

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	<a href="#">P21/S1848/FUL</a>
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL APPLICATION
<b>REGISTERED</b>	30.6.2021
<b>PARISHES</b>	ROTHERFIELD PEPPARD and SONNING COMMON
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Leigh Rawlins Jo Robb James Norman Mike Giles
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Investfront Ltd
<b>SITE</b>	Blounts Farm Blounts Court Road Sonning Common, RG4 9PA
<b>PROPOSAL</b>	Refurbishment of Buildings 12 and 13 for storage use with ancillary offices (4 units); Replacement of Building 4; Refurbishment of Buildings 14 for storage use with new archway feature linked to Building 4; Erection of Building 1 for office use; Change of use of Units 2-3 (Dutch Barn) to provide storage and distribution of gas bottles and storage and construction of wooden sheds; Change of use of land opposite Units 2-3 to display of wooden sheds; Provision of parking for proposed new uses - Part Retrospective. (As amplified by additional information received 19 July 2022 and 15 August 2022 and as amplified by plan received 1 December 2022 and 16 January 2023)
<b>OFFICER</b>	Nicola Smith

**1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 This application is referred to the Planning Committee as both Sonning Common and Rotherfield Peppard Parish Councils have objected to the proposals. The Parish boundary runs through the centre of the site and development is proposed in both parishes. The site location plan is included at **Appendix 1**. The application was withdrawn from a previous Committee agenda so a site visit by Councillors could be undertaken.
- 1.2 The application site is located to the east of Sonning Common, and to the north of Blounts Court Road. Immediately to the west of the site is the Johnson Matthey research complex. To the north, east and south is open countryside. The site is located within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Blount's Court Farmhouse, located outside the site, and the Dutch Barn within the site (building 2) are Grade II listed, a number of mature trees, largely covered by Tree Preservation Orders are located adjoining or close to the boundary of the site and a bridleway runs through the centre of the site from Blounts Court Road, accessing the open countryside to the north. The application site excludes Blounts Court Farmhouse and Appletree Cottage,

both occupied residential properties, as well as some further buildings to the north of the site, in storage or light industrial uses. The site plan is included at **Appendix 2**, and the layout is extracted below, however, all plans associated with this application can be found on the Council's website at:

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P21/S1848/FUL>

- 1.3 The application site consists of various buildings of different ages and styles, the site historically formed part of the Blounts Farm complex but has been used for a variety of business uses for a number of years, including offices, light industrial and storage uses both indoor and outdoor. A number of the uses have been established on the site for some time. In 2019 many of the uses established without planning permission were regularised through the granting of certificates of existing lawful use including:

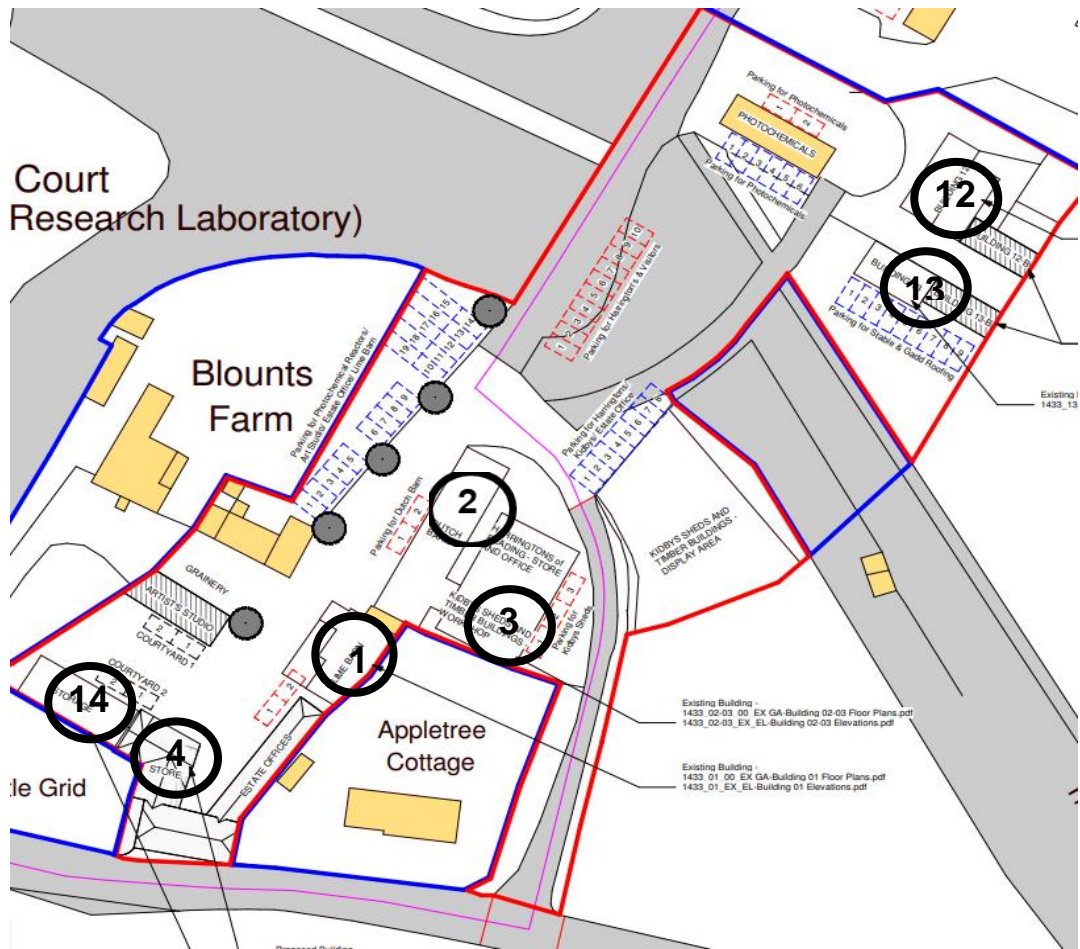
- Use of land for storage of motor vehicles
- Use of building for workshop and storage (use class B8 – storage & distribution)
- Use of building for offices (use class Eg – office or light industrial)
- Use of building for offices (use class Eg), storage and communal toilets
- Use of building for carpenters workshop and manufacturing laboratory equipment (use class B2 - general industrial)

Please see the planning history section for further details of these certificates and links to the applications.

- 1.4 The application in this case seeks to regularise some physical work to the buildings and land that has been done without the benefit of planning permission, as well as some proposed works and change of use, and includes a number of elements. These can be summarised as:

- Conversion of Building 1 for office use (part retrospective)
- Change of use of Units 2-3 (Dutch Barn) to provide storage and distribution of gas bottles and storage and construction of wooden sheds (class B8);
- Change of use of land opposite Units 2-3 to display of wooden sheds (class Ea retail) (retrospective)
- Proposed replacement of existing storage building 4
- Refurbishment of Buildings 12 and 13 for storage use with ancillary offices (retrospective)
- Refurbishment of Building 14 for storage use with new archway feature link to building 4 (part retrospective)
- Provision of parking for proposed new uses (part retrospective)

The relevant building numbers are indicated on the site plan extract below:



2.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

2.1 Consultee	Original submission	Revised plans
Rotherfield Peppard Parish Council	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>based on the intensification use on this site, scale of the proposed development and the potential harmful impact on the AONB</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>object to this application and the urbanisation it creates</li> <li>no objections to the movement of the bridleway subject to approval by Oxfordshire County Council and other appropriate relevant bodies</li> </ul>
Sonning Common Parish Council	<p><b>Objection</b> for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The scale of the proposed development.</li> </ul>	No further comments received

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intensification of the use of the site.</li> <li>• The impact on the public highway and the health and safety of users of the public bridleway which runs through the middle of the site.</li> <li>• The impact on the AONB.</li> </ul>	
Conservation Officer	<b>Holding objection;</b> insufficient information has been provided.	<b>No objection</b> subject to conditions to secure materials and construction details. - the listed barn has been put to a viable use consistent with its conservation, - the other works affecting non-listed buildings have adequately preserved the setting of the listed buildings.
Forestry Officer	<b>Holding objection,</b> insufficient information has been provided	<b>No objection</b> subject to conditions to secure tree protection
Landscape Architect	<b>Holding objection,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application fails to address the landscape and visual impact of the proposed development or the requirement to conserve and enhance the AONB</li> <li>• it does not include a landscape appraisal or any proposed landscape mitigation.</li> </ul>	<b>No objection</b> subject to conditions to secure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planting method, plant numbers and details of long-term management and maintenance</li> <li>• Replacement of conifer hedge, if this does not recover after cutting back to accommodate sightlines</li> <li>• Lighting to be restricted</li> </ul>
Oxfordshire County Council Transport	<b>Holding objection,</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant is required to demonstrate adequate visibility splays in line with 85th percentile recorded speeds for Blounts Court Road.</li> </ul>	<b>No objection</b> subject to conditions to secure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cycle parking</li> <li>• Visibility splays</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant is required to provide clarification on the existing and proposed level of car parking</li> <li>• The applicant is required to submit a plan to demonstrate the location of the propose cycle parking</li> </ul>	
Oxfordshire County Council Archaeology	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposals would not appear to have an invasive impact upon any known archaeological sites or features.</li> </ul>	<b>No further comments</b>
Oxfordshire County Council Rights of Way	<p><b>Holding objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no consideration in the application about how users of Rotherfield Peppard bridleway 331/14 and access road through the site, specifically walkers, cyclists and horseriders, will be safely accommodated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The team have met with the applicant and devised a proposed diversion to the satisfaction of the Rights of Way team and the landowner.</li> </ul>
Thames Water	<p><b>No objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With regard to surface water drainage, Thames Water would advise that if the developer follows the sequential approach to the disposal of surface water we would have no objection.</li> <li>• Thames Water would recommend that petrol / oil interceptors be fitted in all car parking/washing/repair facilities.</li> </ul>	<b>No further comments</b>
CPRE	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development would be contrary to Policy DP3 of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan</li> </ul>	<b>No further comments</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The development would be extremely damaging to the AONB</li> </ul>	
Chilterns Conservation Board	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No LVIA submitted</li> <li>The supporting documents do not address the AONB</li> <li>A cumulative assessment is required</li> </ul>	<p><b>Objection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>still lacks any real cumulative assessment</li> <li>The LVIA's conclusions deal with visual matters and not use which has a considerable impact</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Neighbour comments

**Thirteen** comments have been received from members of the public raising the following relevant issues and concerns:

- Its not appropriate to create an industrial estate in the middle of an AONB
- It has become dangerous to ride along the bridleway, which is one of the main routes to access off-road riding
- There has been an increase in farm vehicles making the access to the bridle way and the road more dangerous for horse riders.
- The farm is already difficult to ride through as it is very noisy and unsettling for the horses.
- Rerouting the bridleway to bypass the industrial area would be very sensible and much safer for everyone
- There is no consideration of lighting or noise impacts, nor environmental assessment of the proposed industrial uses
- Given the proposed development for the retirement village close to this site this application should be refused as it will further increase traffic and noise pollution.
- This development of barns has already had a major impact on road users as the number of very large vehicles on this small country road has increased significantly
- Change of use offers numerous opportunities for future development
- The public highway along the entrance to the site is dangerously narrow, and has no footpath
- This proposed development will impact on the users of the public access and their enjoyment of the countryside
- Large new buildings have been erected, new tracks laid, new entrances built and a massive intensification of commercial activities

## 3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

### 3.1 [SE19/95](#) -

Without planning permission the erection of a building and changes of use of buildings.

### [P21/S0055/LDE](#) - Refused (25/05/2021)

Use of buildings for storage use (B8).

[P19/S3179/LDE](#) - Approved (23/11/2020)  
Use of building for offices (B1a)

[P19/S3187/LDE](#) - Approved (23/11/2020)  
Use of building for workshop and storage use

[P19/S3175/LDE](#) - Approved (29/07/2020)  
Use of building for carpenters workshop and manufacturing laboratory equipment

[P19/S3176/LDE](#) - Approved (29/07/2020)  
Use of building for offices, storage and communal toilets

[SE18/255](#) - (19/06/2018)  
Alleged demolition of existing barns and erection of new buildings without planning permission.

[SE14/104](#) - (24/12/2014)  
Without planning permission the change of use from storage of agricultural machines, tree surgery equipment and horticultural machinery. To the supply of bottled Gas, Solid Fuel, Gas fires and patio heaters.

[P13/S0174/LB](#) - Approved (10/04/2013)  
Repairs/replacement of roof timbers. Reconstruction of two dormers as existing. Replacement of 7 third floor windows and frames (as clarified by additional information accompanying email received from agent dated 20 March 2013).

[P08/E0199](#) - Approved (10/04/2008)  
Change of use from agricultural to storage of agricultural machines, tree surgery equipment and horticultural machinery. Enclosure of sides of building with roller shutters.

[P97/S0249/AG](#) - Approval Not Required (09/05/1997)  
Replacement of lean-to on North side of Dutch barn with 1.5m extra eave height and 1.7m extra width.

[P96/S0517/AG](#) - Approval Not Required (22/10/1996)  
Lean-to extension to existing Dutch barn.

[P94/S0128](#) - Approved (12/10/1994)  
Change of use from agriculture to storage of motor vehicles awaiting sale.

4.0 **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 This proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 or 2 development and therefore an Environmental Impact Assessment is not required.

5.0 **POLICY & GUIDANCE**

5.1 **Development Plan Policies**



South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2035 (SOLP) Policies:

STRAT1 - The Overall Strategy

EMP1 - The amount and distribution of new employment land

EMP10 - Development in Rural Areas

EMP2 - Range, Size and Mix of Employment premises

INF1 - Infrastructure Provision

TRANS4 - Transport Assessments, Transport Statements and Travel Plans

TRANS5 - Consideration of Development Proposals

ENV1 - Landscape and Countryside

ENV12 - Pollution - Impact of Development on Human Health, the Natural Environment and/or Local Amenity (Potential Sources of Pollution)

ENV3 - Biodiversity

ENV6 - Historic Environment

ENV7 - Listed Buildings

EP1 - Air Quality

EP3 - Waste collection and Recycling

DES1 - Delivering High Quality Development

DES6 – Residential Amenity

DES10 - Carbon Reduction

CF5 – Safeguarding Community Facilities

## **5.2 Neighbourhood Plan**

The site lies partially within the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan area. The revision to the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan was made (adopted) in March 2023. The following policies in the revised Neighbourhood Plan are relevant:

RE1a – Existing and new employment sites

RTP2 – Footpaths and cycleways

RENV2 – AONB

The remainder of the site is located in Rotherfield Peppard Parish which does not have a Neighbourhood Plan.

## **5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents**

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Joint Design Guide 2022

Chilterns AONB Management Plan

## **5.4 National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance**

## **5.5 Other Relevant Legislation**

Human Rights Act 1998

The provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998 have been taken into account in the processing of the application and the preparation of this report.

Equality Act 2010

In determining this planning application the Council has regard to its equalities obligations including its obligations under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

## **6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **6.1 The relevant planning considerations are the following:**



- **Principle of development**
- **Landscape and AONB impact**
- **Impact on heritage assets**
- **Access and parking**
- **Impact on Public Rights of Way**
- **Other planning matters**

**Principle of development**

- 6.2 The application site is in employment uses (as confirmed by the approvals of Lawful Development Certificates detailed above) and is located in a rural area, outside of the village of Sonning Common. Policy STRAT1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan sets the overall strategy for development, both housing and employment, focusing major new development in Science Vale and identifying the need to support and enhance the role of larger villages [including Sonning Common] as service centres. The employment strategy for the district is set out in policy EMP1.
- 6.3 Policy EMP10 addresses employment in rural areas, part 1 of that policy states that proposals for sustainable economic growth in rural areas is supported by this policy including *“the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas through conversion of existing buildings”* this part of the policy would apply to this application as the site is outside the built up area of Sonning Common. Furthermore part 3 of Policy ENV1 specifies that *“development which supports economic growth in rural areas will be supported provided it conserves and enhances the landscape, countryside and rural areas.”* Specific to Sonning Common, the Neighbourhood Plan includes policy RE1a which states *“Proposals to retain and consolidate existing employment sites and to establish new employment sites will be supported where they conform with other policies in the development plan.”*
- 6.4 Policies in the Development Plan therefore support the principle of employment development such as this application. However, the development must also comply with the other relevant policies in the Local Plan, and these are discussed below.

**Landscape and AONB impact**

- 6.5 The site is located in the open countryside and wholly within the Chilterns AONB. Policy ENV1 therefore applies to this application, Part 1 of this policy requires the highest level of protection to be given to the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB, part 2 of ENV1 seeks to protect the countryside and rural areas from harmful development.
- 6.6 The site lies within Landscape Character Area 10, Chilterns Plateau with Valleys and Landscape Type 16 Semi-enclosed dip slope, as defined by the South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment for the Local Plan, dated November 2017. This character area is a loose mosaic of farmland and woodland with a strong structure of woods, hedgerows or trees, containing comparatively open fields, resulting in moderate to low visibility. It is generally rural and unspoilt with built development around Sonning Common.

- 6.7 During the application process, and in response to comments received, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was submitted in support of the application. This identified the effects of the development on the surrounding landscape and particularly the AONB. The LVIA draws the following conclusions:
- *“The visual effects are minimal due in most part to dense intervening mature vegetation in the local landscape between the viewer and site, the topography in the area and the similar setting of the proposed scheme.”*
  - *The visual impact of the development on the open countryside has been assessed, at worst case scenario, as moderate (i.e. not a material change)*
  - *With suitable mitigation measures, the development will have a minor visual impact and a minor/moderate landscape effect (i.e. not a material change)*
- 6.8 The Council’s Landscape Officer is satisfied with the conclusions of the LVIA and has no objection to the application on the basis of its impact on the AONB. A condition is required to restrict lighting in accordance with Zone E1 requirements as set out in the Institute of Lighting Professionals guidance to comply with Policy DP8 of the Chilterns AONB Management Plan.
- 6.9 Development of the site has occurred in an ad hoc manner and mitigation has been lacking. The proposed development will add to the impacts of the existing development. To offset the adverse impact of this, a comprehensive mitigation strategy for the site is required in order to conserve and enhance the AONB in accordance with policy ENV1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.
- 6.10 A landscape mitigation plan has been submitted which indicates planting on all the site boundaries, together with management and retention of the existing trees and hedges on the boundaries. This will be secured by condition, and cover details of the planting and its long-term management.
- 6.11 To provide the necessary visibility splays at the junction (please see paragraph 6.17 below for further details) it is necessary to cut back the conifer hedge at the front of the site around Appletree Cottage which is in the same ownership but excluded from the application site. A condition is required to ensure the hedge is replaced in the event that it does not recover from the required works.
- 6.12 Your officers consider that, subject to suitable mitigation being secured by conditions, the development conserves the character and natural beauty of the AONB and is therefore in accordance with policy ENV1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and policy RENV2 of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan.

**Impact on Heritage Assets**

- 6.13 The application site comprises the farmyard that was historically associated with Blounts Farm. The Farmhouse (Grade II Listed) is in the same ownership as the application site but is excluded from the site and is now considered to be a different planning unit. Within the site, the building identified as building 2 on the site plan is also Grade II listed, described in the records as: “*Barn approx. 100m east of Blounts Court, grade II listed building, Barn. Early C18. Brick base; large timber framing; weather boarding; plain tile roof; 6-bay barn with aisle to east; 2 gabled midstreys with plank doors. Interior: Jowled wall posts, double queen-post roof*”. A legal opinion on the listed status of the other various buildings on the site was sought by the conservation team in 2019. The advice received was that the buildings not explicitly identified as being listed would not fall within the definition of a listed building under Part 1(5) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Nevertheless, the site is within the setting of the listed buildings and there is a duty to preserve the setting of those buildings.
- 6.14 A Heritage Statement was provided during the application process which provides an account of the history and development of the site and also describes the heritage impacts of the works proposed. In summary the report concludes the following:
- Works to modern buildings 12 & 13 : no heritage impact
  - Replacement of building 4 and link to building 14: no adverse impact
  - Replacement of building 14 (retrospective): no adverse impact
  - Replacement of building 1 (retrospective): no adverse impact
  - Change of use of buildings 2-3: no adverse impact/beneficial
- 6.15 Overall, the heritage statement indicates that the works have put the listed barn to a viable use consistent with its conservation, and that the other works affecting non-listed buildings on the site have adequately preserved the setting of the listed buildings by maintaining a traditional farm character. The heritage statement indicates that it would be reasonable to control the external appearance of new building 4 with its link by means of planning conditions. It also suggests that details of the new connection between the link and the small barn which is a non-designated heritage asset could be secured by condition. It is agreed that this would be reasonable and necessary to the scheme in the interests of preserving the setting of listed buildings. The Council’s Conservation Officer agrees with the findings of the Heritage Statement and requests that the conditions specified are added to any permission.

**Access and parking**

- 6.16 The existing vehicle access to the site is from Blounts Court Road which is a single two-way carriageway road connecting Sonning Common to the north with the village of Binfield Heath to the south. In the vicinity of the site the speed limit is 30mph. The speed limit changes from 30mph to the national speed limit approximately 50m to the south east of the site access. There is no pedestrian footway on Blounts Court Road in the vicinity of the site, the application proposes no alterations to the existing site access, which is also shared with a bridleway (ROPBR14).

- 6.17 During the application process, and in response to comments received, a plan was submitted which shows visibility splays of 2.4m x 54m to the west and 2.4m x 51m to the east. The splays fall outside the highway boundary, however, this is land within the applicant's control (Appletree Cottage). The existing hedge to the west and the fence to the east currently block the visibility splay. For this reason, it will be necessary to place a condition that the hedge to the west is cut back and that the fence to the east is moved so that the visibility splay is clear within three months of the planning permission being granted.
- 6.18 The applicant has not submitted any information in respect of the expected trip generation associated with the site. The increase in the proposed floor area is not expected to generate significant numbers of trips and as such the impact on the local highway network would not be severe.
- 6.19 The uses involved in this application are a mixture of B8 and E(g) class uses, for these uses the vehicle parking requirements in the County Council's Parking Standards document are as follows:

<b>Use Class</b>	<b>Parking standard</b>	<b>Application floor space</b>	<b>No. of spaces required</b>
E(g) Commercial, Business and Services	1 space per 45 sqm	329.5 sqm	8
B8 Storage	1 space per 300 sqm	435.7 sqm	2

The application plans indicate that there are a total of 19 car parking spaces already existing on the site and a further 42 are now available, as a result of the remodelling of the parking on the site, albeit these are not marked out on the site. There is more than sufficient parking available on the site.

- 6.20 A condition is required to secure cycle parking in accordance with the County Council's parking standards to ensure the application complies with the requirements of policy TRANS5 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan in encouraging sustainable modes of transport.

**Impact on public Rights of Way**

- 6.21 As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, a bridleway (ROPBR14) runs through the site, the map overleaf, extracted from the OCC Countryside Access map, shows the route from Blounts Court Road to the open countryside to the north:



- 6.22 This bridleway is an important access point for the wider rights of way network in the area and for access to the countryside from Sonning Common, particularly for horse riders. Many of the members of the public commenting on this application have cited the impact on the public right of way as being a reason to object to the application, with some giving examples of when non-motorised users of the bridleway, including horses, have come into conflict with vehicles accessing the site. The original farm use is likely to have had a more limited range of access by farming-related vehicles and on-farm service vehicles. Over time this has changed to a commercial operation of non-farming activities with different patterns and concentrations of use increasing the range of vehicles to include staff cars and delivery vehicles as well as the possibility of HGVs.
- 6.23 Usually, shared use of a public right of way is discouraged where possible, especially when this includes HGV use as the impact on non-motorised users, especially horses and their riders can be significant. During the course of the planning application a plan showing a proposal to divert the public right of way was submitted, this is shown as a green line on the plan below:



- 6.24 The route ensures path users can reach the northern part of the bridleway, and access the countryside, without crossing the road twice, equestrians heading south east can avoid the bend and retains the existing point of the bridleway for path users coming from the village. The width of the bridleway would be 3m across the field. A gap would be opened in the hedge just north east of the existing field access, this new gap could enable the landowner to install a gate at the north eastern end of the closed off bridleway to provide security. The width along the track at the southern end would be 4m and a bridlegate would be installed at the access point from Blounts Court Road. Details of gates and fences at that location will be agreed through a planning condition once these are agreed with OCC Rights of Way team.
- 6.25 The Rights of Way team at the County Council have agreed that this is an acceptable alternative route for the bridleway, avoiding the farm yard area, subject to the appropriate consent regime, and mitigates the impact of the development in this location on the right of way. This is a benefit associated with the application and policy CF1 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and policy RTP2 of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan both support proposals that protect or improve rights of way.

#### **Other material Planning considerations**

6.26 Impact on trees

There are trees adjacent to the West boundary of the site that are protected by a tree preservation order (TPO). During the application process, and in response to comments from the Forestry Officer, a tree survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment was submitted in support of the application, which evaluates the direct and indirect effects of the works. The conclusions of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment are accepted by the Forestry Officer and

a condition is recommended to ensure any proposed works do not impact the trees.

6.27 Carbon reduction

No new buildings over 1,000 sqm are proposed, therefore policy DES10 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan does not apply.

6.28 Neighbour amenity

The proposals are located away from the built-up area of Sonning Common, however, on the boundaries of the site are located Blounts Farm and Appletree Cottage, both in residential use and in the same ownership as the application site. It is important to note that the majority of the uses are established on the site and have been operating for some time, so the occupants of the properties would already experience some impact on amenity from the existing uses of the site. The uses not established, include offices and storage which would not have an adverse impact on the amenity of the residential properties. The development, both proposed and retrospective, would therefore be in accordance with policy DES6 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

6.29 Unauthorised development

This application seeks to retrospectively approve some works and changes of use that have already been carried out on site. Some of the development is now complete and some has been paused part way through. The planning system allows for retrospective planning applications to be made and the NPPF advises that formal enforcement action should not be taken simply to regularise unauthorised development. In this case an application has been submitted to regularise the situation and this has been assessed on its own merits in accordance with the policy framework.

6.30 Biodiversity

The site is a former farm complex which has been in continuous commercial or agricultural use. The development would not result in a net loss of biodiversity, however, a condition can be added to ensure that a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved in accordance with policy ENV3 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan.

7.0 **CONCLUSION**

7.1 Development of this type and scale in this rural location is supported by the NPPF, policy EMP10 of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan and policy RE1a of the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Plan as such the principle of development accords with the Development Plan.

7.2 The impact on the Chilterns AONB is found to be acceptable and/or can be suitably mitigated. The use of the Public Right of Way though the site, which has been an increasing problem due to the established uses, is retained, diverted and improved for non-motorised users as part of this proposal.

7.3 All technical matters relating to highways, impact on trees and impact on listed buildings have been satisfactorily addressed and the development accords with the relevant policies in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan in those respects.



7.4 Whilst a significant amount of the work applied for in this case is partly or fully retrospective, the application has to be assessed on its planning merits and has not been found to be harmful in any respects.

8.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

**That permission is granted subject to the following conditions:**

**1 : Commencement 3 years - Full Planning Permission**

**2 : Approved plans \***

**3 : Cycle parking**

**4 : Vision splay details \***

**5 : Joinery Details**

**6 : Schedule of Materials**

**7 : Landscaping Scheme**

**9 : Lighting**

**10 : Tree Protection**

**11 : Public right of way details**

**11 : Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy**

**12 : Specified use within Use Class E(a)**

**Thames Water INFORMATIVE**