

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	243180
Site Address:	Rehoboth, Forest Road, Binfield, Wokingham, RG40 5QY
Expiry Date:	30 April 2025
Site Visit Date:	17 January 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed temporary siting of marquee and use of paddock for temporary event parking from 15th March to 15th August in any calendar year.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Water Utility Consultation Zones
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – **Countryside (CP11)**
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – **Green, Amber and Red Risk Zones**
Ground Water Zones
Nuclear Consultation Zone – **Special Case Zone**
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones
PRoW Within WB Consultation Zone
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Ancient Woodland Consultation Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Design Guide
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities 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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk

	CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Valued Landscape Topic Paper (2020) Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) (WBLCA)

PLANNING HISTORY

App No.	Description	Decision/Date
2011/1802	Erection of a facilities building (including stables), manege and associated works plus change of use of land for the keeping of horses and allotments.	Approved 6 October 2011
F/2012/0651	Erection of a facilities building, manege and associated works within land that originally formed part of Harps Farm, formation of new access and change of use of land for the keeping of horses and a kitchen garden.	Approved 23 August 2012
F/2014/2781	Retrospective variation to F/2012/0651 to allow for the retention of hay barn.	Approved 7 April 2015
152822	Solar panels to existing roof slope.	Approved 13 November 2015
162793	Variation to Conditions 2 (approved plans), 10 (external lighting), 18 (storage of waste) and 20 (use of stable building) of F/2012/0651 to allow for insertion of windows to building, extension of reception porch, erection of external lighting, erection of manure waste storage point, use of existing roof space for store room and office and use of tack room as staff room.	Approved 21 December 2016
170733	Full application for the proposed erection of an ancillary building to provide workshops and stores	Approved 3 August 2017
231595	Full application for the erection of a stable, formation of a bund, siting of 1no. shipping container, timber lean to building and cabin (Retrospective).	Refused 4 September 2023
232961	Full application for the erection of an isolation stable, storage containers and rest cabin (part retrospective).	Approved 25/01/2024
242570	Full application for the retrospective change of use of land for the temporary siting of a marquee between 31st March and 24th December in any calendar year.	Refused 04/12/2024

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections
WBC Ecology – No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections
WBC CIL – Development is not CIL liable

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council has no adverse comments relating to application 243180 and trusts that WBC will apply the appropriate policies in making its decision.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site known as ‘Rehoboth’ was previously part of Harps Farm and is now owned and run by a registered charity called Just Around the Corner (JAC) Ltd. The charity operates as a youth work charity who support vulnerable young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Permission F/2012/0651 allowed a building complex which included a facilities building, menage, paddocks, formation of a new access, change of use of the land for the keeping of horses and a kitchen garden. Since then a hay barn (F/2014/2781) and an ancillary building to provide workshops (170733) have also been permitted on the site. Most recently, permission was given for the erection of an isolation stable, storage containers and rest cabin adjacent to the menage on site (reference 232961). These permissions are personal to JAC and various conditions required the development to be removed should the charity vacate the site.

Conditions were also included in all of the above permissions to prevent further development on this site without express permission, in order to *“avoid the spread of operational development on the site to both safeguard the rural character of the area and so as not to prejudice the possibility of future agricultural use on the open areas of the site”*.

The site is located within the designated Countryside. Additionally, the site is also within Landscape Character Area (LCA) I1 ‘Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland’ of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) (WBLCA) and the Billingsbear Valued Landscape as described in the Council’s Valued Landscape Topic Paper (2020).

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the temporary siting of a 20 x 10 metre marquee from 15th March to 15th August in any calendar year, plus associated temporary

event parking within the paddock. The marquee has a height of 4.771 metres. Its elevations and roof are finished with white plastic weatherproof sheeting and internally, a prefabricated floor lines the ground. Fixings to the ground consist of steel marquee stakes.

The proposed use of the marquee would be for fundraising events and this is described by the agent as follows:

“The marquee is absolutely essential for fundraising and publicity given the limitation of the existing buildings and the need for money-generating activities and raising awareness of the invaluable work of the Charity. This is accentuated by the increasing difficulty in raising grants even with the assistance of the Grants Writer service from Involve, Wokingham. At times of financial constraints which meant none of the grants submitted in the last 2 years was successful.”

The planning statement outlines that there is insufficient room within the main building to host such events. This comprises a kitchen/staff room, a pottery room, classroom, workshop and stables/store.

During the time when the marquee is proposed to be in place there will be one event per month. These include:

- Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- 2no. Barn Dances
- Silent Auction Evening
- Quiz Night
- Community Volunteer events from local businesses

It is expected that the capacity of these events (with the exception of the volunteer events) would be no more than 130 people.

Recent Planning History:

This application is a resubmission of application 242570 that was refused on 4th December 2024 on the following grounds:

1. The proposal conflicts with the spatial strategy and objectives of the development plan, resulting in the excessive encroachment and expansion of development away from the original buildings which fails to maintain or enhance the rural character and appearance of the Countryside. The proposal is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy 2010, Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012.
2. The proposed development will have a negative and detrimental impact on the landscape character & rural appearance of the area by reason of the marquee's scale, urbanising prefabricated form and associated use. The proposals therefore fail to retain or enhance the condition, character and

features of the Billingbear Valued Landscape and Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland Landscape Character Area. The proposal is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy 2010, Policies CC03 and TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012.

3. The application site is within an unsustainable location that would not encourage a modal shift towards sustainable modes of transport, by reason of the countryside location outside of settlement limits, limited public transport links and poor quality of the walking/cycling environment for staff and users of the proposed event space, contrary to policies CP1, CP2, CP3, CP6 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

A main factor in these reasons for refusal was that the marquee was proposed to be sited for over 9 months on the site. The Council therefore viewed its siting as a permanent change of use due to the amount of time proposed, rendering the paddock it is sited on unusable.

Principle of Development:

Policy Context:

Core Strategy 2010:

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- a) An ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing;
- b) Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs;
- c) People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services; and
- d) The specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic groups. Proposals for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:
 - i) The site is located either within or close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9 in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living; and
 - ii) The proposed site is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area.

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 states, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except in certain circumstances. These exceptions are:

- 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.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP) 2014:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

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.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, beautiful new buildings;
- b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are

not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Site History:

The original scheme approved under F/2012/0651 comprised an 'equestrian and training facility with allotments for therapeutic activities and learning opportunities for vulnerable young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'. Beyond its description as a charitable operation, the uses include horse care, stable management, craftwork, horticultural activities (in allotment gardens) and relevant administrative and staff operations to oversee the education of the students. The principle of the development was acceptable as it provided community facilities in a centralised location in accordance with part 6 of Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy, which permits 'essential community facilities that cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building'.

Assessment:

The proposed marquee would temporarily occupy a paddock on the site for a period of 5 months. It would be used exclusively by the Charity to help assist in fundraising and to provide temporary shelter for volunteers who help with the work on site, for which there is no existing spaces on site to facilitate such events.

The Charity is viewed by the Council as a sustainable rural enterprise and the nature of the marquee's use on site would contribute to its ongoing operations through fundraising and volunteering. Its limited 5 month tenancy on site each year would also ensure no permanent change of use of the existing paddock and conditions will be imposed to ensure it remains ancillary to the Charity's operations. Overall, compliance with criterion 1 of CP11 is achieved.

Turning to criterion 2 of CP11, the marquee has a sizeable 10 x 20 metre footprint with a 4.771 metre tall roof. It is acknowledged that the footprint of the marquee is comparable to that of the existing charity building on site and that the intended events within it would undoubtedly result in additional vehicle movements to the site. However, the 5 month temporary period across the Spring/Summer would completely limit any permanent encroachment of development on site and the irregularity of the events listed would be staggered to the point that the vehicle movements would not cause adverse harm to the surrounding countryside.

With the development's temporary nature in mind, the proposals are not considered to result in the excessive encroachment and expansion of development away from the original buildings on the site, thereby complying with criterion 2 of CP11.

Exception 3 requires development to be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about

environmental improvement. The proposals involve a new structure so does not qualify to be assessed under this criterion.

The wording of Policy CP11 requires compliance with criteria 1, 2 and 3. Compliance with criteria 1 and 2 are noted and criterion 3 does not apply to the proposal. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area/Landscape Character:

Policy Context:

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short
- b) term but over the lifetime of the development:
- c) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- d) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Paragraph 180(a) of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

Paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan required development proposals to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development. The Countryside is identified as one of the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks.

Policy TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Site Context:

The application site is within the Billingbear Valued Landscape, which is wholly within the landscape character area (LCA) I1 known as 'Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland'. The valued landscape takes and its demonstrable physical attributes which would take this site beyond "*mere countryside*" and should be considered as more important than Countryside falling outside of this Valued Landscape designation as stated in the in the Valued Landscapes Topic Paper (2020).

The valuable landscape characteristics of the LCA include;

- ***Characteristic mature in-field and roadside oaks in the open arable fields which provide a sense of place.***
- ***Wooded skyline*** which provides a backdrop to the surrounding areas.
- ***Strong rural character*** of the rolling agricultural landscape with its subtle wooded ridges, large woodlands and sparse settlement which create a strong sense of place.
- ***Remote quality*** due to the scarcity of settlement and relative inaccessibility by footpath which results in a sense of tranquillity despite proximity to urban centres and motorways.
- ***Distant framed views*** over the surrounding landscape, including to Wokingham town and wooded horizons outside the borough which provides a sense of place and orientation.

The Landscape Strategy is to conserve and enhance the existing rural character. The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the characteristic wooded ridges and woodland, including ancient woodland. In particular, there are opportunities to restore coppice management and reinstate and repair key hedgerows with hedgerow standards.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern through controlling development.

Assessment:

It is acknowledged that the marquee has a large 20x10 metre footprint and its light/white colour prefabricated form is a stark visual contrast to the modest charity building, adjoining stables and the surrounding rural context.

Despite this, marquees during summer months in Countryside locations are not alien

features and its limited timeframe on site would substantially limit the visual harm to the area as it would not be a permanent addition to the landscape. Public views of its form would be fleeting from Forest Road as a result of the site's hedgerow boundary treatments which would be dense during the months the marquee would be stationed at the site.

In terms of the regularity of events and vehicle movements, it has already been concluded that their irregularity and 5 month timeframe would have no adverse, long-lasting effects on the character of the countryside and surrounding landscape.

In terms of landscape character, the aim for the LCA (and the Billingbear Valued Landscape) is to conserve and enhance the existing rural character, with the main development aim being to conserve the sparse settlement pattern through controlling development. Whilst it is acknowledged that the stationing of the marquee does not enhance the existing rural character nor does it conserve the sparse settlement pattern, it is a temporary structure on site that would be controlled by the Council to ensure it has no permanent harm to the landscape. In this regard, it could reasonably be argued that its removal outside of the 5 month period would adequately conserve the existing rural character of the area.

Overall, subject to conditions, the proposals are considered to have an acceptable impact on the character of the area and the prevailing landscape character. WBC Landscape and Trees have also raised no objections on these grounds.

The Council are aware that the site has several operating hours restrictions including a 09:00-18:00 restriction on the main complex building (with the exception of 1 meeting per week until 21:00) and a 09:00-19:00 restriction on the external space. The applicant has informed the Council that events in the marquee are likely to extend until 22:00 at the latest. Whilst a departure from those hours currently conditioned, the Council does not view the proposed hours of operation detrimental to the character of the surrounding landscape. As such, specific operating hours will be conditioned for the marquee's use for events, isolated from that of the rest of the site's operations.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential property to the development is 180 metres to the south-west. There are therefore no adverse neighbouring amenity concerns.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and it is at a low risk of surface water flooding. The marquee therefore is unlikely to raise any adverse flooding concerns.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

General:

WBC Highways received the revised submissions to address their initial response dated 21st March 2025. These submissions provide further details on the proposed

events (frequency, capacity, time) and the proposed parking plan with 65 no. spaces and a minibus space. Temporary provision of 78-80 spaces can be provided in the manege.

The applicant has provided the following details:

Nature	Frequency	Time	Capacity
Events (includes AGM)	Once per month	Between evening and 22:00	Up to 130 people
Fundraising			
Volunteers Day for local businesses	Twice per month	Between 08:30 and 17:00	10-15 people
Post 16 Work Area			Circa 10 people

Parking:

The site's existing parking area/hardstanding has space to accommodate up to 25 vehicles, including minibuses. The temporary paddock parking would provide up to 65 parking spaces to accommodate guests of the larger events listed above. Vehicular access is also available to the west of the paddock.

WBC Highways consider this amount of parking provision adequate to accommodate the fundraising events listed.

Traffic Impacts:

Due to the fact that the major events and fundraising will be carried out during off-peak hours, plus the low capacity and frequency for voluntary and work area services, the proposal will unlikely induce significant impacts on the wider highway network.

Arboricultural Matters:

There are no arboricultural concerns.

Ecology:

Newts:

WBC Ecology Newts raise no objections to the proposals and their impact on Great Crested Newts as a protected species.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This can be achieved through either on-site or off-site mitigation.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions,

every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition")."

The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

The BNG metric provided with this application outlines that a 58.75% gain in units can be achieved to the north of the site, the details of which will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan. Due to the very limited (de minimis) scale of the gains on site and the temporary nature of the use, a S106 legal agreement was not considered necessary to secure monitoring.

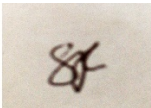
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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:	Approval
Date:	16 April 2025
Earliest date for decision:	13 March 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	17.4.25