

ET Planning

Client:

EU Plants Ltd.

Barn A

Manor Farm, Longwater Road,
Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TS

Change of use of Barn A to 3
residential dwellings for Manor Farm

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the change of use of Barn A to 3 residential dwellings for Manor Farm, Longwater Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TS for the conversion of agricultural land into residential.
- 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 Jake Underwood:
- 2453-001 Rev. A Location and Site Plans Barn A - SCALE 1:2500 and 1:500
 - 2453-002 Barn A - Existing Plans - SCALE 1:1250
 - 2453-003 Barn A - Existing Elevations - SCALE 1:1250
 - 2453-004 Barn A - Proposed Plans - SCALE 1:100
 - 2453-005 Barn A - Proposed Roof Plan - SCALE 1:100
 - 2453-006 Barn A - Proposed Elevations - SCALE 1:100
- 1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Manor Farm is located in the Wokingham parish of Finchampstead, accessed from Longwater road.
- 2.2 Manor Farm is a 36.3-hectare soft fruit farm roughly bounded by Jubilee Road, Dell Road, Lower Sandhurst Road and Cricket Hill/Longwater Road. To the north, the farm is readily visible in wider views across towards Blackwater Valley from the intersection of The Ridges and Jubilee Road.
- 2.3 On the farm are two areas of buildings – in the centre of the farm (which includes an agricultural worker’s dwelling) and towards the southern end near Lower Sandhurst Road (which includes seasonal workers accommodation). There is 4.85 hectares of polytunnels concentrated in the south-eastern corner of the farm and 2.2 hectares on the south facing hill at the northern end of the farm (approved in 191112) with open farmland, access tracks and reservoirs occupying the rest of the farm.
- 2.4 It is bounded on Lower Sandhurst Road and Jubilee Road by hedgerow, partial in areas. It is also framed by a sporadic collection of residential dwellings in the countryside, including along the western side of Dell Lane, equestrian facilities along the western boundary, the village of Finchampstead to the west beyond and Blackwater Lakes across Lower Sandhurst Road to the south.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 Application Ref 252189: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 250504 dated*

30/05/2025. Condition 2 relates to a scheme of landscaping. Application Approved 27/10/2025.

- 3.2 Application Ref 250404: *Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use of agricultural buildings to 2no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3). Prior Approval granted 15/05/2025.*
- 3.3 Application Ref 220967: *Prior approval submission for the proposed Barn A, subdivided to form 3no. dwellings and Barn B, a single dwelling. Prior Approval Refused 27/05/2022.*
- 3.4 Application Ref 201428: *Application to remove condition 4 of planning consent 191112 for the erection of 25 no. polytunnels. Condition 4 refers to the annual removal of the polythene sheeting from the polytunnels and its storage between 1st July and 31st December Application approved 11/09/2020.*
- 3.5 Application Ref 200719: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 191112 dated 10/10/2019 RETROSPECTIVE. Conditions 2 Proposed landscaping scheme. 3 Materials. Application approved 16/04/2020.*
- 3.6 Application Ref 191112: *Full planning application for the erection of 25No polytunnels (retrospective). Application approved 10/10/2019.*
- 3.7 Application Ref 171182: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 160655 (Dated 19/01/2017) 3. External materials 4. Landscaping 5. Wildlife enhancements. Application approved 25/05/2017.*
- 3.8 Application Ref 160655: *Full application for the proposed erection of an agricultural worker's dwelling. Application approved 19/01/2017.*
- 3.9 Application Ref 161926: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 161194*

(dated 15/06/2016) 2. Landscaping. Application approved 20/07/2016.

- 3.10 Application Ref 161589: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 160643 (25/5/2016). 2. Landscaping.* Application approved 12/07/2016.
- 3.11 Application Ref 161194: *Full application for the erection of polytunnels (retrospective).* Application approved 15/06/2016.
- 3.12 Application Ref 160643: *Full application for the erection of polytunnels. (Retrospective).* Application approved 25/05/2016.
- 3.13 Application Ref 160770: *Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 153434 (dated 3/3/16)- 4. Landscaping 5. External lighting.* Application approved 12/05/2016.
- 3.14 Application Ref 153434: *Full application for the proposed erection of 3no agricultural cold store buildings.* Application approved 03/03/2016.
- 3.15 Application Ref 152683: *Application to vary conditions 1 and 2 of planning permission F/2012/0039 for the use of a barn for the stationing of 2 caravans to provide accommodation for seasonal agricultural workers and installation of sewage treatment plant (part retrospective). Condition 1 requires the use to cease on 2 October 2015. It is proposed to remove this condition. Condition 2 restricts the permission to three years and only whilst the premises are occupied by EU Plants. It is proposed to vary this condition to read: The use hereby permitted shall be carried on only by EU Plants Ltd whilst the premises are occupied by EU Plants Ltd.* Application approved 26/11/2015.

- 3.16 Application Ref 130475: *Erection of framing for plant irrigation/protection with associated infrastructure (Retrospective)*. Application approved 11/12/2013.
- 3.17 Application Ref 130479: *Application to remove condition 9 of planning consent F/2011/2620 for the erection of polytunnels which states that they shall only be covered between January to June*. Application approved 11/12/2013.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposal is for a full planning permission for the conversion of Barn A to No.3 terraced residential dwellings.
- 4.2 Each dwelling will comprise of a 3-bedroom, two-storey dwellinghouse with an open plan living/dining/kitchen area, a bathroom, a W.C and storage cupboard. Both outside dwellings will mirror each other in arrangement, while the middle dwelling will be arranged in a slightly different order, however, all will have the same features.
- 4.3 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, considering 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*” (para 120-121).
- 4.4 **Use and Amount:** The site currently exists as a single barn, surrounded by two residential conversions. Barn A currently houses

2 caravans, and Barn B and C have already been approved for residential conversion as per the planning history. The proposal seeks to change the use of the agricultural barn into No.3 C3 dwellinghouses, providing policy compliant and nationally prescribed standards of living.

4.5 **Layout and scale:** The proposed development will create 3 terraced houses with 6 parking spaces. The conversion would install new openings to provide front doors and windows in the front elevation as well as windows and doors in the rear elevation.

4.6 **Appearance:** The proposed development will involve the conversion of barn A into 3 dwellings. Each dwelling will be the same in character and appearance, which externally involves:

- **Windows:** 1 front window, 2 rear windows, 2 windows each side of the outer dwellings.
- **Doors:** 1 front door, 1 rear door.

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 61 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 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”* (para 109).
- 5.5 **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.
- 5.6 Wokingham Core strategy (2010) policy CP11, states that a change of use of land from agricultural to residential is accounted for as development in the countryside and is therefore restricted unless one or more of the exemptions are met.
- 5.7 These exemptions include supporting diverse and sustainable rural enterprise or other specific exceptions recognized in the policy (e.g., essential community facilities or appropriately justified rural businesses).

5.8 Policies for changing the use of land outside development areas are strict due to the policy prioritizing maintaining the character, openness, and sustainable function of rural land. Only in exceptional circumstances where it demonstrably contributes to rural enterprise or meets policy exceptions, might such a change be considered. These matters will be assessed next.

5.9 **Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement – August 2025:** The Council published their latest five-year Housing Land Supply Statement which is dated August 2025. This confirms that the Council are currently only able to demonstrate a housing land supply position of 2.5 years. As the Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply position the presumption in favour of sustainable development (the tilted balance) as set out within the paragraph 11d) of the NPPF would apply. NPPF paragraph 11(d) provides that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, the presumption in favour of sustainable development requires permission to be granted unless either:

i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.10 It is considered, for the reasons set out below, that the application scheme would meet the requirements of paragraph 11d and therefore the tilted balance would therefore be engaged.

5.11 Policy CP3 requires high-quality, context-responsive design and protection of neighbouring amenity, stating development must be "of

an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area with a high quality of design”.

This means the residential layout and built form of development on Manor farm must be demonstrably landscape and character-led, with a clear sense of place.

- 5.12 **Green Belt:** The site does not fall within the Green Belt.

- 5.13 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** The proposal would result in the creation of No.3 two storey dwellinghouses.

- 5.14 Due to the proposal reusing the existing barn and converting this into the two-storey 3-bedroom dwellinghouse, the building will retain its barn-appearance and therefore be suitable in its appearance in the Countryside, in accordance with policy CP3.

- 5.15 **Listed Buildings:** The existing building does not have a listed building status, nor does the site exist near a listed building due to its location being in an open countryside. This constraint is not applicable.

- 5.16 **Residential Amenity – Internal Space:** Wokingham’s adopted Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (2014) – Policy TB07: Internal Space Standards sets the baseline. It requires new homes (including conversions) to meet minimum gross internal areas (GIA) and to provide adequate “social” space. Minimum GIAs are: 1-bed flat 50 sqm; 2-bed flat 61 sqm; 2-bed house 83 sqm; 3-bed house 87 sqm; 4-bed house 100 sqm. Three-storey houses are expected to provide additional circulation space. For day-to-day living space, TB07 seeks minimum combined living/dining/kitchen areas by designed occupancy: 2-person 23 sqm; 3-person 25 sqm; 4-person 27 sqm; 5-person 29 sqm; 6-person 31 sqm. Proposals are assessed against these minima to ensure layouts provide a suitable standard of amenity for future occupiers.

- 5.17 Each new dwelling will offer a total floor space of 96sqm. When compared to the MDD, which states that a 3-bed house must meet the minimum space standard of 87sqm, the dwellings in Barn A will meet this minimum space requirement. Therefore, the proposed development is compliant with MDD local plan - policy TB07: Internal Space Standard.
- 5.18 The development will incorporate a fully liveable space for each new dwelling that includes 3-bedrooms, a bathroom, living room, hall, kitchen and utility. This will provide the necessary amenities for someone to live in.
- 5.19 **Residential Amenity – External Space:** According to the Borough Design Guide SPD, the minimum space for outdoor amenity for dwellings of this size is required to measure to 11m. The three dwelling's depths ranges, with the western dwelling reaching this figure, while the dwelling on the other end is just short, reaching around 9m in depth. Despite this, the development is privileged with a side amenity space that measures approximately 146 sqm. With the addition of the side amenity space, this comfortably exceeds the Borough Design Guide SPD's recommended minimum space, ensuring ample, usable outdoor amenity space for future occupiers. The provision accords with the objectives of Policy TB07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and Policy AHD3 of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 5.20 **Residential Amenity – Overlooking, Loss of Light and Overbearing:** The developments' regular, terraced style pattern provides positioning that prevents overlooking from neighbouring dwellings. Barns B and C are also positioned at a compliant distance that does not create overlooking or loss of light. This complies with policy CP3.

- 5.21 **Trees and Landscaping:** The site does not contain trees and will not be impacted by its landscape.
- 5.22 **Transport and Parking:** The development will include the addition of No.6 6x3m parking spaces on site. This will account for the transportation needs for those living on the site.
- 5.23 The site has sufficient space for cars to manoeuvre and park private motor vehicles in accordance with WBC parking standards and has pedestrian access. The likely conflicts with other vehicle users are low and the proposed development would not result in any highway safety issue.
- 5.24 The applicant has provided an overview access and egress plan for the site to confirm that refuse collection is able to access and egress the site safely and conveniently.
- 5.25 **Air Quality:** The site is not in an Air Quality Management Area.
- 5.26 **Drainage and SuDS:** Due to the site being the development of an existing building, there will be minimal impact on the existing natural drainage system on site.
- 5.27 **Contamination:** A Phase I contamination assessment has been carried out for the site. The desk-based review and site inspection identified no evidence of significant historical industrial activity that would be expected to give rise to widespread contamination. Historical mapping, aerial imagery, and environmental records did not highlight notable contaminative uses within the site boundary, though some surrounding land uses such as nearby agricultural activity and minor infrastructure were considered as potential low-level sources.
- 5.28 The walkover survey found the site to be predominantly undisturbed, with no visual or olfactory indicators of contamination such as

staining, stressed vegetation, or waste deposits. No records of landfilling, hazardous substance storage, or pollution incidents were associated with the site. Overall, the site is considered to present a low risk of contamination to future receptors, including residents, construction workers, and controlled waters.

5.29 **Sustainability and Energy:** Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports the transition of development to a low carbon future. The national Code for Sustainable Homes has now been abolished, however it is proposed that the development would conform to Part L of the Building Regulations which as of 2022 requires a 30% reduction than current standards. By way of contributing to the reduction in carbon, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;

- A. The limitation of the amount of inherent material, structure and embodied energy through the employment of good building standards to create an excellent SAP rating;
- B. Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable;
- C. Maximizing the use of natural light through floor-ceiling windows;
- D. Reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day through the incorporation of water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins;
- E. Refuse, recycling and composting facilities to be provided to work with the Council's existing waste and recycling collection service;

- F. Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport;
- G. 'A' rated electrical appliances and energy saving light fittings;
- H. 'A' rated double glazed windows with natural cross ventilation provision;
- I. Water butts fitted to the rainwater down pipes for watering the garden;
- J. Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable;
- K. Permeable driveway/parking spaces to avoid increase in surface water runoff;

5.30 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with sustainability objectives in this respect.

5.31 **Ecology:** The site will have no impact to the ecology of the area as it converts an existing building which does not have any roof voids or vegetation on the plot.

5.32 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** The relevant CIL forms have been submitted with the planning application.

6. Conclusion

6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an 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 the proposed development would contribute an appropriate windfall site to the

Borough's housing supply, without adverse effect on the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring residents.

- 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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