

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261620
Site Address:	Warren Crest Farm, Wick Hill Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3PY
Expiry Date:	6 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	17 July 2025 (251233)
Proposal: Prior approval submission for the proposed installation of a new track to provide access to farm buildings and fields.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Countryside
Landscape Character Assessment Area – Finchampstead Pastoral Sandy Lowland
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 5km Zone
Badger Setts Consultation Zone
SSSI Impact Risk Zone

PLANNING POLICY/LEGISLATION

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Section 55	Provides that 'development' includes the carrying out of building operations on land, and 'building operations' includes structural alterations or additions to buildings.
------------	--

Section 57	Planning permission is needed for all development of land.
------------	--

Section 187a	Enforcement for breach of conditions
--------------	--------------------------------------

The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)

Section 7	Prior approval applications: time periods for decision
-----------	--

Article 3	In conjunction with Schedule 2, Part 6, Class A grants planning permission for agricultural developments on units of 5 hectares or more
-----------	---

Article 4	Provides that the planning authority may give direction to restrict the effect of Article 3
-----------	---

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
251233	Full application for the proposed erection of 3no. dwellings following demolition of existing dwelling, outbuilding and agricultural barns.	Conditionally Approved – 27/05/2026
242129	Full application for a proposed access, including formation of new trackway, improvement of existing track, and installation of new gates.	Conditionally Approved – 29/08/2025

241564	Householder application for proposed single storey side extension and single storey front infill extension, following demolition of the existing conservatory, the part raising of the roof to create first floor habitable accommodation, the conversion of the existing garage to create habitable accommodation and the part conversion of the detached store building to create a workshop and garage plus fenestration changes.	Conditionally Approved – 25/09/2024
233112	Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use and associated building operations to re-use existing agricultural buildings as 3no. dwellings and 1no. garage.	Prior Approval Granted – 09/07/2024
05206	Detached farmhouse and garaging	Conditionally Approved – 28/10/1976

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

None consulted

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Finchampstead Parish Council	No comment
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises part of an agricultural holding (circa. 29 hectares) to the south of Wick Hill Lane, Finchampstead. The site falls outside of settlement limits within open countryside with agricultural fields to the south/south-east, woodland to the east and the settlement of Finchampstead North to the north/west.

The site benefits from an existing formalised access point off Wick Hill Lane adjacent to its northern boundary, as well as a less formal access point off the junction of Wick Hill Lane and Jubilee Road to the south. An existing unsurfaced access route cuts through the site, although part of the northern section (adjacent to the existing agricultural buildings) is surfaced. It is understood that farm traffic predominantly utilise the site's northern access.

PROPOSAL

This application seeks permission for the formation of a new track to improve access between the farm buildings and fields. The track would extend from the existing

compound and hardstanding towards the site's northern boundary and, apart from a slight realignment of its central section, follow the existing unsurfaced route and gateways. The track is to be surfaced in compacted stone and would have an approximate length of 460m.

The application is made within the scope of a prior approval made under Class A of Part 6 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. The factors for consideration when assessing this application are whether or not the proposed development would fall within the parameters and restrictions of Class A (agricultural development) of the Use Class Order and the provisions of paragraph A.2 of Schedule 2, Part 6 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.

The current proposal duplicates part of the development already authorised by planning permission 242129. This does not prevent the applicant from seeking to rely on permitted development rights for the shortened track now proposed. However, any subsequent implementation of the separate full planning permission, including the approved southern access works, would remain subject to the conditions attached to that permission. The prior approval process does not discharge, vary or remove any requirement to comply with the pre-commencement or pre-use conditions attached to planning permission 242129.

PART A.1 APPRAISAL				
Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)			Yes	No
1	s.55	Does it constitute development?	✓	
2	s.191	Would it be contrary to an enforcement notice?		✓
3	s.187a Art.3 (4)	Would it be contrary to any condition imposed by any planning permission granted or deemed to be granted?		✓
The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended)			Yes	No
4	Art.3(5)	Are the building operations involved in the construction of the original building/use lawful?	✓	
5	Art.4	Is there an 'Article 4 Direction' in effect for the site?		✓
6	Sch.2 Pt. 6	Does it consist of the carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of: (a) works for the erection, extension or alteration of a building; (b) any excavation or engineering operations which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit?	✓	
7	A.1(a)	Would the development be carried out on a separate parcel of land forming part of the unit which is less than 1 hectare in area?		✓
8	A.1(b)	Would it consist of the erection or extension of any agricultural building on an established agricultural unit (as defined in paragraph X of Part 3 of this Schedule) where development under Class Q or S of Part 3 (changes of use)		✓

		of this Schedule has been carried out within a period of 10 years ending with the date on which development under Class A(a) begins?		
9	A.1(c)	Would it consist of, or include, the erection, extension or alteration of a dwelling?		✓
10	A.1(d)	Would it involve the provision of a building, structure or works not designed for agricultural purposes?		✓
11	A.1(e)	Would the ground area covered by: (i) any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations exceed 1,000 square metres; (ii) any building erected or extended or altered by virtue of Class A would exceed 1,500 square metres; calculated as described in paragraph D.1(2)(a) of this Part?		✓
12	A.1(f)	Would it be within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome and the height of any part of any building, structure or works exceed 3 metres?		✓
13	A.1(g)	Would it be not within 3 kilometres of the perimeter of an aerodrome and the height of any part of any building, structure or works exceed 12 metres?		✓
14	A.1(h)	Would any part of the development be within 25 metres of a metalled part of a trunk road or classified road?		✓
15	A.1(i)	Would it consist of, or include, the erection or construction of, or the carrying out of any works to, a building, structure or an excavation used or to be used for the accommodation of livestock or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge where the building, structure or excavation is, or would be, within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building?		✓
16	A.1(j)	Would it involve excavations or engineering operations on or over article 2(4) land which are connected with fish farming?		✓
17	A.1(k)	Would any building for storing fuel for or waste from a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system be: (i) used for storing waste not produced by that boiler or system or for storing fuel not produced within the unit (ii) within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building		✓
18	A.1(l)	Would the erection or extension of a building be carried out on land or a building that is, or is within the curtilage of, a scheduled monument?		✓

NOTES

Does it consist of the carrying out on agricultural land comprised in an agricultural unit of 5 hectares or more in area of –

(b) any excavation or engineering operations,...which are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within that unit?

The proposed works comprise engineering operations in the form of a compacted stone farm track. The submitted information confirms that the wider agricultural unit is over 5 hectares in area. The application form states that the purpose of the track is to provide

access to farm buildings and fields. The covering letter provides further explanation that the track would serve the agricultural need for access between the farm buildings and the fields, particularly during wet weather when use of the land can damage soil structure. It is also stated that the applicants are transitioning the farm to a regenerative farming model, where maintaining soil health is a key consideration, and that the track would reduce damage to the land from agricultural vehicle movements.

The track would also provide a more direct internal route across the holding and reduce the need for farm traffic to use Wick Hill Lane to the north of the farm. The submitted covering letter states that use of that road by large vehicles can cause difficulties for farm operations.

The Council has also recently granted full planning permission under application 242129 for an access, new trackway, improvement of existing track and installation of gates. That permission accepted the principle of a farm access track in this location. The current prior approval proposal is materially similar to the previously approved track route, but omits the southern section associated with the approved alterations to the southern access.

Having regard to the scale of the holding, the relationship between the farm buildings and agricultural fields and the fact that the proposed track would provide an internal route between the existing farmstead and operational agricultural land that is capable of being used throughout the year, the functional agricultural purpose described by the applicant, and the recent permission for substantially the same track alignment, the local planning authority is satisfied that the proposed engineering operations are reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture within the agricultural unit. Further detailed evidence of the agricultural business is not considered necessary in this case.

Would the ground area covered by any works or structure (other than a fence) for accommodating livestock or any plant or machinery arising from engineering operations would exceed 1,000 square metres?

The development does not fall within these criteria. The proposed track is not a structure or works for accommodating livestock or plant and machinery and does not comprise the erection, extension or alteration of a building.

The application must be accompanied by a written description of the proposed development and of the materials to be used and a plan indicating the site together with any fee required to be paid.

The application has been submitted with a site plan, written description of development and the materials to be used and the applicant has paid the required fee.

PART A.2 APPRAISAL

Development under Class A is permitted subject to the following requirements under Part A.2:

- a) *where development is carried out within 400 metres of the curtilage of a protected building, any building, structure, excavation or works resulting from the development are not used for the accommodation of livestock except in the circumstances described in paragraph D.1(3) of this Part or for the storage of slurry or sewage sludge, for housing a biomass boiler or an anaerobic digestion system, for storage of fuel or waste from that boiler or system, or for housing a hydro-turbine;*

The track would be sited within 50m from the nearest residential property (protected building) of The Old Police House to the south-west of the application site. However, the works would not be used for the accommodation of livestock, nor would it be used for the storage of slurry or sewage.

- (2) *Subject to sub-paragraph (3), development consisting of the erection, extension or alteration of a building...the developer must, before beginning the development, apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to the... siting and means of construction of the private way...*

Siting

The proposed track would largely follow the route of the existing unsurfaced farm route, with a minor realignment of the central section. It would connect the farm buildings with the wider agricultural fields and would not create additional field severance beyond the route already present on the holding. Accordingly, the development would largely formalise an existing pattern of agricultural movement across the holding. The route is also materially similar to the track approved under planning permission 242129, save that the current proposal excludes the southern access alteration works.

Given the relationship between the existing farm buildings, the agricultural fields and the approved southern access, the siting of the track is considered logical and acceptable for its agricultural function. Any public views of the track would be experienced in the context of an existing agricultural holding, existing access arrangements and the pre-existing route across the site.

Means of construction

The proposed track would be formed with compacted stone. This is a functional and visually recessive material for a farm track and would be appropriate to the agricultural character of the site. The use of compacted stone is also consistent with the applicant's description of a simple agricultural track serving farm access needs.

On the basis of the above, prior approval is not required. The applicant has also submitted information relating to archaeology. Archaeological impacts do not form part of the matters requiring assessment under paragraph A.2 in relation to the proposed private way and therefore do not affect this determination.

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

Recommendation:	Prior approval not required
Date:	29 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	N/A

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	31/07/26