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Without prejudice

Planning Services
Wokingham Borough Council

Via Email

15th November 2024

Dear Sirs

**Change of use of existing building to allow use for Class E use(s)
At Hennerton Golf Club, Crazies Hill, Wargrave, RG10 8LT**

Please find enclosed a without prejudice planning application. We write this letter as an all-in-one letter to cover the submission of a planning application for the change of use of the building which adjoins the driving range at Hennerton Golf Club to use within Use Class E as explained within this letter. The use is already in place and the application is retrospective. This application consists of:

- Application form
- Fee
- Site location plan
- Site plan (existing and proposed are the same)
- Floor plan (pre-)existing
- Floor plan proposed
- Community Infrastructure Levy form 1
- Justification statement/planning statement

If you have any questions about this submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

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Introduction

1. Hennerton Golf Club is situated about 3km to the south-east of Henley-on-Thames town centre and 1km to the north of Wargrave, within the countryside in Wokingham Borough. The golf club was established in 1992 and received planning permission in 2003 to expand from 9 holes to an 18-hole course. An extension to the club house was allowed in 2009. It has a club house and a driving range. The latter being located to the northern part of the site immediately adjacent to the car park. Balls are hit out of a shelter building in an easterly direction into a captive area. The shelter is the eastern side of a former farm building that has a portal frame construction and low pitched roof. The shelter slightly protrudes from the main building on its northern side and is segregated from the rest of the building. It is the western part of the building which is subject of this application. The two images below highlight the application building.

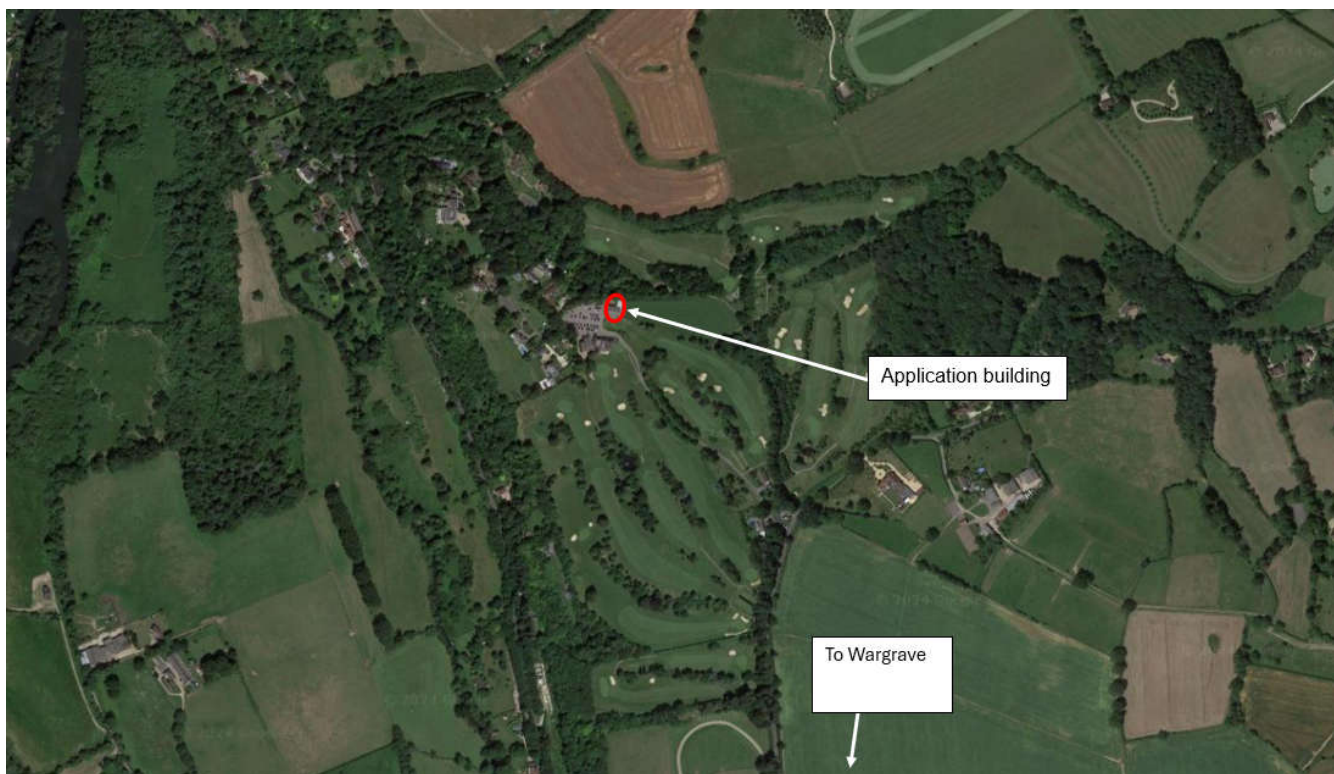


Figure 1 - Aerial view of Hennerton Golf Club and application site

2. To ensure the viability of the business, expand the offering available at the club and make use of an underused building the site owners have diversified operations, which includes three elements within the building attached to the back of the driving range shelter. In the building previously used as a golf shop and as offices three different uses have taken place each of which falls within the wide scoping Use Class E. Firstly, there is the addition of a training room. This is a purposely fitted-out training room where the shop once operated (the pro-shop is now inside the main club house). Herein a personal trainer instructor carries out 1 to 1 tuition and training regimes with clientele.



Figure 2- application building and context

3. Secondly in what was previously used as offices on the northern side of the training room is an office and display area for a local firm of joiners/builders. This is used as an administrative area for the firm which has fabrication premises elsewhere (Shiplake) but also as a shop window for their work. To attract custom to their business, in addition to the administrative desk, they have a range of full-scale pieces on show to show the quality of their work, which it would not be appropriate to have within their workshop (see images below). There is no fabrication on the application site. The office is not manned daily but people are able to enter the display area when the golf course is open.
4. Thirdly, a small room at the back of the building is set up as a barber and treatment room.
5. There is no change to the driving range shelter nor is there proposed to be and there have been no external works to facilitate these three new activities. During the covid pandemic when there was a change in behaviours this building became largely unused. In the belief that no consent was required (and hence why this is a without prejudice application) the site owners in discussion with the three occupiers laid out the building which has now been in use as described about for about two years.

6. All these new activities fall within Use Class E the wide-ranging use class covering commercial, business and service. This application has been requested by the Council because it believes that planning permission is required for these activities as a change of use.
7. The nature of the previous use of the building and amount of time the building had been in that use is ambiguous at present, but as the new uses are considered acceptable on merit further exploration on the lawfulness of the previous use is not pursued within this letter. This application seeks planning permission to regularise the present use(s).



Figure 3- interior of the office cum display area



Figure 4- interior of barber treatment room

Planning context

8. The site is situated within the Metropolitan Green belt. The site is not in a conservation area nor in the setting of any listed buildings. The site is not in a National Landscape nor SSSI. The site is situated in flood zone 1- that at least risk of flooding- the club house is situated on high ground of the local plateau.

Relevant Planning history

35041 planning permission was granted on appeal in May 1990 for the change of use of farm land to recreate a (9 hole) golf course

F/2003/8447- Proposed change of use of land from agricultural to form extension to existing 9-hole golf course to form 18 holes. – Approved 1st October 2003

F/2004/2609 - Proposed replacement of 6.5m high driving range fence with 10m high safety netting. Retrospective. – Approved 2nd September 2004

F/2009/0353 - Proposed erection of single storey side extension to clubhouse and re-roofing of spike bar and conservatory. – Approved 31st March 2009

Relevant planning policy

9. Planning law (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990) requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, including any local and neighbourhood plans that have been brought into force, unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

The Development Plan

Wokingham Core Strategy 2026

CP1 – Sustainable Development

CP3 – General principles of development

CP4 – Improvement and provision of infrastructure

CP6 – Managing Travel Demand

CP7 – Biodiversity

CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)

CP12 -Green belt

CP15 - Employment Development

Managing Development Delivery (MDD) 2026

CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC02 – Development Limits
CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
CC07 – Parking
TB21 – Landscape Character
TB901 – Development in the Green Belt

Other relevant policy/guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

Para 89 – Rural Enterprise

Para 154 – Inappropriate development in the green belt

Planning considerations

11. The use of the site as a golf club was allowed on appeal in 1992 under reference 35041.
12. The subject building was converted from farm use at the beginning of the golf course's creation. There was a golf shop operated separately from the golf course and swing tuition in the southern section and the northern section was used for administration and also by an unrelated company called Medi-link (a medicinal supply company/broker). The operators of medi-link have relocated out of the district and the pro-shop now operates from the club house to the south of the car park
13. Since becoming unused for its previous uses subsequent to 2020 the building has been used as a personal trainers room, office cum builders show room, and builders show room. The current mix of uses has not previously been subject of an application, hence this submission.
14. Core policy 11 of the Wokingham Core Strategy 2026 (WCS states that proposals outside the development limits (i.e. outside settlements and in the open countryside) will not be allowed unless the proposal contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprise with the borough, that it does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. Development should be contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion.
15. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 88 states that policies and decisions should enable 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 and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
16. In accordance with CP11, the present businesses comprise a diversification of use of the building in a rural area through the establishment of three diverse and sustainable small businesses. The businesses have not caused any encroachment or expansion of

development away from the original building. The building has been converted via internal layout changes only to enable the functioning of the three enterprises. All the uses operate only internally in this durable building.

17. CP15 may not be relevant, but it states that there should be no net loss of existing B use floor space. This policy is somewhat outdated following the Use Class Changes made in 2020. It is considered that this policy would address uses within current Use Class Eg(i) office, Eg(ii) research, Eg(iii) light industrial process and B2 and B8 uses. The policy states that provision will be made for a range of sizes, types, quality and locations of premises and sites in order to meet incubator/start up, move on, expansion and investment accommodation needs and having regard to the needs of specific sectors of the business community.
18. In accordance with CP15 the businesses have made efficient use of existing previously developed land through the conversion of an existing building. There has been a change to Class E use of the whole building (excluding driving range) which is in our view generally acceptable. Only the former office use would have been B1 pre-2020 when uses were differently classified but there has been no loss of (former) B use floorspace as this has been retained in the present office. Thus if policy needs to be considered there is no conflict, there are still the same sorts of jobs available, and noting that there is no change of use to move to another subclass within modern Class E, there can be legitimate moves away from the old B1 uses.
19. The premises for the barbers, trainer and the builders' office/showroom, are small independent business comprising startups and have low employee numbers, which the policy seeks to achieve.
20. The proposed mixed use of the building will allow these small businesses to thrive. The proposed use is supported by CP11 and CP15 and through national policy, with rural diversification and enterprise supported in the district and in England, comprising a core element of sustainable development. The present use of the building is acceptable in principle.
21. Core policy 3 of the core strategy states that planning permission will be granted where there is no loss of community/recreational facilities. The indoor training room and personal training use comprise indoor sport and recreational facilities (as defined by use class E), so there is no net loss in recreational floorspace. The proposal is compliant with policy CP3. In any event the new activities are expressly designed to support the golf course and ensure that the overall business remains viable, which is necessary to ensure the greater good of retaining golf on the wider site. For instance, there is synergy between the physical training and being fit and able to play golf, and also for the barbers and treatment room for people already on site. Haircutting and treatment being by appointment only, but suitable for people already on site prior to playing or before leaving once having played. Physical treatment is highly compatible with the overall site use.

22. The administration office for the building company is useful to the golf course. The company has through its other work done repair and maintenance work on the site. However the opportunity to create something of a 'shop window' to people playing golf is useful. Instead of, as happens at many sporting venues, displaying banners, TVs and hoarding advertising the business, golfers are able to peruse the quality of work, by seeing real products, even when the site is unstaffed. It is a very low key affair with one or two office staff and little traffic other than by those staff or people visiting them. This is deemed a compatible use with the other premises.
23. There is no undue impact to the wider environment through the operations running out of the building, as is explained below.

Possible Impact on the Green Belt

24. Core policy 12 states that planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the metropolitan green belt in accordance with former PPG2, now defined in chapter 13 of the NPPF. TB01 refers to national policy defined in the NPPF. NPPF Para 154g confirms that the reuse of buildings in the green belt is permissible in principle. As the uses are all confined to the building there is no Green Belt openness impact.
25. There are no physical alterations- there is a small amount of external parking associated with the enterprises but this is no greater than what was associated with the former use, and occurs only in an existing car parking area, and is indistinguishable from golf parking. It is a shared car park.
26. No operational development has taken place which might be inappropriate in the green belt, thus the proposal is in accordance with policy CP12 and NPPF para 154. This application to regularise the use of the building for new usage is in accordance with the requirements of the development plan and NPPF and does not comprise inappropriate development in the green belt.

Impact to the character and visual amenity of the area

27. As no works have occurred there has been no impact on the character of the area. The parking all already exists. There is some discreet signage but none of this needs consent and it is not visible from the wider area. Only someone stood right at the door would know that these uses are in place. The principle impact on the local area is of the main building. The use that goes on within has no impact on visual amenity.

Transport

28. In accordance with CP6 there is adequate parking available for the operation of the businesses in addition to golfing.

29. The nature of the separate businesses on site will not generate any additional vehicular traffic in comparison to past use of the building. The main attraction of the site is for its use as a golf facility and it will be noted that there is a car park with capacity of at least 106 spaces. There are no active sales or large quantities of materials brought and sold at the site, it is only a display showroom to showcase the services/products to building business provides to people already on site for golf, in reality a large advert. Plus the one or two office staff (who are not full-time). The barbers use also is very small and capitalises on the footfall already associated with the golf club for cutting by appointment, and relates to a single employee who also has other premises.
30. For the personal trainer, there is no discernible intensification in the vehicular movements associated with the use of the premises compared to if people had been having tuition inside the building for golf. One form of one- on-one sporting/leisure enterprise has been swapped for another. This diversity being helpful to the golf course in this challenging economic environment.
31. The Class E uses being carried out do not produce any additional traffic as compared to if the operations at the building were either operated fully for golf or golf related activities, or as the building had been used previously including the medi-link offices, or via association with other mainly outdoor recreation use which would be permitted/not need consent.
32. Many trips are shared trips to the site and the site is accessible from Wargrave which has a rail station and can be considered accessible such is the proximity and ease of connection. There is a wide spread of existing vehicle movements across the day such is the nature of golf and the socialising associated with that. There is no addition to peak hour traffic such is the nature of the use(s).
33. Therefore there is no transport harm generated by this retrospective application for planning permission to diversify the operations of this rural business.

Ecology

34. No operational development has taken place to allow the uses to begin, and there has been with no degradation of onsite habitat. There is no operational development proposed, the proposal will affect less than 25sqm of onsite habitat. In addition, the proposal is retrospective and so is not subject to meeting the statutory Biodiversity net gain of 10% baseline on site. Nor is there any impact on priority habitat. In accordance with Core Policy 7 this application will not harm any national or locally designated areas. There are no protected species on the site identified that will be harmed by allowing the development.

Amenity

35. The site is located centrally to a golf course. The building is far from residential properties and the uses concerned are all daytime uses that don't create noise. There is no potential for harm to residential amenity. Hours of use are variable between the three components but as the site generally has long and uncontrolled hours there is no need to control hours of use on this particular building.

Summary

36. Given these considerations there would seem no reason to object to the proposal and planning permission can be granted. The proposal accords with the development plan, as demonstrated above..