

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252144
Site Address:	Land adjacent to Moor Green House, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TH
Expiry Date:	7 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	28 November 2025
Proposal: Full application for the installation of an access track and bund, and erection of 2 no. agricultural buildings following demolition of the existing buildings. (Part retrospective)	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability 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 CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside FD1 – Development and flood risk FD2 – Sustainable drainage

Update (LPU)	NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
221706	Full application for the formation of an access to serve an existing agricultural use.	Refused 12/07/2022
222605	Full application the formation of an access to serve an existing agricultural use.	Refused 12/05/2022
222706	Full application for the creation of an access point and driveway on to Lower Sandhurst Road.	Approved 08/12/2022

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection
WBC Ecology Newts – No comment

External

Natural England – No objection
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
South East Water – No comments recieved

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site is located in a rural area, characterised by its agricultural heritage, and the surrounding agricultural and equestrian land. Moor Green House is a two-storey detached 6-bedroom property with a detached triple garage, set on a plot of 2.5 acres. The dwelling is of redbrick construction with pitched tiled roofing. The site is a single field to the north-east of the dwelling

Description of Development:

This application seeks full planning permission for the installation of an access track (part retrospective), the erection of two agricultural buildings, the demolition of existing structures and the erection of a bund. The site is accessed via the existing residential access serving Hall Farm and the proposals are associated with the use of the land for agricultural purposes, including the grazing and management of livestock.

The access track extends from Lower Sandhurst Road, spurring from the existing residential access, and runs into the site to facilitate access across the field. The track has been constructed using a permeable surface comprising plastic grid reinforcement backfilled with topsoil. The application seeks retrospective permission for these works.

A bund has been formed along the southern boundary of the site, measuring approximately 0.6 metres in height. This is proposed to be retained and has been planted with hedgerow planting to provide landscape screening and ecological enhancement.

The development also comprises the erection of two agricultural buildings. One building would be used for the storage of a tractor and associated equipment, and the second would function as a livestock shelter.

There is a current open enforcement investigation in relation to the unauthorised gates and fencing at the residential access which is awaiting the outcome of this application.

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. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

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 without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The site is located outside of settlement limits and as such the development requires assessment against Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. This is a restrictive policy designed to protect the separate identity of settlement limits and maintain the quality of the environment. CP11 states that development will not normally be permitted outside of development limits 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. is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvements.

There is no strict definition of enterprises within Core Strategy Policy CP11. It can therefore be understood that enterprises encompass a range of scale of business of activity, including those of limited scale and profitability. The submitted agricultural evidence demonstrates that the land is in active agricultural use and forms part of a wider holding comprising owned and rented land. The applicant currently undertakes grazing activities and proposes to maintain and expand agricultural operations through the keeping of livestock, supported by appropriate storage and shelter facilities. The submitted Supporting Agricultural Statement explains that the proposed buildings are required to provide secure storage for agricultural machinery, equipment, feed and bedding, together with shelter and handling facilities for livestock. The statement further explains that livestock cannot be kept on the site year-round without appropriate shelter and storage facilities and that the scale of the buildings has been designed around the operational requirements of the holding.

In respect of criterion 2 of Policy CP11, the proposed buildings are intended to replace structures which previously existed on the site and are located on, or closely related to, the footprint of former buildings. The submitted evidence indicates that the buildings previously serving the site had become dilapidated and were removed for safety reasons. As such, the proposal would not result in a significant extension of built development into the countryside nor would it represent excessive encroachment away from the existing developed areas of the holding

Having regard to the submitted Planning Statement and Agricultural Statement, it is considered that the proposal would support a rural agricultural enterprise, would not result in excessive encroachment into the countryside, and would remain proportionate to the scale and operational needs of the holding. The principle of development is therefore considered to accord with Policy CP11.

Additionally, Chapter 4 of the NPPF states that the objectives of policies within Chapter 4 is to enable development that support the rural economy and rural communities and the provision of infrastructure, and limiting development away from settlements to help safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Specifically, S5.1.a states that development for agriculture should be approved outside of settlement unless the benefits of doing so are substantially outweighed by any adverse effects. Policy S5(1)(a) of the NPPF identifies development for agriculture as a form of development that is generally appropriate outside settlements. The policy establishes a clear presumption in favour of such development and confirms that proposals should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects. The proposal therefore within the category of development envisaged by Policy S5(1)(a) and is therefore acceptable in principle.

The proposal would therefore contribute towards the sustainability and viability of an agricultural enterprise, consistent with the objectives of the NPPF to support rural economic activity and agricultural land uses. Furthermore, the development is located on land already associated with agricultural activity, with the proposed buildings replacing structures that formerly existed on the site, thereby limiting any encroachment into the countryside.

Significant weight is also afforded to the fact that the circumstances before the Council are materially different from those considered under application 221706. In refusing that application, the Council concluded that insufficient information had been provided to demonstrate an agricultural unit, agricultural activity on the land, or a justification for the proposed development. By contrast, the current application is supported by detailed agricultural evidence which demonstrates active agricultural use of the land, identifies the wider holding, sets out livestock management proposals and explains the functional need for the proposed buildings and associated infrastructure. Consequently, the evidential deficiencies that formed a substantial part of the earlier refusal have now been addressed.

In this instance, additional information has been submitted in support of the application, including a Planning Statement which sets out the overarching justification for the proposed development. This is supported by a Supporting Agricultural Statement, which provides further detail on the nature, scale and operation of the agricultural use of the land, including the grazing and management of livestock. Taken together, these documents demonstrate that the site is in active agricultural use, with a clear operational requirement for year-round access and appropriately scaled buildings to support these activities. The submitted details also demonstrate that the scale of the proposed development is proportionate to the use of the land and would support a rural enterprise consistent with the aims of Policy CP11. As such, the principle of development is considered acceptable, subject to compliance with other relevant development plan policies and material considerations.

Character of the Area:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate 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 without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users, including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Core Strategy Policy CP11 deals with development proposals outside development limits. It is a restrictive policy designed to protect the separate identity of settlement limits and maintain the quality of the environment. CP11 states that development will not normally be permitted outside of development limits except where it meets certain exceptions.

Access Track:

The proposed access track introduces a formalised route across the field, and as such has the potential to alter the appearance of the currently open landscape. However, the track is required to facilitate access for agricultural purposes, including the movement of livestock and equipment, as set out within the submitted Planning Statement. The track follows a logical alignment within the site and has been constructed using a permeable surface, filled with topsoil and seeded which assists in reducing its visual prominence when viewed within the wider landscape. Its visibility from the public realm is limited, largely confined to glimpsed views from the site entrance, and it would be seen in the context of an agricultural setting where such features are not uncommon.

Having regard to Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, the introduction of the track is considered to represent an appropriate and proportionate form of development within

a rural setting, supporting the use of the land without resulting in material harm to the character or quality of the environment. Whilst it is acknowledged that the track represents an engineered feature, it is not considered to give rise to an unacceptable urbanising impact.

Agricultural Buildings:

The proposed agricultural buildings are modest in scale and are typical of structures commonly found within rural and agricultural settings. The submitted Planning Statement and Supporting Agricultural Statement confirm that the buildings are to be used for the storage of agricultural equipment and the sheltering of livestock and are therefore directly related to the use of the land. The proposed tractor shed would measure approximately 10.25 metres by 5 metres, and the field shelter would measure approximately 6.5 metres by 8 metres, both with a maximum height of 3 metres. These would represent relatively small-scale structures within the wider agricultural holding. In terms of siting, the buildings are located within the holding in a manner that relates appropriately to the access track and the overall use of the land. Their scale, height and materials are considered appropriate and would ensure that they do not appear prominent or incongruous within the wider landscape.

In applying Policies CP3 and CP11, the buildings are considered to be of an appropriate scale, form and design in the context of the countryside location and would not result in harm to the character of the area. Furthermore, the development is consistent with the aims of Policy CP1, as it would maintain the overall quality of the environment and reflects the type of built form ordinarily associated with agricultural land uses.

Bund:

The bund is located along the southern boundary of the site and represents a low earthwork feature, measuring approximately 0.6 metres in height. Whilst this introduces a degree of engineered form, its limited height ensures that it does not appear unduly prominent within the landscape. The bund has been planted with hedgerow planting, as detailed within the submitted information, which will assist in reinforcing the site boundary and integrating the development into the surrounding landscape over time. This planting will also assist in filtering views of the access track and associated development from adjacent land.

In the context of Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11, the bund is considered to be a minor intervention that supports landscaping and integration of the development. On balance, it would not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area and would contribute to maintaining the visual quality of the site in the longer term.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity by ensuring proposals are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, height, materials and character.

The proposed tractor shed is sited approximately 37 metres from the nearest neighbouring property and the proposed field shelter is approximately 31 metres away. Due to the significant separation distances, it is not deemed that the tractor shed, or field shelter would have any impact on neighbouring amenities relating to overlooking, overbearing or loss of light. Additionally, there is appropriate screening along the

boundary between the application site and the neighbouring property, and this would obscure views of the tractor shed and field shelter, further demonstrating there would be no impact upon neighbours.

The proposed access track poses no harm to neighbouring amenities. The use of the track for agricultural purposes, including the movement of machinery and livestock, would not give rise to levels of noise or disturbance beyond what would reasonably be expected within a rural setting. The submitted statements confirm that the track is required to enable the effective management of the land and would be used on an intermittent basis associated with agricultural activities. In addition, the track is located within the field and is sufficiently distanced from neighbouring properties such that its use would not result in overbearing impacts, loss of light or loss of privacy. As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity and complies with the aims of Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity Space:

The proposed works pose no harm to the usability of the site's private rear amenity space for current and future occupiers despite the vehicular access being shared with Hall Farm.

Highways Access and Parking Provision:

WBC Highways have been consulted on the application and raise no objection subject to conditions. Revised visibility splay plans and swept path analysis were submitted and assessed by the Local Highway Authority during the application process. The submitted information demonstrates that adequate visibility can be achieved at the site access and that vehicles associated with the agricultural use can safely enter and leave the site. Accordingly, the Highways Officer had no objection to the proposal subject to conditions securing the turning and visibility splays, and access and surfacing. Therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable in highway safety terms and complies with Policies CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy.

Planning Balance:

Substantial weight is attached to the support afforded by Policy S5(1)(a) of the NPPF, which identifies agriculture as a form of development that is generally appropriate outside settlements and states that such development should be approved unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by any adverse effects. The proposed development falls squarely within that category of development, being directly related to agricultural land management, livestock keeping and associated operational requirements. The proposal therefore attracts positive support from national policy

Against these benefits, the proposal results in some change to the appearance of the countryside through the introduction of built form, an access track and earth bund. However, for the reasons set out above, these impacts are limited by the modest scale of the development, its agricultural purpose, the use of appropriate materials, existing and proposed landscaping, and its relationship to existing and former development within the holding. The development would not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, landscape character, drainage or ecology.

It is, however, a significant material consideration that the access track and bund were undertaken without planning permission. The applicant had previously sought permission for an access and track under applications 220605 and 221706, both of which were refused. The officer report for application 221706 records that the proposal was substantially similar to that previously refused under application 220605 and clearly identified the Council's concerns regarding the absence of an adequately demonstrated agricultural justification and the impact of the development on the countryside and rural landscape. In view of that planning history, it is considered, on the balance of probabilities, that the applicant was aware that planning permission was required and that permission had previously been withheld before undertaking the unauthorised works. The unauthorised development is therefore considered to have been intentional for the purposes of Policy DM8(2). In accordance with that policy, substantial weight is afforded against the grant of retrospective planning permission.

Nevertheless, Policy DM8(2) does not preclude the grant of retrospective planning permission and this matter must be considered alongside all other material considerations. The current proposal is materially different from the previous applications in evidential terms, being supported by detailed agricultural information which demonstrates the agricultural use of the land and the functional need for the proposed development. In addition, only limited adverse impacts have been identified. Significant weight is afforded to the agricultural benefits of the proposal and the support provided by Policy S5(1)(a) of the NPPF, which identifies agriculture as a form of development that should be approved outside settlements unless the benefits are substantially outweighed by any adverse effects. Whilst substantial weight is attributed against the proposal under Policy DM8(2), it is considered that the identified benefits substantially outweigh the limited adverse effects. The proposal therefore accords with the Development Plan and the NPPF and the planning balance weighs in favour of granting planning permission.

Conclusion:

The proposal would support an established agricultural use and provides access and buildings necessary for the ongoing management of the holding. The development is considered acceptable in principle and would not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the area, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, ecology or landscape character. The proposal therefore accords with Policies CP1, CP3, CP6, CP7 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, relevant policies of the MDD Local Plan and the NPPF. Accordingly, planning permission is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

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.

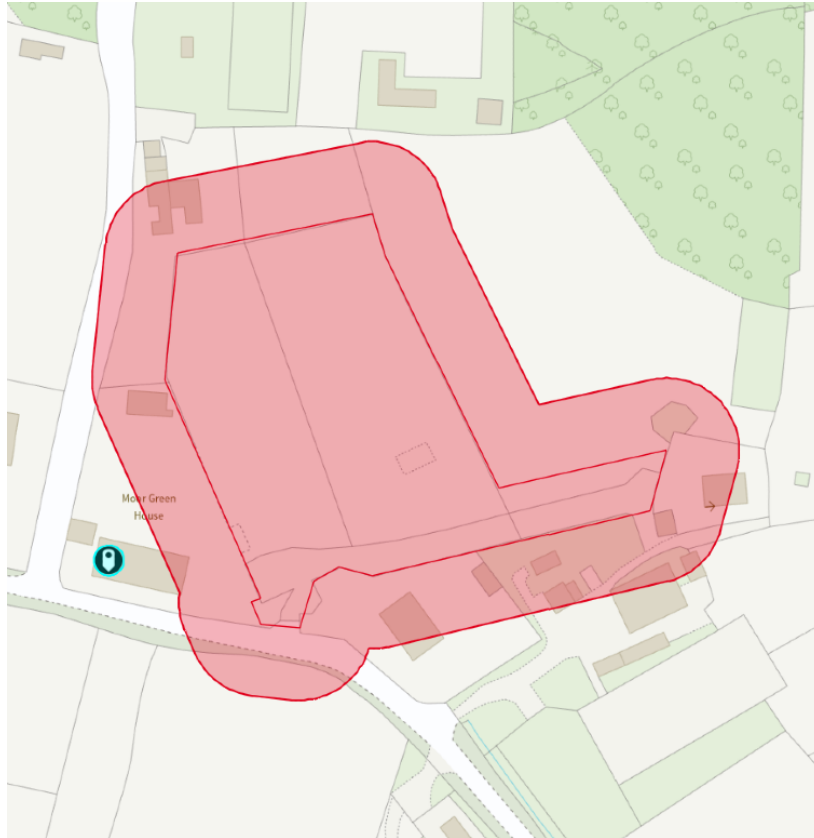
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	3 September 2026
Earliest date for decision:	28 October 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	8 September 2026

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS



Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 1

#	NAME
1	Outside Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Countryside	Countryside

Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Special Protection Area Linear Mitigation Zone	5km Linear Mitigation Zone

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: Special Case Zone	ONR also requests to be consulted on planning applications, irrespective of distance from nuclear sites, for special cases. Developments that either introduce a new hazard or change the existing external hazards posed to nuclear sites.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Farnborough Consultation Zone | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT_WHEN
1	Aerodrome Safeguarding: Farnborough Consultation Zone	Consultation zone 3	All buildings, structures, etc. Exceeding 90m
2	Aerodrome Safeguarding: Farnborough Consultation Zone	Consultation zone 1	Tree Planting, Mineral extract/Quarrying, Refuse tips, Reservoir, Sewage Disposal, Nature reserve, Bird Sanctuary, any aviation use

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Gatwick Consultation Zone | Total count: 2

#	Description
1	Please consult London Gatwick on the following: All buildings, structures & works exceeding 150 m AGL.
2	Please consult London Gatwick on the following: All buildings, structures & works exceeding 150 m AGL.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 2

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
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1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	YES	YES
2	All works exceeding 90 metres (295.3 feet)	YES	YES

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 7

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	XZ1158	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YA1162	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YA1163	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
4	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YC1163	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
5	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YD1163	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
6	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YE1163	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
7	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YG1162	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developments only
2	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Amber	For Householder applications check HH Layer. Consult NatureSpace for all other types of development

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones - Minor | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Amber	Consult NatureSpace for any minor development that intersects a red or amber zone in this layer

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 2

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0121000322302&es=11401&location=481695,163378%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)
2	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0321000432000&es=11401&location=479352,162887%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Water Utility Consultation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT_WHEN
1	Water Utility Consultation Zone	South East Water Supply Area	New dwellings

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Blackwater River Valley with Open Water

Wards | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Finchampstead Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Finchampstead CP	0 m