06 December 2023

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION UPDATE REPORT**
Ward	Out of Borough
Planning Application Reference:	**RBC Application No**.: 231581 **WBC Ref. No.:** 232475
Site Address:	Earley Gate, Reading, University Of Reading, , RG6 6EQ
Proposed Development	Full planning application for the erection of the headquarters building of European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECWMF) with access parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing buildings.
Applicant	Government Property Agency
Report author	Thomas Bradfield
Recommendation	As below

RECOMMENDATION:

That Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) be informed that Reading Borough Council raises an **OBJECTION** to the proposal on the following transport grounds:,

1. The proposed layout fails to assess the full trip generation impact by the development on the surrounding Highway Network. The Highway Authority are therefore unable to ensure sufficient spare capacity during peak periods to accommodate the proposed development in safety and without delay. As a result it would be in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.

2. The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking and that existing parking on the application site can be removed. This could result in on-street parking surrounding the application site, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.

3. That WBC is sent a copy of this report, and the appendix, for their information and use.

1. Introduction

1.1 Following receipt of the consultation letter from Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), officers have reviewed the proposals and consider that RBC should object to the proposals on transport grounds.

1.2 Given the location of the site, approximately 200m from the Borough boundary, and the nature of the proposals, it is not considered that any other matters would have any adverse impact on RBC, and officers are content that all matters other than transport can be assessed by WBC without any comment from RBC.

2. Transport comments

2.1 The Transport team have provided comments which explain officer's position regarding the above proposals. These are attached in full as an Appendix.

2.2 The submitted information is not sufficient to allow for a full assessment of the impacts of the proposals. The submission fails to provide accurate or complete data to allow for a full assessment of the trip generation of the proposed use. The accident data is insufficient and fails to take into account the position of certain junctions. There are significant discrepancies in the data and assessment of the existing car parking requirement at the site, which should be re-provided as part of the proposals if it is still required. No parking has been proposed for the ancillary seminar/lecture theatre and meeting facilities, and without details of how these facilities are operated, it is not possible to assess whether this is acceptable.

2.3 Taking the above into account the Reading Borough Highway Authority objects to the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. *The proposed layout fails to assess the full trip generation impact by the development on the surrounding Highway Network. The Highway Authority are therefore unable to ensure sufficient spare capacity during peak periods to accommodate the proposed development in safety and without delay. As a result it would be in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.*

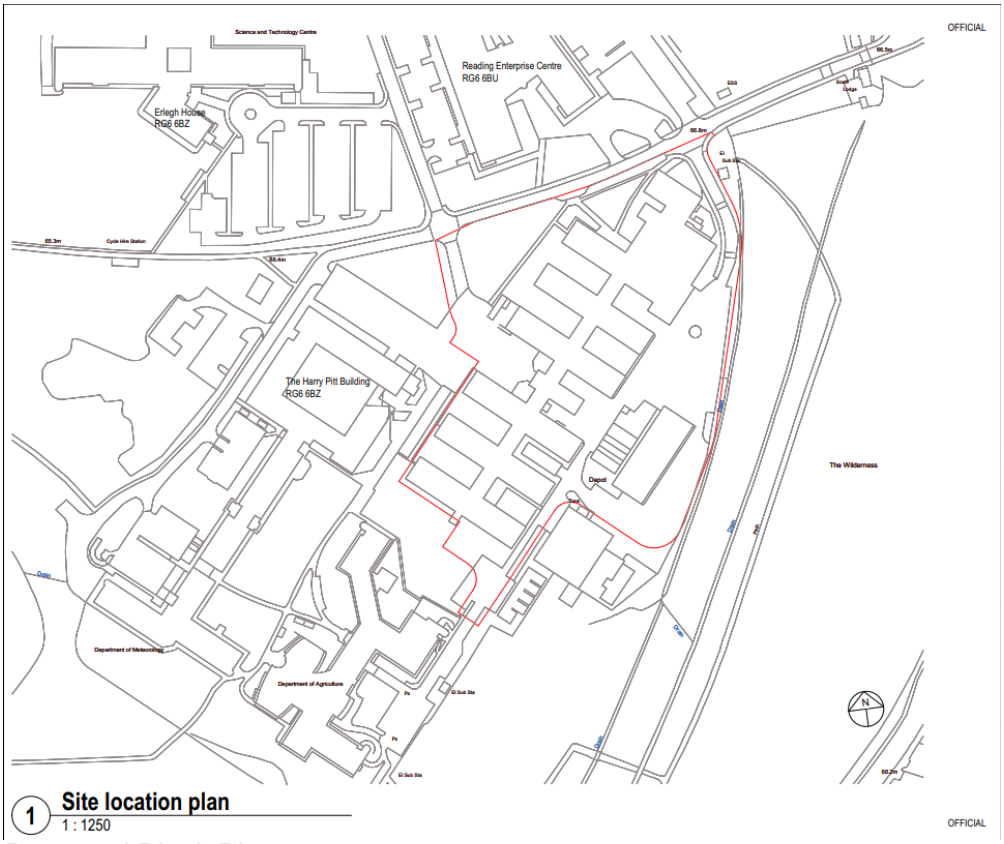
2. *The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking and that existing parking on the application site can be removed. This could result in on-street parking surrounding the application site, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.*

3. Recommendation

3.1 Officers recommend that the Planning Applications Committee endorse officer's comments as above and in the appendix.

Case Officer: Thomas Bradfield

Location Plan



Proposed Block Plan

Wider Location Plan Showing RBC Boundary (in blue)

Appendix 1 – Full Transport Consultee Response

From: (e)Transport Development Control Floor 1 North Rear Civic Offices Bridge Street Reading RG1 2LU

To: Tom Bradfield thomas.bradfield@reading.gov.uk

Date: 30th November 2023

Re: Consultation on Planning Application

Application Number: 231581 (ADJ Ref 232475)

Application Type: Full Planning Approval
Address: Earley Gate Whiteknights Campus University of Reading
Proposal: Full planning application for the erection of the headquarters building of European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) with access parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing buildings

The application site is located in Wokingham Borough just outside of Reading Borough boundary and as such given the potential impact on Highway matters the RBC Highway Authority have been consulted.

Given the scale of the application a Transport Assessment has been submitted and I comment on the aspects impacting Reading as follows:

Accessibility

The proposed location is provided with a good footway network within the University campus, and this is extended externally on the Highway Network surrounding the site. Existing footways allow for various trips to be made on foot and allow for convenient access to public transport and other amenities surrounding the site.

Cycle routes are currently provided to the extremities of the wider University Campus which run in a mainly northwest – southeast direction with an array of cycle routes also provided within the campus providing links in an east – west direction.

Bus services are located on and around the University Campus that provide numerous services into Reading and to the east. Given that the application assessment identifies that a substantial number of staff currently live within Wokingham and Bracknell this should provide an opportunity to encourage staff to utilise the bus services as an alternative mode of travel.

Trip Generation

It should firstly be stated that as part of the pre application comments issued by Reading Borough Council the following information was requested to ensure that the proposal was fully assessed.

Details and operation of the lecture theatre, seminar facilities and the Council Chamber should be clarified in terms of their usage etc to determine whether this should be included within any additional parking and whether this would contribute to an additional number of trips.

It is evident from the trip generation assessment that this only takes account of the staff trips and as such without the above assessment the Reading Borough Highway Authority are unable to determine whether the proposed assessment is in fact acceptable. The additional facilities could still have a significant impact on the Highway

Network whether attendees travel by their own vehicle or by taxi / coach etc. it is therefore essential that this is included within any assessment.

It is noted that the Transport Assessment states at 5.16 that *'the postcode data for the existing ECMWF staff was provided to WBC allowing the WBC modelling team to input the distribution into their model. The postcode data was plotted using GIS and overlaid on the WSTM zone plan that was provided by WBC'*. This data should be provided for review given that Table 2.1 states that 37% of trips are to Wokingham 8.5% Oxfordshire and 2.5% Bracknell totalling 136 trips all of which are likely to utilise the A329 Wokingham Road (West Bound) / B3350 Church Road / A329 Wokingham Road (East Bound) / B3350 Wilderness Road Signalised Junction however, the junction assessment has only indicated that 13 trips in the AM peak and 2 in the PM peak will occur at this junction.

Alongside the data requested above it would therefore need to be confirmed that no errors have occurred, or it is accepted by the applicant and Wokingham Borough Councils modelling team that drivers will avoid those congested main routes and junctions utilising lesser roads to undertake their commuting journey instead. Further to this it is noted that links off Wilderness Road have been assessed but no links off of Whiteknights Road have been included within this assessment. The applicant should therefore undertake a further assessment to identify what impact the development will have on the roads linking Whiteknights Road and Wokingham Road.

The applicant has undertaken a detailed junction assessment of the Whiteknights Road / Wilderness Road junction that has identified extensive queues along Wilderness Road in both directions however it must be acknowledged that given the proximity of this junction to the A329 Wokingham Road (West Bound) / B3350 Church Road / A329 Wokingham Road (East Bound) / B3350 Wilderness Road Signalised Junction that much of the queue from the north will in fact travel back through the signalised junction with Wokingham Road.

Given the above Reading Borough Highway Authority request that the A329 Wokingham Road (West Bound) / B3350 Church Road / A329 Wokingham Road (East Bound) / B3350 Wilderness Road Signalised Junction is fully assessed.

Any assessment should include an updated trip analysis associated with the data related to the lecture/seminar facilities and only once the trip distribution has been assessed by Reading Borough Council.

Until the above is undertaken the applicant has not fully assessed the impact of the development on the Highway Network within reading and as such the application would be unacceptable in that regard.

<u>Accident Data</u>

The applicant has undertaken an assessment of accidents within the vicinity of the site, and this has identified that there is a cluster of accidents at the A329 Wokingham Road and Holmes Road junction. It is noted that every other cluster location has been provided with an explanation regarding the accidents but his has not been provided in relation to this location.

This cluster includes 4 accidents in a 2 ½ year period 3 of which involve vehicles colliding with cyclists with a causation of the driver failing to look properly.

It is also noted that a cluster of accidents have occurred at the A329 Wokingham Road (West Bound) / B3350 Church Road / A329 Wokingham Road (East Bound) / B3350

Wilderness Road Signalised Junction which is partly located within Reading Borough. This cluster involves 5 accidents since Oct 2017.

It is claimed at Paragraph 3.86 of the Transport Assessment that *'all five collisions were a result of human carelessness, as opposed to issues with the highway network, including disobeying automatic traffic signals, failure to look before manoeuvring and incorrect use of pedestrian crossing facilities. These collisions do not indicate highway safety issues at this location'*. However, the applicant has not assessed the junction to ascertain whether there are in fact any issues with the design of the junction. It could be claimed that the human errors leading to the accidents could be as a result of capacity issues at the junctions leading to drivers undertaking manoeuvres without fully assessing their surroundings in order to travel through the junction as quickly as possible.

The proposed junction assessments identify that the vehicle movements in the area will only increase, and this is likely to result in an increase in accidents at these locations. This is noted when the accident data at the A329 Wokingham Road (West Bound) / B3350 Church Road / A329 Wokingham Road (East Bound) / B3350 Wilderness Road Signalised Junction is reviewed alongside Department for Transport Annual Average Daily Flows data. As you extend back in 5-year segments for both the accident data and the DfT AADF data it is clear that as the traffic flow increases so does the number of accidents. This clearly identifies that any increased flows within this junction will result in the likelihood of increased accidents.

Access

All vehicles accessing the relocated ECMWF facility will access the University Campus via Earley Gate from Whiteknights Road, this junction is not located within Reading Borough but is located directly adjacent. The applicant has undertaken a detailed assessment for this junction and has identified that following development it remains well within capacity and therefore it is deemed acceptable.

Car Parking

The application site currently accommodates the University's School of Arts Building and local private businesses, not associated with the University. There are 146 parking spaces associated with these existing uses. These buildings and car parking spaces will be removed, allowing the new ECMWF building to be built in their place. There are 216 car parking spaces associated with the relocated ECMWF building, all of which are allocated for ECMWF staff and visitors only.

Paragraph 4.23 of the Transport Assessment has stated that *'the tenants / local businesses previously located at the site have relocated elsewhere. Consequently, the cars parked on site associated with these uses are no longer there'*. It continues at Paragraph 4.24 to state that *'the University's School of Arts Building has relocated to the former Central Kitchen CPU building located immediately north of Pepper Lane, approximately 1.2km south west of the new ECMWF building. There was a planning application associated with that relocation. This application was accompanied by a Transport Statement, which set out how parking for the relocated Arts Building was to be accommodated'*.

However, the applicant has not undertaken a detailed assessment to justify that this parking was in fact only utilised by the uses no longer operating from the application site especially given that extensive retained buildings are located adjacent to the application site.

It is further stated at Paragraph 4.25 of the Transport Assessment that *'0n the basis, previous commercial tenants have moved off site, and parking requirements for the School of Arts Building have been addressed separately, there is no direct requirement to relocate any parking displaced as part of this proposal. However, the University will bring forward separate proposals to provide the 146 existing parking spaces elsewhere on the campus as part of its transport strategy'*. However, this would appear to be a clear admission that this parking is in fact required in some form and should it be necessary to be re-provided then it should form part of this planning application. In addition to this it is acknowledged that the applicant has not undertaken any reduction in trips associated with the existing use when assessing the trip generation for the proposed development. This is a standard methodology to accurately assess the impact of the development and therefore this is further confirmation that the existing vehicle movements associated with this parking will be retained.

Having visited the application site it was noted that car parking is continually taking place on the application site even though the applicant has confirmed that the uses associated with the buildings have been relocated. Please see the photos below confirming this.

If the applicant wishes to prove that this parking does not need to be re-provided then a car parking survey of the application site should be undertaken to identify the exact use of the site. Any parking taking place should therefore be included within any redevelopment of the application site.

Given that some areas of the Reading Highway network are currently unrestricted that could facilitate overspill parking the application should ensure that this does not occur by including any existing parking currently in use with the development proposals.

In relation to the proposed car parking provision the applicant has stated at Paragraph 4.29 that *'the level of car parking provided onsite was agreed with highway officers at both WBC and RBC during scoping. Full details on this are included within the scoping report and post application comments included within Appendix 2'*. However, it is noted that RBC comments have not been included within the aforementioned Appendix, but the comments provided on this matter to the applicant as part of the pre application discussions are detailed below:

Details and operation of the lecture theatre, seminar facilities and the Council Chamber should be clarified in terms of their usage etc to determine whether this should be

included within any additional parking and whether this would contribute to an additional number of trips.

The proposed car parking for the office us is in excess of the Reading Borough standards but is in line with existing parking demand at the current ECMWF facility. The parking for the main use is therefore deemed acceptable. However, until an assessment/clarification has been provided for the ancillary seminar / meeting facilities detailed above I am unable to confirm whether sufficient car parking is provided.

In principle the proposed development provides for parking marginally in excess of Reading Borough Council requirements for the main day to day uses on the site and as such is deemed acceptable however no parking has been proposed for the ancillary seminar / meeting facilities. The Reading Borough Highway Authority are unable to determine whether the proposal is provided with sufficient parking until full details and operation of the lecture theatre, seminar facilities and the Council Chamber are clarified by the applicant.

As explained at Paragraph 3.1.2 of the Planning Statement *'the facility will communicate the core values of the occupier and will provide an office space together with ancillary accommodation including a large lecture theatre, catering facilities, meeting facilities and ECMWF council chamber'*. Although I appreciate that following COVID meetings have changed with numerous people connecting online instead of attending in person the Transport Assessment does confirm that the lecture theatre will accommodate 220 seats; the ECMWF council chamber will seat up to 132 persons and other seminar facilities will be provided depending on the exact usage of the facilities this could result in a significant increase in parking demand.

Before it can be accepted that attendees will travel by way of public transport, taxis, coaches etc it would need to be confirmed whether the facilities will be made available to the wider public for external use and whether there are similar facilities at the existing site and if so how this has operated.

If no additional information is provided the Highway Authority would require additional car parking to be provided in line with the Councils parking standards that stipulates a requirement for 1 space per 7.5 seats that would require an additional 47 parking spaces alongside any additional requirement for the seminar facilities. Capacity of these facilities would need to be provided by the applicant.

At present the planning application has failed to justify that no parking associated with the proposed meeting facilities on the site would not result in overspill parking on the Reading Borough Council Highway network and as such the proposed application is unacceptable in that regard.

Taking the above into account the Reading Borough Highway Authority objects to the proposed development for the following reasons:

The proposed layout fails to assess the full trip generation impact by the development on the surrounding Highway Network. The Highway Authority are therefore unable to ensure sufficient spare capacity during peak periods to accommodate the proposed development in safety and without delay. As a result it would be in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.

The proposed development fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking and that existing parking on the application site can be removed. This could result in on-street parking

surrounding the application site, adversely affecting road safety and the flow of traffic, and in conflict with Policy CC07 of the Wokingham Borough Managing Development Delivery Document (Local Plan and Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy.

Darren Cook
Transport Development Control Manager