

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Application Number:	261098
Site Address:	Whiteknights Campus, Reading, URS Building Faculty of Urban Regenerative Studies, Reading, RG6 6EN
Expiry Date:	1 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	29/06/2026
Proposal: Full application for the removal and replacement of existing boundary fencing and gates to Whiteknights Campus.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
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 CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM7 - Conserving the Historic Environment
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS9 – Whiteknights Campus FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage 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 DH5 – The historic environment DH6 – Archaeology
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Whilst there are a number of planning applications within the site boundary, none are considered directly relevant to the works proposed under this planning application. Planning history within the site boundary is available to view on the Council's planning website.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No response received
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection
WBC CIL – No response received
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Sports Development (Places and Neighbourhoods) – No response received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No response received
WBC Green Infrastructure – No objection

External

Southern Gas Networks – No response received
Berkshire Gardens Trust – No response received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council – No objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site comprises a number of sections of existing boundary fencing and gates along the edge of Whiteknights Campus, University of Reading, which fall within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council. The application relates only to the Wokingham Borough sections of the campus boundary, although the wider Whiteknights Campus extends across both Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council administrative areas.

Whiteknights Campus is the main University of Reading campus and is located to the south-east of central Reading. The wider campus is set within an extensive parkland landscape containing academic buildings, student accommodation, a lake, open grassed areas, and woodland. The boundary sections subject to this application generally adjoin public highways, footways and public routes, and are typically lined by mature trees, hedgerows and grass verges.

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. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The application seeks full planning permission for the removal and replacement of existing boundary fencing and gates along sections of the Whiteknights Campus boundary within Wokingham Borough. The works are confined to the established campus boundary and substantially follow the existing fence alignment. Whiteknights Campus is identified in local planning policy as a location for development associated with the University of Reading. Policy TB14 of the MDD supports development on the campus subject to compliance with criteria relating to landscape, heritage, ecology, safety and neighbouring amenity, and the emerging Local Plan Update Policy SS9 similarly supports the continued adaptation and development of Whiteknights Campus.

Given the limited nature of the proposal as replacement boundary infrastructure within the existing campus, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with the detailed considerations assessed in this report.

Design and Character of the Area: Whiteknights Campus is characterised by a landscaped parkland setting, with mature trees, woodland, hedgerows, open grassed areas and campus buildings set within a verdant environment. The boundary sections within Wokingham Borough are generally experienced as a soft and enclosed campus edge, with boundary treatments read against mature planting and parkland vegetation rather than as dominant features in their own right. The eastern part of the campus also falls within the Whiteknights Park Local Historic Park and Garden and contains, or lies in proximity to, a number of designated heritage assets, which adds to the sensitivity of the wider townscape and landscape context.

In this context, the existing boundary treatment is formed by a mix of fencing and gates of differing materials and appearance. The proposed development would replace these sections on the established boundary line with consistent metal fencing and gates. Having regard to the limited nature of the works, the fact that the proposals do not extend beyond the existing campus boundary, and the improved design and finish of the proposed fencing in comparison to the current boundary treatment, it is considered that the development would sit comfortably within the established character of the area and would have a neutral/positive impact on the character or appearance of the campus edge or its wider setting. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in this regard and to accord with Policies CP3 and TB21 of the development plan, and emerging Policies SS9, NE5 and DH1 of the Local Plan Update.

Flooding and Drainage: The application site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1, which is at the lowest risk of flooding. Parts of the site are at low risk of groundwater flooding, the worst being groundwater levels of between 0.5m and 5m, with a risk of flooding to subsurface assets but surface manifestation of groundwater is unlikely.

The new fencing and gates will not result in additional built form, alter ground levels, or materially affect existing surface water drainage arrangements. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires development proposals to avoid increasing risks of or from all forms of flooding (including groundwater). The LLFA raises no objection to the application, and the application is deemed acceptable in relation to flooding and drainage.

Landscape, Trees and Green Infrastructure: Policy CC03 of the MDD requires applications to demonstrate how they have considered the protection and enhancement of the Borough's green infrastructure network, including, but not limited to, the protection and retention of existing trees, hedges and other landscape features, the prevention and/or mitigation of habitat loss or fragmentation, and the incorporation of high-quality landscaping.

The replacement fencing would improve the existing boundary condition by introducing a unified and coordinated boundary treatment along the campus edge and adjoining streets. This would replace a currently inconsistent and in places deteriorating arrangement, resulting in a more coherent and legible frontage. Given the proposed fencing has a relatively open and lightweight design and follows the established alignment, it would remain visually subordinate to the existing vegetation and would not detract from the established landscaped character of the boundary.

Within the site and along sections of the perimeter there are a number of trees of value, including mature and veteran specimens. Veteran trees are of particular importance due to their ecological and amenity value. The application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and associated documentation, which demonstrate that the proposals have been designed to avoid harm to these features, with works largely confined to the footprint of the existing fence line. Appropriate tree protection measures are proposed to safeguard retained trees during construction, and where minor vegetation removal is required, this is limited and mitigated through replacement planting.

It is considered that the proposal would retain important landscape features, avoid fragmentation of the green infrastructure network, and maintain the verdant character of the campus edge. The development is therefore considered to comply with Policy CC03 of the MDD and Policy CP3 of the adopted local plan.

Heritage: The application site is not located within or adjacent to any Conservation Areas. Within Whiteknights Campus there are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

None of the existing boundary elements to be removed are historic, nor are they considered curtilage listed, therefore the proposal would not result in harm to, or loss of, historic fabric. The Heritage Officer has confirmed that whilst the proposal would not

enhance the nearby heritage assets, it would not result in harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

It is therefore considered that the application is in accordance with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, TB24 of the MDD and Policy DH5 of the LPU, in addition to the provisions of the NPPF.

Ecology: The application is supported by an Ecological Impact Assessment and biodiversity metric, which have been reviewed by the Council's Ecologist. The baseline habitat assessment is accepted, and the proposed works would involve only limited vegetation removal, including invasive species, which would have a neutral or beneficial effect on the surrounding priority habitat. Whilst on-site habitat creation is constrained, the proposals would result in a biodiversity net loss of -1.60%, and therefore the applicant proposes to secure off-site biodiversity units to achieve the required 10% net gain. This approach is considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with the Environment Act 2021 and the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan, including evidence of off-site units on the Biodiversity Gain Site Register, secured by condition.

In respect of protected species, the works have potential to impact nesting birds and roosting bats through limited vegetation clearance and tree works. The Ecological Impact Assessment recommends standard mitigation measures, including timing of works outside the bird nesting season and precautions in relation to tree works. Given the absence of detailed tree assessments, an ecological clerk of works is recommended to supervise vegetation clearance and check for protected species, including bats and badger setts, prior to works commencing. Subject to these mitigation and enhancement measures, including the provision of bird boxes, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy CP7, Policy TB23 and relevant national guidance.

Conclusion: Overall, the proposal is considered to accord with the relevant policies of the Development Plan, including Policies CP1, CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC03, TB21, TB23 and TB24 of the MDD, as well as emerging Local Plan Update Policies SS9, NE5 and DH1 and the provisions of the NPPF. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a 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 the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed 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 subject to Conditions
Date:	29 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	5 June 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	30.06.2026