

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260613
Site Address:	Wyvols Court Farm, Basingstoke Road, Swallowfield, Wokingham, RG7 1WY
Expiry Date:	16 June 2026
Site Visit Date:	24 February 2026
Proposal: Full application for the change of use of existing Unit 13 (B1(c)/B8) to Use Classes B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution). (retrospective)	

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 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
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
070613	Change of use of Redundant Farm Buildings to Use for Purposes Within Classes B1(c)/B8	Approved: July 2007

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Internal	
WBC Environmental Health – No objection	
External	
None	

REPRESENTATIONS		
Swallowfield Council	Parish	No comments
Ward Member(s)		No comments received

Neighbours	6 objection letters have been received from local residents, raising the following concerns: • Impact on residents: The industrial activity (uPVC window manufacturing) creates significant noise and disturbance, which is incompatible with nearby housing and harms residential amenity. • Existing problems: The current operation already generates frequent, high-pitched noise (early mornings, weekdays, and Saturdays), causing ongoing disruption. Attempts to resolve this informally have failed. • Planning breach: The lawful use requires operations not to harm residential amenity, but the current use clearly does, making the application an attempt to legitimise an unsuitable activity. • No justification from duration: The fact the business has operated since 2017 does not make it acceptable or lawful. • Poor mitigation: Existing noise insulation is ineffective; doors are often open and no meaningful soundproofing has been implemented. • Policy conflict: The proposal conflicts with planning policies that protect residential amenity and require appropriate scale and impact in rural areas. • Unlikely approval if new: A B2 industrial use would likely never have been approved originally due to noise, location, and rural setting. • Precedent risk: Approval could encourage further industrial encroachment near homes. • Noise concerns: The type of high-frequency, tonal noise is particularly intrusive and likely exceeds acceptable standards, with no adequate acoustic assessment provided.
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APPRAISAL

Context: The application relates to an existing industrial-style building (Unit 13) at Wyvols Court Farm, Swallowfield. The site is accessed via the existing vehicular

entrance off Basingstoke Road, which leads to three commercial/industrial units to the south. Unit 13 is located at the end of this access road, adjacent to the site's eastern boundary.

Bracknell Glass Ltd currently operates from the unit. The business primarily manufactures windows for new-build housing developments, supplying large housebuilders including Bovis.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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 application seeks retrospective planning permission for the change of use of Unit 13 from its former lawful B1(c) / B8 use to a mixed B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Storage and Distribution) use. The proposal arises from a previously investigated enforcement case by the LPA, which concluded that the current operations at the unit represent a material change of use from its previously consented B1(c) use, now E(g)iii as of 2020, to B2 and therefore require express planning permission.

The site forms part of an established employment area on Wyvols Court Farm characterised by a range of commercial and industrial uses of a similar nature and scale. Within this wider context, the use of the unit for general industrial and storage purposes is consistent with the established character and function of the site and does not represent a notable departure from the surrounding uses.

The NPPF supports the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, including through the use and re-use of existing buildings (paragraph 88). Furthermore, paragraph 89 recognises that rural sites may need to accommodate business uses outside of defined settlements, provided development is sensitive to its surroundings and does not result in unacceptable impacts. In this instance, the proposal utilises an existing building within an established employment site and is therefore considered to accord with the aims of the NPPF in this regard.

Core Strategy Policy CP15 supports the retention and appropriate intensification of employment uses within established employment areas, particularly where development helps to sustain local businesses and contributes to the local economy. The policy seeks to ensure that such uses remain compatible with their surroundings and do not give rise to unacceptable impacts.

The proposed B2/B8 use would allow the continued operation of a small local business from Unit 13 of Wyvols Court Farm, supporting economic activity and employment within the borough. The unit provides suitable, established employment floorspace, and the retention of the current use assists in maintaining the viability of the wider employment site.

Whilst the B2 use is materially different from the former B1(c) use, it is noted that the activities taking place are contained entirely within the existing building envelope, with no expansion of the unit or change to its external appearance.

Having regard to the above, specifically the established industrial character of the site, the proposed B2/B8 use is considered positive when considering the proposal against economic and employment policies.

Notwithstanding all the above, it remains relevant that the site is located within the countryside and therefore is subject to assessment against Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. Core Strategy Policy CP11 seeks to restrict inappropriate development in the countryside to protect its character and rural setting. However, the policy also supports the re-use of existing buildings. In this case, the proposal relates solely to a change of use, making use of an established commercial building that already forms part of the built environment. As no external alterations are proposed, the use has not resulted in any harmful effect on the rural character or encroachment into the countryside and therefore accords with the relevant aims of CP11 in this respect.

However, for the proposal to specifically comply with exception 1 of Policy CP11, the use would need to be associated with, and necessary for, a rural enterprise. While the policy does not define "rural enterprise", there is no clear or intrinsic functional relationship between the business and the countryside location. The nature of the use is such that it could operate equally from an urban site without reliance on a rural setting.

Accordingly, although the proposal may meet exceptions 2 and 3, Policy CP11 requires compliance with all three exceptions for support to be given in principle. As the development fails to satisfy the first, the application is contrary to Policy CP11 and is therefore unacceptable in principle. Nevertheless, this conflict must be balanced against the identified benefits of the scheme and considered in the context of any resulting harm. This balancing exercise is summarised in the conclusion of this report.

Character of the Area: The wider site of Wyvols Court Farm is primarily a large agricultural holding, however, as stated above, it includes two clear and distinct areas playing host to several commercial and industrial units. Unit 13 itself contains a long-established commercial building with existing hardstanding and parking areas. The proposal involves no external operational development, and therefore the form, massing, materials, and visual appearance of the building remain entirely unchanged.

The use does not increase the visual prominence of the building or introduce any features that would detract from the wider countryside setting. The scheme maintains the established industrial character of the immediate site.

Overall, the use does not impact the openness and visual qualities of the countryside and remains compatible with the area's immediate character, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP1, CP3, CP11 and MDD Policy TB21.

Neighbouring Amenity: Given the departure from the previously permitted use, a primary consideration in the assessment of this application is whether the noise impacts arising from the current use are acceptable.

Changes introduced on 1 September 2020 through the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 resulted in Class B1(c) being subsumed within the new Use Class E. Specifically, former B1(c) uses now fall within Class E(g)(iii), which relates to industrial processes that can be carried out within a residential area without giving rise to unacceptable impacts on amenity by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.

In this instance, the use of the unit was not considered to fall within the scope of Class E(g)(iii), as identified during the enforcement investigation. Instead, the activities undertaken were deemed to constitute a general industrial use (Use Class B2), for which planning permission is now being sought retrospectively.

It is important to clarify that this conclusion does not imply that the noise levels observed during the enforcement investigation were inherently unacceptable in planning terms. Rather, the nature and intensity of the operations were considered to exceed what would reasonably be expected under the previously lawful Class E(g)(iii) use.

In order to robustly assess the acceptability of the development in amenity terms, a Noise Impact Assessment was requested by the LPA and subsequently submitted by the applicant.

The Noise Impact Assessment, prepared by Enzygo (May 2026), assesses the potential impact of noise arising from the operation of the unit, including fixed plant, internal machinery, and vehicle movements, on the nearest noise-sensitive receptor (Handpost House). The assessment has been undertaken in accordance with relevant national guidance, including BS4142:2014+A1:2019 and BS8233:2014.

Baseline noise monitoring was undertaken over a four-day period, with the background noise climate established during a period when the unit was not operational, providing a robust and representative baseline for assessment. The assessment demonstrates that the predicted rating noise levels associated with the operation of the unit are below the established background noise levels at the nearest residential receptor. In accordance with BS4142, this indicates that the use would result in a low noise impact, with the specific sound unlikely to give rise to adverse effects.

Further assessment undertaken in accordance with BS8233 indicates that internal noise levels within the nearest residential receptor would fall within recommended guideline values for daytime resting conditions, even with windows partially open for ventilation.

The findings also identify that existing environmental noise sources, including nearby road traffic and established commercial and agricultural activities, contribute to the prevailing background noise climate and would act to mask the operational noise from the site.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the submitted Noise Impact Assessment and raises no objection to the proposal on noise grounds. As per the above, they confirmed that the predicted noise levels are below the background levels

at the nearest sensitive receptor and therefore would not result in unacceptable impacts on residential amenity. The development is therefore considered to comply with Core Strategy Policy CP3 and MDD Policy CC06 in respect of noise and amenity.

It should be noted that the LPA re-notified the nearest neighbouring resident following the submission of the Noise Impact Assessment, affording the opportunity to provide further representation. This resulted in the engagement of a third-party acoustic consultant, who reviewed the submitted assessment. The third-party consultant acknowledged that the findings of the assessment differ from the neighbours' subjective experience. However, they ultimately accepted that the methodology and approach adopted within the Noise Impact Assessment are sound. Whilst the concerns raised by neighbouring occupiers are fully acknowledged and have been carefully considered, it is reiterated that the technical evidence demonstrates that the noise associated with the use would not give rise to significant adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Conditions: Whilst noise levels have been assessed and found to be acceptable, it is recognised that the unit operates in relatively close proximity to a residential area and therefore requires appropriate control over its hours of operation. The applicant has confirmed that the business operates between 08:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday, and 08:00 to 13:30 on Saturdays. These hours are considered reasonable and will be secured by condition to ensure that the use does not give rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

To further safeguard the amenities of nearby residential occupiers, a condition is considered necessary to ensure that the use does not give rise to noise levels exceeding those assessed within the approved Noise Impact Assessment.

Whilst restrictive use conditions are sometimes imposed on change of use applications to limit the potential for further changes under permitted development rights, such a condition is not considered necessary in this instance. The assessment of the application has accepted the B2 use on its merits, including with regard to its impacts on neighbouring amenity. Any future change to a materially different use would, in most cases, require planning permission and would therefore be subject to further assessment by the LPA. As such, a use restriction condition would fail to meet the tests of necessity and reasonableness as set out in national planning guidance.

Conclusion: The application seeks retrospective permission for the change of use of Unit 13 to a mixed B2/B8 use following an enforcement investigation which established that the activities undertaken constitute a material change from the lawful B1(c), now Class E(g)(iii)) use.

In principle, the development gives rise to some conflict with Core Strategy Policy CP11, as the use is not directly associated with, or necessary for, a rural enterprise and therefore fails to meet all criteria required to justify development in the countryside under this policy.

However, significant weight is afforded to the material considerations in support of the development. The site forms part of an established employment area with a longstanding commercial function, and the use of the unit for general industrial and

storage purposes is compatible with the character and operation of the wider site/ The proposal makes effective use of an existing building without any external alterations or encroachment into the countryside, and in this regard the development is considered to represent sustainable development when assessed against the Development Plan (CP11) and NPPF (Paragraphs 88 & 89) when read as a whole, with the benefits outweighing the minor policy conflict.

Furthermore, the development supports the continued operation of a small local business, contributing positively to the local economy and aligning with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CP15, which seeks to retain and support employment-generating uses.

It is also relevant to note that the previous lawful use of the building as light industrial would also have conflicted with the criteria now contained in Policy CP11, had the current policy framework been in place at the time of that conversion. The use therefore does not introduce any new form of development that is more inconsistent with CP11 than the established position.

In amenity terms, whilst concerns from neighbouring occupiers regarding noise are acknowledged and given appropriate weight, the submission of a Noise Impact Assessment has enabled the LPA to robustly assess the effects of the development, and it was not subsequently concluded that there is an adverse impact to the nearest noise receptors.

Taking all matters into account, the limited identified conflict with Policy CP11 is outweighed by the benefits of the scheme, including the retention of employment use on an established site, support for a local business, and the absence of any material harm to the character of the area or neighbouring amenity. Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval.

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:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	10 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	29 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>JMM</i>
Date:	11 June 2026

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Countryside*