

Wokingham Borough Council
Development Control
PO Box 157
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1WR

Our ref: WA/2024/131583/01-L01
Your ref: 241855
Date: 20 August 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

Prior approval submission for change of use of the ground, 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors to 62no residential dwellings (use class c3).

400 Regus House, Thames Valley Park Drive, Earley, Wokingham RG6 1PT

Thank you for consulting us on the above application on 02/08/2024. We have reviewed the application in line with our planning remit.

Environment Agency position

As submitted, we have no objections to this application. However, due to the historic industrial land use and proximity to sensitive controlled water receptors, it is necessary to investigate the site further for any potential pollutant linkage. **We recommend that the following conditions** be included on the decision notice.

Condition 1 – Remediation strategy

No development approved by this planning permission shall commence until a remediation strategy to deal with the risks associated with contamination of the site in respect of the development hereby permitted, has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. This strategy will include the following components:

1. A site investigation scheme, based on a desk study, to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off-site.
2. The results of the site investigation and the detailed risk assessment referred to in (1) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken.
3. A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (2) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.

Any changes to these components require the written consent of the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reasons

To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution in line with paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Did you know that in the UK, 6.6 million tonnes of household food waste a year is thrown away? Almost three quarters of that is food which could have been eaten. Do your bit to avoid domestic food waste to fight climate change! www.lovefoodhatewaste.com www.wrap.org.uk

Condition 2 – Verification report

Prior to any part of the permitted development being brought into use a verification report demonstrating the completion of works set out in the approved remediation strategy and the effectiveness of the remediation shall be submitted to, and approved in writing, by the local planning authority. The report shall include results of sampling and monitoring carried out in accordance with the approved verification plan to demonstrate that the site remediation criteria have been met.

Reasons

To ensure that the site does not pose any further risk to the water environment by demonstrating that the requirements of the approved verification plan have been met and that remediation of the site is complete. This is in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF

Condition 3 – Previously unidentified contamination

If, during development, contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority) shall be carried out until a remediation strategy detailing how this contamination will be dealt with has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The remediation strategy shall be implemented as approved.

Reasons

To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution from previously unidentified contamination sources at the development site. This is in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

Condition 4 – Infiltration of surface water into ground (SuDS)

No drainage systems for the infiltration of surface water to the ground are permitted other than with the written consent of the local planning authority. Any proposals for such systems must be supported by an assessment of the risks to controlled waters. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reasons

The previous use of the proposed development site presents a high risk of contamination that could be mobilised by surface water infiltration from the proposed sustainable drainage system (SuDS). This could pollute controlled waters (surface and groundwater).

This condition therefore seeks to ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants, in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

Condition 5 – Decommissioning of investigative boreholes

A scheme for managing any borehole installed for the investigation of soils, groundwater or geotechnical purposes shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall provide details of how redundant boreholes are to be decommissioned and how any boreholes that need to be retained, post-development, for monitoring purposes will be secured, protected, and inspected. The scheme as approved shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any part of the permitted development.

Reasons

The submitted planning application indicates that boreholes have been installed and few more will need to be installed at the development site to investigate groundwater resources/carry out soakage tests. If these boreholes are not decommissioned correctly, they can provide preferential pathways for contaminant movement which poses a risk to groundwater quality.

This seeks to ensure that redundant boreholes are safe and secure, and do not cause groundwater pollution or loss of water supplies in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF and Position Statement A8 - Building and decommissioning of structures of [‘The Environment Agency’s approach to groundwater protection’](#).

Condition 6 – Drainage scheme

The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to dispose of foul and surface water, and roof drainage –sealed at ground level have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reasons

To ensure that the development does not contribute to and is not put at unacceptable risk from or adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution caused by mobilised contaminants. This is in line with paragraph 180 of the NPPF

Advice to applicant – Foul drainage

Government guidance contained within the national Planning Practice Guidance (Water supply, wastewater and water quality – considerations for planning applications, paragraph 020) sets out a hierarchy of drainage options that must be considered and discounted in the following order:

1. Connection to the public sewer
2. Package sewage treatment plant (adopted in due course by the sewerage company or owned and operated under a new appointment or variation)
3. Septic Tank

Foul drainage should be connected to the main sewer. Where this is not possible, under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 any discharge of sewage or trade effluent made to either surface water or groundwater will need to be registered as an exempt discharge activity or hold a permit issued by the Environment Agency, additional to planning permission. This applies to any discharge to inland freshwaters, coastal waters or relevant territorial waters.

Please note that the granting of planning permission does not guarantee the granting of an Environmental Permit. Upon receipt of a correctly filled in application form we will carry out an assessment. It can take up to 4 months before we are in a position to decide whether to grant a permit or not.

Domestic effluent discharged from a treatment plant/septic tank at 2 cubic metres or less to ground or 5 cubic metres or less to surface water in any 24-hour period must comply with General Binding Rules provided that no public foul sewer is available to serve the development and that the site is not within an inner Groundwater Source Protection Zone.

A soakaway used to serve a non-mains drainage system must be sited no less than 10 metres from the nearest watercourse, not less than 10 metres from any other foul soakaway and not less than 50 metres from the nearest potable water supply.

Where the proposed development involves the connection of foul drainage to an existing non-mains drainage system, the applicant should ensure that it is in a good state of repair, regularly

de-sludged and of sufficient capacity to deal with any potential increase in flow and loading which may occur as a result of the development.

Where the existing non-mains drainage system is covered by a permit to discharge then an application to vary the permit will need to be made to reflect the increase in volume being discharged. It can take up to 13 weeks before we decide whether to vary a permit.

Further advice is available at: [Septic tanks and treatment plants: permits and general binding rules](#)

Advice to applicant - Other consents

As you are aware we also have a regulatory role in issuing legally required consents, permits or licenses for various activities. We have not assessed whether consent will be required under our regulatory role and therefore this letter does not indicate that permission will be given by the Environment Agency as a regulatory body. The applicant should contact 03708 506 506 or consult our website to establish if consent will be required for the works they are proposing. This includes any proposal to undertake work in, over, under, or within 8 meters of the top of the bank of a designated Main River, called a Flood Risk Activity permit. Please see <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/permitting/default.aspx>

Closing comments

Thank you again for consulting us on this application. Our comments are based on the best available data and the information as presented to us. Should you require any additional information, or wish to discuss these matters further, please do not hesitate to contact me. Please quote our reference number in any future correspondence.

Yours faithfully,

Mr Nathan Davis
Planning Advisor

Direct e-mail: Planning_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk
Direct dial: 02030251755