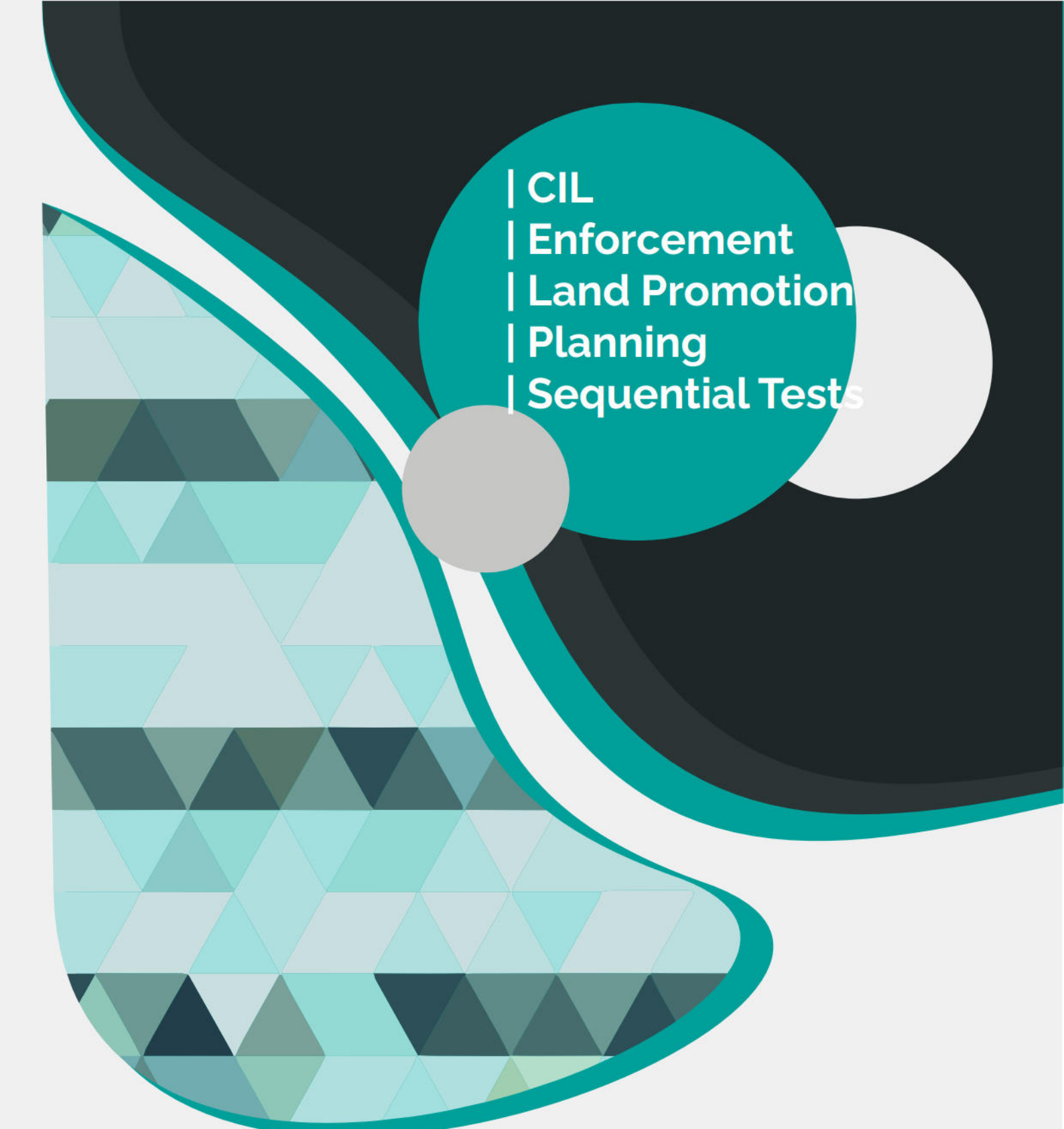
6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes efficient use of land.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered that the proposed development would be a sustainable addition to the existing commercial buildings on site, without adverse effect on the Green Belt, character of the area, flood risk or the amenity of nearby land uses.
- 6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.



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