

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260527
Site Address:	Lm Park, Toutley Road, Wokingham, RG41 1DB
Expiry Date:	8 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	20 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for a new detached office building with associated external works.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development CP20 – North Wokingham Strategic Development Location
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 TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB12 – Employment Skills Plan TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU) (N.B. the LPU is deemed to hold overall limited weight at this time).	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS8 – Meeting our employment needs CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design

	C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document North Wokingham SDL SPD

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
192956	Full application for change of use of existing site from sui generis waterworks to B8 Storage and Distribution with the addition of ancillary assembly activity (B1c) within the main existing building. Including alterations to onsite parking. Alterations to site access in conjunction with the Northern Distributor Road Highways Improvement Scheme. Relocation of electricity sub-station. Erection of 1.8m high palisade fencing to front and side boundaries with manual and automated gates. Siting of 3no storage containers (1 retrospective and 2 proposed).	Conditionally Approved – 02/04/2020

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage: No objection subject to condition
WBC Environmental Health: No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees: No objection subject to condition
WBC Ecology: No objection subject to conditions
WBC Highways: No objection subject to conditions
WBC CIL: No comments received
WBC Waste Services: No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener: No comments received

External

Office for Nuclear Regulation: No comment

Thames Water Utilities Ltd: No comment
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REPRESENTATIONS

Wokingham Town Council	No comments
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises a former water pumping treatment works located off Toutley Road, Wokingham. The site has been recently redeveloped following the approval of planning consent ref. 192956 dated 02/04/2020 and now comprises a warehouse building located centrally within the plot with an ancillary yard/parking area. The site is occupied by the applicant, LM Electrical Services, for Storage and Distribution (Use Class B8) with ancillary assembly activity (Use Class E(g)(iii)).

The site is located to the south of The Metro Business Centre which forms part of Toutley Industrial Estate, a designated Core Employment Area. The site also falls within the North Wokingham Strategic Development Location with the surrounding area predominantly residential in character to the south and east. The Emm Brook runs along the site's northern boundary with a pumping station and Scout Hut located to the immediate south.

Proposal:

This application proposes the erection of a two-storey office building to the rear of the existing warehouse building. The proposed building would comprise exposed brickwork and a flat roof, with a maximum ridge height of approximately 7.1m and a footprint of 255sqm. It would be sited towards the south-eastern corner of the site, with its principal (front) elevation facing the northern boundary adjoining the Emm Brook. The proposal also includes the extension of the existing hardstanding to facilitate an improved parking arrangement for the site.

The office building would be ancillary to the existing business occupying the site and would not facilitate occupation of the site by multiple businesses/uses. The applicant has advised that the proposal would allow the business to consolidate all activity onto one site, resolving operational challenges arising from running the company with resources spread across different sites.

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. The site is not located within a defined Core Employment Area under Core Strategy policy CP15, although it does immediately adjoin the southern boundary of Toutley Industrial Estate. Policy CP15 supports the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in employment use which are located within settlement limits but outside of the defined Core Employment Areas.

The National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on building a strong, competitive economy, with paragraph 85 stating that decisions *‘should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. 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’*.

Design and Character of the Area:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. NR2 and NR5 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that non-residential development should be designed to contribute towards improving the character and quality of the area, with building height, bulk and massing designed to relate well to the local context.

The surrounding area is defined by a mix of light industrial and office use immediately to the north, with residential development beyond the adjoining pumping station and Scout hut to the south/south-east and on the western side of Toutley Road. Although the site is located outside of the adjoining business park, from the street scene it visually acts as the edge of the commercial area and marks the transition to the residential character to the south.

While the proposed building would be approximately 1.8m taller than the existing warehouse building and container structures on site, it would be viewed in the context of the light-industrial character of this section of Toutley Road and the adjoining, larger buildings within the Metro Business Park to the north. Its visual bulk would also be mitigated by its siting on an east-west axis set well back from the street scene, and its flat roof form. The proposal would therefore not appear out of character in this respect.

The side (west) elevation facing the street scene would complement the appearance of the principal elevation with well-proportioned fenestration adding visual interest to the building from most public vantage points. While the lack of fenestration on the rear (south) elevation could introduce a blank façade, any harmful impact would be mitigated by its siting well away from the public realm. This elevation would also be partially screened by the existing boundary planting.

The use of facing brickwork would complement the appearance of the existing warehouse building and is acceptable in principle. Further details on the proposed external materials including brick colour can be secured via condition to ensure that they have an acceptable impact on the site's appearance and the visual amenity of the street scene.

The creation of office space to serve the existing sole occupier of the site would not result in the adverse intensification of the use of the site in terms of activity. It would also remain in keeping with the mixed commercial and residential use of the area. Nonetheless, the occupation of the building by a separate, unconnected business/use(s) could result in detrimental intensification of the use of the site which would amount to an adverse impact on local character. For the avoidance of doubt a condition is recommended which ties the use of the building to the commercial activity taking place on the site only.

Overall, the proposal would be of an appropriate scale which would be viewed in the context of the adjoining business park and would not result in the overdevelopment of the site in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The closest residential property to the proposed development is located circa 69.5m to the west. As such, there are no concerns in respect of potential loss of light, overlooking or overbearing impact on any neighbouring residential development. The proposal would also be sited approximately 22m to the north-west from the adjoining Scout Hut, preventing any potential loss of light or overbearing impact on the use of the building. To prevent any perceived overlooking impact, the outlook from the rear (south) elevation is restricted to small, top-opening-only windows serving amenity spaces within the building.

Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Given the separation distance from the closest residential property, and the ancillary nature of the use of the building within the existing light industrial site, no significant impact on existing noise levels is anticipated. No extraction equipment or other plant is proposed as part of this application. If any future occupier requires externally mounted plant, ducting or extraction equipment, this will likely require separate planning permission and would be assessed at that time having regard to amenity impacts.

Overall, the proposal is well designed in respect of how it addresses the site's relationship with adjoining land uses and would not introduce any adverse impact on neighbouring amenity, in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP3 and MDD Local Plan policy CC06.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan set out the parking standards for development, noting that these should be regarded as a starting point with each site assessed on its own merits. Policy CP6 states that development should not have an adverse impact on the highway and alternative modes of transport to the private car

should be encouraged.

The proposal includes the extension of the existing hardstanding to facilitate the creation of additional parking spaces on-site. No changes are proposed to the existing vehicular access off Toutley Road. Following the submission of amended plans to clarify the functionality of the proposed parking arrangement, the Council's Highways Officer has raised no objection to the application.

The proposal would create a total of 26 parking spaces, meeting the Council's parking standards, while any additional traffic impact would be limited. The site is also accessible by sustainable modes of transport and a new cycle store is proposed to promote active travel. There is a slight shortfall in dimensions to comfortably store four bicycles; however, no objection is raised to the location of the cycle store, subject to final details being agreed via condition.

Subject to conditions, there would be no adverse highway safety impacts resulting from the development in accordance with Core Strategy policy CP6 and MDD Local Plan policy CC07.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding and policy CC10 requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The site and its access are located within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3; however, the proposed development would be sited wholly within Flood Zone 1. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) (Innervision Design, November 2025) has been submitted in support of the application.

The report concludes that the proposal represents no additional fluvial flood risk or vulnerability due to the development's footprint being contained within Flood Zone 1. The Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has reviewed the assessment and has raised no objection to the siting of the building. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of policy CC09.

The FRA recommends that a full drainage strategy report is produced to demonstrate how runoff from the proposed development will be managed, following the SuDS hierarchy. Subject to this being submitted to and agreed by the LPA prior to the commencement of the development, the Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has raised no objection to the principle of the proposed development. This is secured via the recommended condition.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping. Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of the landscape character.

The proposed development would not result in the direct loss of any soft landscape features apart from part of the grassed area to the rear. Indicative landscaping is

shown on the submitted Site Plan, showing planting to the front of the building's western and northern elevations. This would help soften the appearance of the building and the enlarged hardstanding and contribute to the aims of policy CC03.

The Council's Senior Landscape Officer has reviewed the application and raised no objection subject to a full landscaping scheme and planting plan being agreed via condition.

Ecology:

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF is clear that new development should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impact on and providing net gains for biodiversity and Paragraph 193 states that planning permission should be refused if significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or compensated for. Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.

Protected Species:

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (John Wenman Ecological Consultancy, February 2026) has been submitted in support of the application which concludes that there would be no direct impact on bats, amphibians and other species arising from the development. The most important habitat feature on site is identified as bramble scrub adjacent to the adjoining watercourse which will be retained, and the surrounding landscape provides more optimal foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

The Council's Ecology Officer has reviewed this appraisal and agrees that there would be minimal or no impact on protected and priority species during and following the development. A series of precautionary mitigation measures is recommended to mitigate any potential impact during construction. The Officer agrees with this approach in principle, subject to full details being submitted to and agreed by the LPA prior to commencement. This is secured via the recommended condition requiring submission of a method statement.

The appraisal also recommends that a sensitive external lighting strategy is produced to minimise light spill onto key habitats and commuting routes. The Ecology Officer agrees that this is required and should be secured by condition. Biodiversity enhancement measures are also recommended including the installation of integral bat and bird boxes in the new building. Full details of these measures can also be agreed by condition.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):

BNG is now mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the proposed development meets the exception criteria set out in paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 and the Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024. The

proposal does not meet the exception criteria and is therefore required to demonstrate a BNG of 10% or more following the development.

The statutory framework for BNG involves the discharge of the statutory biodiversity gain condition following the grant of planning permission and prior to commencement of the development. The relevant Planning Practice Guidance states that prior to the determination of an application the LPA must be confident that the statutory condition is capable of being discharged, however full detail does not need to be submitted to the LPA prior to determination.

In accordance with the framework, a BNG metric has been submitted in support of the application. This indicates that the development would result in a 65.18% habitat unit loss without appropriate mitigation/compensation. The habitat baseline has been agreed by the Council's Ecology Officer. The applicant has indicated that the required units would be secured through the purchase of off-site habitat units, alongside on-site enhancements via wildlife-friendly planting and other measures. Full details will be provided when discharging the statutory condition.

Taking into consideration the information submitted in support of this application, including the indicative proposals, the Ecology Officer has concluded that they are confident the statutory condition is capable of being discharged and no further information is required prior to the determination of the application.

Subject to the submission of, and agreement to, the statutory biodiversity gain plan, a full landscaping scheme and a separate on-site enhancements strategy via condition, the LPA can be satisfied that the proposed development would comply with the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement.

Conclusion:

Having regard to the development plan and all other material considerations, the proposal is considered acceptable and would not give rise to significant harm in respect of character and appearance, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, flood risk or ecology, subject to conditions. This application is therefore recommended for **approval**.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for 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 an assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement 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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	Approve
Date:	6 May 2026
Earliest date for decision:	9 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	07/05/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Major Development Location – Wokingham*
- *Strategic Development Location – North Wokingham*
- *Adjacent to a Core Employment Area – Toutley Industrial Estate*
- *Flood Zones 1, 2 & 3*
- *Surface Water Flood Zone – 1 in 30 year risk extent*
- *Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Area*
- *Landscape Character Assessment Area – Wokingham-Winnersh Settled and Farmed Clay*