

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252380
Site Address:	94 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4RB
Expiry Date:	10 December 2025
Site Visit Date:	28 October 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a storage outbuilding, repositioning of the main entrance gate, demolition of a side extension of the existing main building, erection of a barrier and changes to site layout plus additional car parking spaces.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Countryside
Ancient Woodland Consultation Zone – Poor's Copse
Green Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts
Bat Roost Suitability Habitat

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity 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 CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB11 – Core Employment Areas TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS8 – Meeting our employment needs CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development

(LPU)	CE4 – Supporting a circular economy C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER1 – Core Employment Areas ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER3 – Supporting the Rural Economy FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
37740	Change of use from Haulage Contractors Yard to Wholesale Contractors and Merchants Yard	Approved 21/08/1991
031900	Proposed Demolition of modular units and erection of single storey rear extension.	Approved 03/10/2003

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	The Committee RESOLVED to raise NO OBJECTION to this planning application, on condition that the agreed working
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	hours are adhered to. The Committee questions the necessity of installing a new Armco steel barrier rather than using more traditional fencing or hedging. The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous).
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One representation received from a local resident raising the following concerns: - Trees have already been removed - Opening hours of the site are contrary to what is approved (<i>Officer comment: A potential breach of the conditioned operating hours cannot influence the determination of this application and will be investigated separately.</i>) - HGVs frequently queue outside of the site, blocking the road which is already busy.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is a commercial building material yard located on Reading Road, Finchampstead. The site primarily comprises of two main buildings; the trade counter/office building on the site's south-western frontage and a large, industrial storage building to the far south-east (rear) of the site. In between the two buildings are large areas of concrete hardstanding that host several large industrial shelving units for building materials.

The site is enclosed by existing metal vehicle gates that are well set back from the roadside. Parking for the site is to the north (side of the site), with a central access road running through the site for HGV access/turning.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature, characterised by linear development along both sides of the road. Whilst a semi-built-up area, the site is located in the Countryside for the purposes of policy assessment.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed erection of a storage outbuilding to the rear of the site, the repositioning of the entrance gate/alterations to boundary treatments, changes to site layout (mainly impacting parking). The proposal also includes the demolition of a side extension on the northern side elevation of the existing storage building to the rear of the site.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning

applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy Context:

Local Plan Update (LPU):

The Council are also progressing with their Local Plan Update (LPU) which has progressed beyond the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) stage, with representations received on the plan's legal compliance and soundness between 30 September and 13 November 2024.

The Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) consultation has now closed and the Council have now analysed the representations received. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025. Hearings with designated Inspectors occurred in November 2025.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive.

The Council however acknowledge that there are unresolved objections on substantive grounds pursuant on the majority of relevant policies listed above, meaning weight attracted to these policies is limited.

Core Strategy 2010:

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.

National Planning Policy Framework:

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, 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 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.

Assessment:

With regards to criterion 1 of CP11, there is no specific definition of what constitutes a rural enterprise. The proposals involve alterations and the development of an existing enterprise within the Countryside. Therefore, broad compliance with criterion 1 is achieved.

With regards to criterion 2, the new storage building has a modest footprint and would be located within the existing development envelope of the site, located on an area of existing hardstanding. Similarly, the proposed gate would remain within the site's development envelope and would still be legibly set back from the roadside. Other changes to the site layout would have a negligible impact on the openness of the Countryside, aided by the demolition of an existing side extension. Overall, the proposals would not lead to the excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings on site. Compliance with criterion 2 is

therefore achieved.

Criterion 3 is not relevant to the development proposals.

To be considered acceptable in principle, compliance with the first three criteria of CP11 is required. Compliance with criteria 1 and 2 are achieved and criterion 3 is not relevant. Therefore, the development is considered acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area:

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 and contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

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).

With regards to the storage building to the rear, it would be comprised of a lightweight metal/ aluminium structure with an open doorway, painted metal walls and thermo-translucent roof coverings and gables. The building will provide an additional covered storage area for building materials. The height of the building would be 7.5 metres which is approximately 0.5 metres taller than the existing storage building it would be sited adjacent to.

The building is expectedly utilitarian in appearance, but this would be in-keeping with the immediate locale of the site. Further afield, there would be limited to no views of the building's form, limited to fleeting views by vehicles and pedestrians travelling past the site on Reading Road to the west. Overall, it would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

The internal changes to the site layout would have negligible visual impacts; storage areas would be placed further to the rear of the site, reducing overall visual prominence.

With regards to the vehicle gate, it would be 1.8 metres tall and similar in appearance to the existing gate, albeit brought closer to the site's frontage on Reading Road. The gate would still be legibly set back from the roadside, reducing its visual prominence. Its overall impact on the character of the area would be limited given the lack of change in character compared to the gate that exists currently and would be acceptable.

The fencing associated with the vehicle gate would be standard 1.8 metre close boarded timber fencing. Such boundary treatments are common within the locale and as such would not be out of keeping with the area, with its visual prominence reduced due to the set back from the roadside. Overall, the fencing would have an acceptable

impact on the character of the area.

With regards to the Armco barrier abutting no.92a Finchampstead Road, it is only 0.75 metres tall and would be located adjacent to the site's southern boundary shared with no.92 Reading Road. Its modest height raises no character concerns.

It is acknowledged that a handful of unprotected trees on the northern side of the site's frontage have already been removed to facilitate the development. These trees were unprotected and did not require permission to be removed; therefore, no objections are raised regarding their loss.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

Due to the nature of the proposals, there are no concerns on these grounds.

Overbearing and Loss of Light:

The new storage building would maintain a separation distance of 4 metres from no.92a Finchampstead Road's rear garden boundary. The scale of the building and distance from the boundary does not raise any concerns on these grounds, assisted by the fact that no.92a's garden is very generous in width/depth and well screened by coniferous vegetation.

The plans indicate that storage areas will be created adjacent to the boundary with no.100 Reading Road to the immediate north, following demolition of the side extension on the existing storage building. Bulk storage in this location does not pose any adverse overbearing/overlooking concerns for similar reasons raised regarding no.92a Finchampstead Road, insofar that no.100's garden is very generous in size, severely limiting any impacts on primary amenity space.

The proposed vehicle gate and associated fencing, by reason of its location, poses no overbearing and loss of light concerns.

The Armco barrier is only 0.75 metres tall and would be located adjacent to the site's southern boundary shared with no.92 Reading Road. Its modest height raises no overbearing concerns.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The development includes alterations to the existing parking layout to accommodate the relocated entrance gate. In total there would be 12 staff parking spaces, 9 of which would be in a tandem layout. There are also 5 customer parking spaces further into the site. WBC Highways have no objections to the parking plan but due to the tandem nature of the majority of the staff parking, a Parking Management Plan will be secured via condition.

There is no anticipated increase in HGV vehicle movements as the development is purely to increase storage space on site. Swept paths have been provided to demonstrate that HGVs can continue to safely enter and exit the application site. WBC Highways consider these acceptable.

Overall, there are no concerns regarding Highway Safety. Subject to the

aforementioned Parking Management Plan, WBC Highways raise no objections.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at very low risk of surface water flooding. The development would all be located within existing areas of impermeable hardstanding.

WBC Drainage have no objections to the development but have requested a drainage strategy as a condition. The Case Officer considers this request unnecessary due to the very low risk of fluvial and surface water flood risk of the site, plus the works are located on areas of existing hardstanding.

Landscape and Trees:

With regards to the storage building, it would be positioned at the rear of the site on existing hard standing and therefore will not have any additional impact on the ancient woodland to the rear of the site.

With regards to the parking alterations and new gate/fencing, the photos provided with the application shows the area proposed for additional parking at the site entrance has already been cleared of vegetation and trees. These trees were not protected and did not look high quality. Trees to the south of the parking area and adjacent to Reading Road have been retained. As such, WBC Landscape and Trees raise no objections to the proposals.

Ecology:

The application site lies immediately west of Poor's Wood, a designated Ancient Woodland. There are no anticipated impacts on the Ancient Woodland as a result of the proposed development, but a condition will be imposed restricting any lighting on the new storage building to protect any overspill onto the habitat to the rear.

The site is also located in a Green Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts, the lowest risk zone. The development is also primarily located on areas of existing hardstanding, meaning there is no anticipated impacts on this 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 habitat baseline for the existing site is 0.18 habitat units. The proposed development will result in a net loss of 0.17 habitat units, equating to a 96.34%

decrease. As per the conclusions of the report, this cannot be achieved through on-site mitigation and will have to be secured through off-site mitigation.

Final details of the BNG mitigation off-site will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan, automatically applied to the permission if approved.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval.

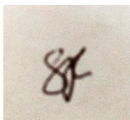
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	10 December 2025
Earliest date for decision:	7 November 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10.12.25