

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252547
Site Address:	Fairview, Forest Road, Binfield, Wokingham, RG40 5SA
Expiry Date:	27 March 2026
Site Visit Date:	14 January 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. detached barn plus 1no. 4 stable block including tack room plus the demolition of the existing stables.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP is not applicable to this application site.
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes

	DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH7 – Equestrian development HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC5 – Environmental protection
Other	National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List A Design Guide for Hurst

Application Number	Description	Decision	Date
F/1996/64531	Proposed construction of detached garage.	Refused and allowed at appeal	15/11/1996
F/1997/66379	Proposed two storey side extension to dwelling.	Refused	31/10/1997
F/1998/67382	Proposed two storey side extension to dwelling and part infill extension.	Approved	02/07/1998
CLP/2007/0562	Application for certificate of lawfulness for proposed erection of building to create indoor swimming pool, gymnasium, and games room.	Approved	20/04/2007
F/2009/1230	Proposed erection of single storey rear extension and detached double garage. (Removal of existing conservatory and single garage).	Refused	26/10/2009
APP/X0360/D/09/2113143	Appeal against refusal F/2009/1230	Appeal allowed	26/10/2009
F/2013/0759	Erection of extension to stable (retrospective application).	Approved	21/06/2013
CLE/2013/0614	Application for a certificate of lawful existing use of buildings as 2no. dwellings plus the use of land for the parking and maintenance of an HGV.	Approved	18/09/2013

F/2014/0676	Proposed raising of existing roof to create first floor accommodation, plus two storey front extension, following demolition and removal of existing front entrance porch to Old Orchard.	Approved	13/08/2014
152778	Application for a certificate of lawful existing use for the stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes and associated garden curtilage.	Approved	25/01/2016
160754	Full application for the proposed erection of a replacement dwelling, following removal of existing mobile home and ancillary outbuildings.	Refused	12/08/2016
163202	Full application for the proposed erection of a replacement dwelling, following removal of existing mobile home and ancillary outbuildings.	Approved	10/01/2017
170722	Conditions application for the submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 163202 dated 19/01/2017: 3 Samples and details of materials, 4. Sustainable drainage scheme, 5. Protection of trees, 8. Hedge planting.	Approved	15/02/2018
173344	Householder application for the proposed raising of existing roof to create	Approved	15/02/2018

	first floor to include two dormer extensions, erection single storey front extension to form porch for Fairview bungalow.		
191342	Full application for an access road for HGV traffic.	Approved	23/09/2019
202528	Householder application for the erection of a two-storey rear extension after the demolition of current single storey extension to Fairview Farmhouse.	Approved	07/12/2020
211147	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey side extension, including the insertion of 1no. roof light to Paddock View.	Approved	11/06/2021
212737	Householder application for the proposed erection of a garage (retrospective).	Refused – S74 Appeal dismissed (3285010)	06/10/2021
212800	Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached outbuilding (retrospective)(for Old Orchard).	Approved	27/08/2021
212724	Full application for the proposed change of land used from agricultural to residential including the erection of a gazebo and climbing frame, plus the erection of a detached garage. (Retrospective)(in connection with Paddock View)	Approved	20/10/2021

213145	Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey rear extension, erection of a single storey side extension to form porch, plus changes to fenestration (to Fairview Farmhouse)	Approved	15/11/2021
213169	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of garage extension as a residential annex and agricultural land as residential amenity area.	Refused	16/11/2021
213231	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the parking of HGV's and LGV's within the identified land as shown on the submitted plans.	Refused	22/11/2021
213503	Full application for the proposed erection of an office and staff welfare building (retrospective).	Refused – S74 appeal dismissed (3289899)	22/12/2021
213863	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the substantial completion of a building for more than 4 years, the use of the land as residential amenity space for more than 10 years.	Approved	18/01/2022
213865	Full application for the proposed change of use to residential annex (retrospective).	Refused	20/01/2022
213949	Full application for the change of use of land for parking of	Refused – S74 appeal dismissed	27/01/2022

	commercial vehicles and change of use of buildings for commercial storage purposes (RETROSPECTIVE).	(3292286)	
222489	Householder application for the erection of a 8.0m x 5.0m swimming pool with paved edge.	Decline to determine	20/10/2022
223213	Full application for the change of use of land to residential garden and the erection of 8.0m x 5.0m swimming pool	Approved	25/11/2022
240718	Householder application for proposed erection of a garden store and kennel, children's climbing frame(retrospective) including a swimming pool plant room.	Approved	13/05/2024

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – Further information required

WBC CIL – No comments received

WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to condition

WBC Ecology – Update to BNG Baseline required and conditions recommended

External

N/A

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council raise no objection to the application.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	2 comments in support of the application have been received (excluding duplicates) that state the following (copied verbatim): <i>"It will improve the site and be extremely beneficial to the young horses there. cant bee seen from the highway and</i>

	<i>wont have an impact on the countryside. will also benefit nesting birds / bats”</i> and <i>“NO objection to application as do not affect surrounding area or people”</i> Officer comment: <i>The above are noted</i>
--	--

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site forms part of a wider complex known as Fairview Farm that originally included 1 dwellinghouse (Fairview Farmhouse). Currently the complex includes 4 no. 2 storey houses and numerous agricultural buildings and there are authorised agricultural/ equestrian uses.

The area where development is proposed is in the north-east corner of the site, currently accessed via a HGV access point on the southeast extent of the site. This contains existing stables, some agricultural storage and a currently disused menage.

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.

Adopted Local Plan

i) Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery Plan

The site is located outside of settlement limits, within the designated countryside as established by CP9 of the Core Strategy. CP11 is the relevant policy within the Core Strategy for assessing developments outside of settlement limits and within the designated countryside. This policy outlines that development will normally only be acceptable where it complies with specified exceptions:

1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and

The proposal would provide accommodation for the continued keeping of horses and planned increase of horse ownership on site. The proposed barn would provide sufficient storage for items such as feed, bedding, hay and maintenance machinery which the applicant has demonstrated is reasonably necessary to manage the keeping of horses.

2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and

The proposed buildings (stable and barn) would in part replace existing build form and be located directly in the context of built form which formed the 'original buildings' at Fairview Farm. Whilst the proposed barn is located on the former menage, it remains circa 5 metres away from the original buildings which is not considered to be excessive encroachment.

3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

Part 3 of CP11 would not apply to the erection of stables and a barn given provisions are not made within the policy for the creation of new buildings that are not on the same footprint. It is understood that formerly there were stables in reasonable proximity to those proposed, this building no longer exists and thus cannot be used in the same baseline assessment.

4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;

Not applicable to the proposal.

5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:

- i) Bring about environmental improvements; or***
- ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.***

Not applicable to the proposal.

6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;

Not applicable to the proposal.

7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9

Not applicable to the proposal.

It is appreciated that the proposal broadly aligns with the objectives of CP11 given the proposal's location in amongst existing built form, as well as contributing to enjoyment in the countryside, preventing excessive encroachment away from the original (in this instance agricultural) buildings. However, it is noted that the proposed barn and stables subject to this application would fail to comply with CP11(3).

As drafted, proposals must comply with CP11(1),(2) and (3) to be compliant with the policy and so it cannot be relied upon to provide policy support for the scheme as a whole.

As such, attention has to turn to whether the proposal would comply or conflict with the overarching objectives of CP11, namely preventing coalescence of settlements and maintaining the quality of the environment. The application site is located sufficiently away from the edge of settlement and considering the limited scale of development, would be unlikely to cause any perceived visual or spatial coalescence between St Nicholas Hurst and Wokingham. In terms of maintaining the quality of the environment, this is a multi-faceted that incorporates a number of material considerations and so a judgement on this matter will be made at the end of this report.

It is worth highlighting that the applicant has also provided the following justification for their proposal:

- *There are currently 5 horses on site and another 3 foals which are to be accommodated in the near future.*
- *The existing lease for the applicant's off-site stables is coming to an end with the land being privately sold, preventing continued use for the welfare of their horses.*
- *In respect of feed, it will be bought in by the pallet load as it is more cost effective. The bags are consumed at 2 bags a week per horse.*
- *When the fields are wet - and they have a propensity to be so in this location - the horses need to be brought in as they can be prone to mud fever and other related issues when subjected to periods of time on wet muddy ground.*
- *The main use of the barn will be for bedding and hay. Bedding accounts for 40 bags every 6 weeks which is wood shavings in sealed bags. They are 1.0m high by 0.5m by 0.5m.*
- *The stables are mucked out on a daily basis with the muck being stored on a heap which is then removed via tractor and trailer. Each horse can use between 1 and 2 bags of shavings per week depending on the season and the need for stabling as opposed to being kept in the open paddocks.*
- *Hay in the barn is stored all year-round and is grown and cut once a year. It is purchased when it is cut in the summer. In all between 150 and 200 bails are purchased to last a full year. Although they vary, the standard bails are 1,200cms x 700cm x 500cms which allow for ease of handling whilst being cost effective.*
- *When aggregated and allowing for appropriate stacking techniques, the hay takes up around 75 cu. m and at 2.5m in height, a floor area of circa 185 sq m for 175 bales. This accounts for 2 of the bays shown on drawing MLP/06 with the remaining open bay available for the rolling supply of bagged shavings.*
- *In respect of machinery this includes 2 small tractors; a field roller; 1 chain harrows; 1 paddock sweeper; 1 topper; 1 hedge cutter, a 3.5tonne horse trailer; a horse*

box (3.5 tonnes). Aside from the horse box and trailer, all are used to maintain the fields and paddocks.

- *The horses are solely restricted to the occupants of Fairview as a private use only.*

It is appreciated that there are numerous buildings on site that could be used for some storage, however, further to site visits these are occupied by other machinery which contributes to the maintenance of the land overall (outside of equestrian activities) and further would not be of sufficient scale to cater for the m2 requirement for hay, bedding and feed. More pertinent is the chemicals stored in other buildings to support the wider holding, such as ad-blue, pesticides and fuel for machinery.

Animal Feed Regulations prepared by DEFRA, and farm inspection standards (RPA / APHA) outline that animal feed must be protected from contamination and that chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, disinfectants, fuels, vet meds, fertilisers, oils) must not be stored with feed. With this guidance in mind, it would not be possible to use the other existing units at Fairview Farm to store food and bedding for the applicant's horses, as it could pose immediate danger to their health and wellbeing.

It is noted that the supply of hay, bedding and feed will vary over the year, but given the majority is purchased during growing season (which is a relatively limited window linked to grass/ field cutting) and cutting quantities require imminent dry storage to prevent mould/ rot and disease, the coverage identified by the applicant is appropriate and proportionate. It could be argued that the hay bales could be stacked higher than 2.5 metres (circa 5 bales on their side), however, this would require removal/ stacking by a larger tractor or telehandler which would arguably take up more space and is currently not within the applicant's control and would require an increase in height of the proposed barn which measures at 3 metres to the eaves (designed to limit visual impact).

Turning to the list of machinery provided, all of those listed by the applicant are standard features on any smallholding/ paddock space and reflect the anticipated as well as existing scale of activity pursuant to the owner's private use of the paddocks/ land. This accounts for the circa 36 sqm machinery storage area. Accounting a standard dimension of 5x2 metres for each small/lawn tractor (20m2), 2x3 metres for a field roller (6m2), 1.8x1.8 metre paddock sweeper (3.2m2), 1.25x1.25 metre topper (1.5m2), 2.35x2 metre chain harrows (4.7m2), 3x2 metres 3.5 tonne horse trailer (6m2) and 6x3 metre horse box (18m2), the dimensions put forward are proportionate to the intended use and in fact are marginally below average dimensions.

With the above in mind, considering the horses need for enhanced accommodation above the existing dilapidated stables, dry and mould free bedding, hay and feed for disease prevention and private use, the principle of development is justified, subject to it being concluded that the proposal would not conflict with the overarching aim of policy CP11 which is to maintain the quality of the environment.

ii) Neighbourhood Plan

There is no neighbourhood plan in force that covers the application site.

iii) Joint Minerals and Waste Plan

The Joint Minerals and Waste is not applicable to this application as the site is not within a Minerals Safeguarding Area or Area of Search.

Emerging Local Policy

The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans, is at Regulation 22 stage as it has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. As per paragraph 49 of the NPPF:

Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*

As a whole, the LPU is still given limited weight, despite its advance stage of preparation. This is owing to unresolved objections to a great number of the policies contained within it. However, those policies highlighted in **yellow** in the policy table earlier in this report are those that have received less objection and therefore are individually considered by Officers to hold moderate weight in the determination of this application. All the others hold limited weight. The policies that hold moderate weight will feed into/ be considered in their relevant sections in this report.

In relation to the principle of development, policy DH7, which is considered to hold moderate weight, is relevant as it states the following criteria need to be met for equestrian development to be supported in principle. The Officer response to each of the criteria is in **bold**:

1. Equestrian development proposals will be supported in principle, as a means of boosting the rural economy, provided it has been demonstrated all the following criteria have been met:

- a) The scale and intensity of the proposed development, including any subdivision of field(s) and earthworks, is compatible with the site's location and satisfactorily relates to existing field accesses, tracks and bridleways; **The proposal is of a modest scale of the proposal and is contained so as not to conflict with access points***
- b) The proposal includes the re-use of existing building(s) wherever practicable and viable; **The original proposal was for the erection of a new barn and stables. During the course of the application, it was negotiated to remove an existing dilapidated stable from the site to ensure that the quantum of built form does not substantially increase, given the limited justification and harm additional***

built form could have on the countryside. The existing stable is in a poor state of repair and so the new stable is considered acceptable in this regard.

*c) The location of new buildings, stables, yard areas and associated facilities respect the amenities of surrounding occupiers; **The proposed development, due to its proximity away, would not result in adverse impact to surrounding neighbours – see neighbouring amenity section of the report.***

d) Site layout, highways and parking arrangements demonstrate safe access and egress for horse boxes, delivery vehicles and specialist waste collection vehicles; and

*e) Estimated trip generation rates are provided to assess the impact on local highways, including from feed/hay deliveries, livery visitors including owners and farriers. **The proposed barn and stables will be conditioned to be used by the residents of Fairview Farm only and it will not be permitted to sell, let or dispose of it separately. As such, this will mean that the trips to and from the application site will be at the same/ similar level to the existing situation, and which will also experience deliveries etc to the site on occasion.***

Based on the above, Officers would conclude that the principle of this equestrian development would be supportable under policy DH7, albeit the policy only holds moderate weight in the planning balance.

Summary on principle of development:

The application site is outside settlement limits and in the Wokingham Countryside. The exceptions for development in the countryside, as outlined in CP11, have not been fully satisfied for development. Attention then turns as to whether the proposal complies with the overarching aims of policy CP11 which are to prevent settlement coalescence and maintaining the quality of the environment. The latter is a multi-faceted consideration and will encompass matters discussed in this report, and then a conclusion reached. In terms of emerging policy, the principle of this equestrian development would be supportable under policy DH7, albeit the policy only holds moderate weight in the planning balance.

Character of the Area:

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.

Stables:

The proposed stables are to be situated in a similar location to those that historically featured on the site. They would be buffered by a notable hedgerow, existing built form and the proposed barn. They would sit directly next to the HGV access point and be visualised in the context of the existing built form to the north of the site.

The proposed stables would not be clearly visible from the street scene due to set back from Forest Road of circa 70 metres. Further, given their modest height they would not be visible over the existing boundary treatment. Inter-site, the stables would appear as a logical extension of the existing built form and would appear in keeping with the site's historically agricultural/ equestrian character and thus would comply with CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Barn:

The proposed barn would be of larger scale than the proposed stables, including being of a taller height. Whilst this would be obliquely visible from the street scene from one singular viewpoint from Forest Road at a setback of 50 metres, this would have a negligible impact on the character of the area and retain the quality of the environment given the magnitude of change in the context of other built form would be minimal. This would not detrimentally harm the character of the area and thus does not stand contrary to CP3 of the Core Strategy.

It is appreciated that the combined volumetric increase of the stables and barn would be notable in the context of the original form on site, adding to the accumulation of built form seen historically, however, given the proposal's shielded location this is not considered to pose significant harm. It will also be conditioned that the dilapidated existing stables elsewhere on the site area removed within 3 months of the proposed stables being used, so as to avoid proliferation of built form/ stables across the site in this countryside location.

The proposed barn and stables are proposed to be constructed of timber, steel frame and dark grey powder coated cladding which is of standard agricultural/ equestrian appearance and echoes similar examples within close proximity of the site and are deemed suitable.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users. This is echoed by policy DH2 of the LPU.

Given the proposal's location, no detrimental overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing, noise, odour or light impacts would be predicted to arise from the development.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems. CC07 of the MDD states that development should be provided with sufficient parking.

The proposed barn and stables have been confirmed to be used only by those residents of Fairview Farm. The applicant has advised that for the time being and prior to them being privately sold, the occupants have stables and storage facilities elsewhere which generates trips to and from the site to care for their horses.

Consolidation of this activity to the application site would therefore limit trips more than existing and furthermore would not require additional parking provision considering its proximity to the dwellings of the Fairview Farm complex.

It is appreciated that WBC Highways requested additional information with respect to the largest vehicle using the site, but it should be noted that an on-site certificate permitted the use of the land for the storage and access of one HGV and therefore access provisions are sufficient for this purpose and do not require amendment, particularly as loading of goods are to be brought into the buildings via small tractors/ trailers which are smaller.

Flood Risk:

Policy CC09 of the MDD states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding

The site is located solely within Flood Zone 1 and is at a low risk of surface water flooding. Furthermore, the site is solely hardstanding at current and the proposals would not introduce a greater level of impermeable area.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy TB21 of the MDD states that Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. Policy CC03 (d and e) of the MDD states that development should protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.

The site is outlined to lay with the Forest and Rides Valued Landscape as per the 2020 and 2024 Valued Landscape Topic Papers. Accordingly, the site is subject to paragraph 187 of the NPPF which requires development to protect and enhance the environment.

Whilst the proposals would not necessarily significantly enhance the environment, they equally would not significantly harm it given their shielded location and agricultural appearance which is very much a common character feature of the area. Thus, whilst a technical policy breach exists with respect to enhancements, it is not sufficient to warrant refusal of planning permission.

No trees have been identified as being removed as part of the proposals, and given the site is hardstanding, there are limited opportunities for new planting. However, in light of the scale of the scheme and the proposal not resulting in new vegetation loss, the absence of new planting on site is not considered to warrant refusal of the application.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD states that development should incorporate or enhance biodiversity features, provide buffer zones with protected species and ensure all existing and new development is ecologically permeable.

Protected species

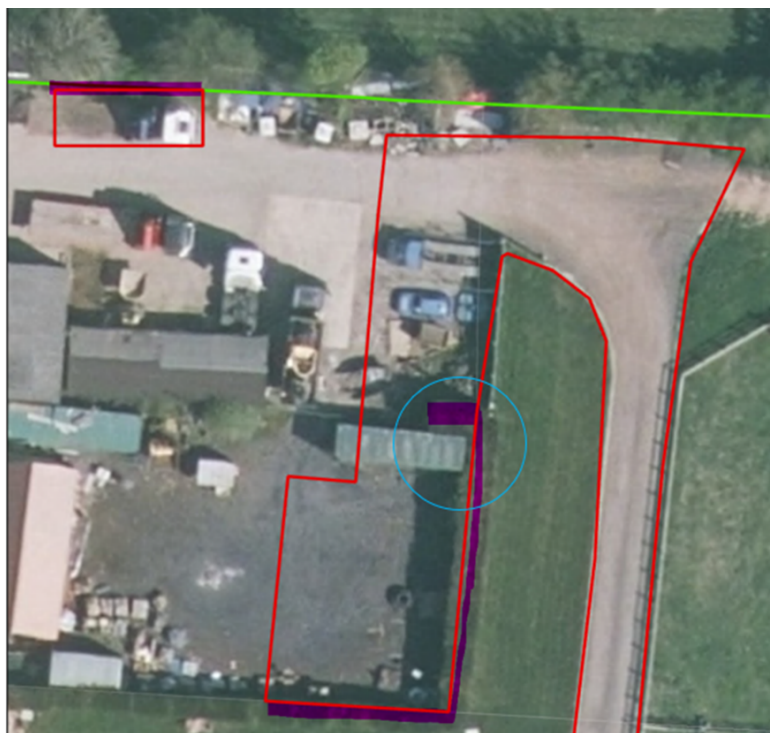
The application site is located within a potential area for bat roosts, and a red zone for Great Crested Newts meaning the site is a highly suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts, albeit it is acknowledged that the site is primarily hardstanding.

The application is accompanied by a preliminary ecological assessment which outlines the development would have no substantial impact on protected species. However, conditions have been recommended by the WBC Ecologist relating to the submission of a lighting plan, restriction on works to hedgerows and trees taking place within the bird nesting season and a scheme for ecological permeability and biodiversity enhancements.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application is accompanied by a biodiversity net gain assessment, statement and metric. The majority of the site is hardstanding, and has been presented by the applicant in their BNG metric as being a 'sealed surface'.

Upon review, the WBC Ecologist considered that linear treelines and hedgerows have not been incorporated in the statutory BNG metric, along with a protruding hedge into the site (circled in blue). Below is the application site with purple showing ornamental hedgerows and green showing tree lines:



The applicant did not consider that the vegetation on the perimeter is not included in the application site. This was then reflected by an updated site plan.

Statutory Metric guidance doesn't define a boundary but states that on-site is all land within a redline boundary. There are two types of boundaries:

Legal: imaginary or invisible line dividing one person's property from that of another. It is an exact line having no thickness or width and is rarely identified with any precision either on the ground or in conveyances or transfers and is not shown on Ordnance Survey mapping.

Physical: A physical feature that we can see such as a fence, wall or a hedge, which may, coincidentally, also follow the line of a legal boundary.

For the purposes of a planning application, the red line is the boundary, and therefore follows the 'legal' boundary. As can be seen above, the ornamental hedgerow and tree line are very much on the cusp of the site boundary, however upon further review and on balance, Officers accept that these do not form part of the application site and are not within the red line boundary.

The exception to this is the ornamental hedgerow circled in blue which clearly protrudes into the site. This is therefore the only linear based habitat and there are no area-based habitats (e.g. woodlands), or watercourse-based habitats (e.g. rivers). It is noted that this ornamental hedge is no longer in situ, however on aerial imagery was in place last year, and years prior. As such, the inclusion of this hedgerow would have been required in any BNG metric as it would appear the site has seen degradation in terms of habitat loss, and as per the regulations, if that has occurred, the site's pre-existing state (how it was in Jan 2020; the pre-development biodiversity value) has to be calculated.

Development is exempt from statutory BNG if the proposal impacts less than 5m of linear hedgerow; it is classified as 'de minimis'. In this case, the ornamental hedge measures 3m and therefore less than 5m of linear hedgerow is to be affected, and so Officers consider the proposal exempt from statutory BNG.

On this basis, no amendments to the BNG baseline metric are required, and the statutory biodiversity net gain condition will not apply.

Planning Balance/ Conclusion:

The application site is located outside of settlement limits within the Wokingham Countryside. It fails to meet all the required exceptions of policy CP11, however, as discussed earlier in the report, this does not automatically mean a development is unacceptable in the countryside on the provision that it does not conflict with the overarching aims of the policy. One such aim was that the development would maintain the quality of the environment. As discussed through the report, the proposal would not result in substantial harm in relation to any of the material considerations discussed and so Officers do not see it reasonable to conclude that the development would fail to maintain the quality of the environment to a degree that would warrant refusal of the application. The proposed stable and barn would be compatible with an agricultural/ equestrian use and it will be conditioned that the buildings can only be used in a personal capacity by occupiers of Fairview Farm, and that they will not be let, sold or disposed of separately as if this were to occur, it may result in an intensification of activity on site which this assessment has not accounted for.

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: 1. Time Limit 2. Approved Plans 3. Materials as specified 4. Barn and stables to be used by the occupiers of Fairview Farm only and not in connection with any separate and shall not be rented out, sold, or disposed of separately 5. Lighting plan 6. Restriction on works to hedgerows and trees taking place within bird nesting season 7. Ecological permeability and biodiversity enhancements 8. Compliance with avoidance measures for Great Crested Newts 9. Existing stable to be demolished within 3 months of first use of proposed stable.
Date:	3 March 2026
Earliest date for decision:	2 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	03/03/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- ***Designated countryside***
- ***Water Utility Consultation Zones***
- ***Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone***
- ***Bat Roost Habitat Suitability***
- ***Ground Water Zones***
- ***Minerals Site Consultation Area***
- ***Landscape Character Assessment Area***
- ***SSSI Impact Risk Zones***
- ***Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 7km***
- ***Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone***