

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251173
Site Address:	The Scrapyard, Highlands Avenue, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SP
Expiry Date:	28 August 2025
Site Visit Date:	18 July 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 2no. industrial units following demolition of the existing tyre shed.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking TB21 – Landscape Character
Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS8 – Meeting Employment Needs ER3 – Supporting the Rural Economy
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

NO RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments
WBC Highways – Request further information
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comments
WBC Landscape and Trees – Requests further information
WBC CIL – No comments
WBC Ecology – No comments

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Barkham Parish Council	No comments
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site 'A1 recycling centre' is located off Highlands Avenue, Barkham. Its visual appearance is akin to any traditional recycling centre, with open storage of car parts and large industrial buildings being the prominent features. The recycling site is surrounded to the east, west and north by a dense and mature woodland. The site is located outside of any settlement boundary and within Countryside.

Proposed Development: This application seeks planning permission for the erection of 2no. industrial units within the grounds of the recycling centre. Unit 1 would replace an existing tyre shed. The dimensions of both units are detailed below:

- Unit 1: 20 x 24 metres (footprint), 4 metres (eaves), 6 metres (ridge).
- Unit 2: 16.5 x 55 metres (footprint), 4 metres (eaves), 6 metres (ridge).

The two sheds will provide space for the storage and distribution of second-hand car parts. They are intended to allow the business to grow their online presence, as discussed in further detail below.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located in the countryside and therefore must be assessed against policy CP11. This policy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

- 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
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 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
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 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.
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

The proposed buildings fall close to the core of buildings on site, and well within the area

historically associated with the A1 recycling centre. Considering that the general principle of the development has been established in this area, within the historic boundaries of the recycling centre, it is not considered that the proposal would lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of built form away from the original buildings.

Looking to the quantum of development, it is quite clear that the introduction of two large industrial units would have an impressionable visual impact upon the site. That said, the context of the application must be considered. The buildings would reduce the extent of open storage currently present on the site, thus mitigating against the scale of development proposed. This increase in scale would be further offset through the demolition of the existing tyre shed, which is located in the position of the proposed Unit 1. Overall, the scale of development is not considered inappropriate within the context of the dense and commercial appearance of the recycling centre.

The units are said to facilitate a change in the business model of A1 (the applicants), transitioning from solely on-site sales of second-hand car spares to a more online model using online selling platforms and shipping parts to customers. It has been stated that this is a result of changes in the wider market. In assessing whether this constitutes compliance with exemption 1 of Policy CP11, appeal APP/X0360/W/22/3297227 is of relevance. This appeal followed an application in which retrospective planning permission was refused for the change of use of residential curtilage (Use Class C3) to parking for a recycling centre (Use Class B2). Whilst for a different type of development, it is important to note that the Inspector in this previous application agreed with the LPA that the existing recycling business cannot be considered a rural enterprise, and that there is no overriding need for it to be located here. Accordingly, the development, whilst providing long term benefits for the business, cannot be considered to comply with exemption 1 of CP11. Notwithstanding, the Inspector through this previous appeal placed great weight on the fact that the business was already well established in this location and acts as an important local facility. This remains relevant to the current proposal and will be revised in the conclusion of this report.

CP15 of the Core Strategy indicates that development for business, industry or warehousing including expansion and intensification of existing employment uses as long as it is within one of the Core Employment Areas. The proposed development is not in such an area. If the proposed development is not within a Core Employment Area, then development would normally only be acceptable as part of development that limits the redevelopment, refurbishment or minor extension of buildings in existing employment use. The proposal would not constitute a minor extension of an existing building, however, the NPPF supports the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, including through well designed new buildings (paragraph 88). As such, while the Council's development strategy is to direct employment development away from rural areas, the site offers significant employment

opportunities for the local community on an established site. Therefore, despite not being within one of the defined areas for employment, the above details weigh in favour of the modest expansion of the recycling centre in this location.

The emerging local plan (LPU) advises that the Council should be supporting employment destinations to evolve to meet the changing need of business. As stated previously, the development would facilitate a shift towards on-line retailing by providing secure storage for car parts to avoid damage, which is particularly important for the growing number of electric vehicle parts being utilised by the recycling centre, which is once again a reflection of a market shift in this area.

Overall, whilst minor conflict has been found with CP11 and CP15, the development is located close to existing buildings and uses, within the dense and industrial recycling centre, such that it has been demonstrated there would be no overriding conflict with the intended purpose of these policies and is acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area: The buildings would not be significantly visible from outside the recycling centre, by virtue of the surrounding woodland and the presence of the existing dwellings along Highlands Avenue. In any case, the buildings would be viewed against existing development and storage within the recycling centre and would not significantly impact the surrounding landscape.

As discussed above, the introduction of the proposed units would reduce the extent of open storage currently present at the recycling centre. It is thought that this would improve the appearance of the site by consolidating development into two enclosed units.

With regard to the buildings themselves, their utilitarian appearance is reflective of their intended use as storage for car parts. They would reflect the appearance of the existing buildings on site, thus would appropriately integrate into the setting of the recycling centre.

For the above reasons, it is considered that the application is in accordance with CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan.

Neighbouring Amenity: The proposed Unit 2 would be located in close proximity to the rear boundary of Fernview Cottage. Nonetheless, the neighbouring dwelling benefits from a significantly large rear garden, with a depth of approximately 20 metres, such that the location of the Unit in question would not adversely impact upon the amenities of the neighbouring occupants regarding an unacceptable loss of light, overbearing or noise impact.

With regard to Unit 1, this would be location centrally within the recycling centre, far away from the neighbouring properties on Highlands Avenue.

Overall, the proposal would not adversely harm the amenities of nearby occupants. However, as the development remains in relatively close proximity to the residential properties situated along Highlands Avenue, it is considered prudent to impose a condition restricting the hours of construction, to prevent a harmful noise disturbance for residents.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: Following an initial review of the application, the Highways Officer requested further information on matters such as; whether the proposal will increase its operating capacity, delivery and collection trips, and/or changes to the number of staff. This was to help determine if the proposed development would lead to additional traffic impacts. The requested information was provided by the Agent of this application via a highway note dated 18 August 2025. This confirms and reiterates the information put forward within the Planning Statement (and discussed previously in this report), which is that the Units would facilitates a shift towards on-line retailing. Consequently, the development would ultimately result in a reduction of trips made to and from the application site by customers.

The LPA are also satisfied that there would be ample turning space retained in the area of the site where Unit 2 is proposed.

Landscape and Trees: The Trees & Landscape Officer has raised some level of concern over the visual impact of the development. This concern is more focused on Unit 2, on the basis it is the larger of the two units and an entirely new building. The Officer stated that the building could be an incongruous feature within the site. However, the visual impact of the development has already been assessed within this report, where no such concerns were shared.

Amended plans have however been received in line with the Officer response regarding the accuracy of the Site Plan. This now shows the existing building to be of an accurate scale.

Conclusion: As stated previously, the recycling centre cannot be considered a rural enterprise, thus demonstrating minor conflict with policy CP11. However, this conflict with policy must be weighed against all other relevant material considerations. The proposal would contribute to the long-term viability of a local business that provides significant employment in Barkham. Furthermore, for the reasons established above, the proposed units would not just have limited impact on the landscape, but would actually improve the visual appearance of the site, removing the large expanse of open storage areas currently present. These factors hold substantial weight, such that the application is considered to be acceptable.

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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. 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:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	26 August 2025
Earliest date for decision:	25 June 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	27.08.25

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Countryside