

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

LISA SPIERS

PLANNING STATEMENT

**BROADACRE PLACE
BROADCOMMON ROAD
HURST
WOKINGHAM
RG10 0RE**

Conversion of part of existing equipment store to residential use with alterations to roof and existing elevations to provide new windows and doors and a new enclosed entrance porch. Removal of existing log cabin

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Lisa Spiers for the partial conversion of an existing equipment store to residential use with alterations to the roof and elevations to provide new windows and doors together with an enclosed entrance porch. The proposal also includes the removal of the existing log cabin which was originally granted planning permission in 2009 for seasonal occupation to house the applicant's polo groom for a 5 year temporary period. This was subsequently followed by a further temporary permission for 5 years. Permanent permission was granted to retain the log cabin in August 2020 under ref.201418. The re-siting of the log cabin was approved in 2023 and whilst this has not been implemented it is still extant.
- 1.2 The equipment store was originally granted permission in 2008 with an increase in height to the roof approved in 2012.
- 1.3 Planning permission has recently been granted to convert part of the equipment store under application ref.251843 in September 2025. This application maintains the same extent of floor area proposed for conversion under this permission with the other main changes being some minor external and internal alterations and a new enclosed entrance porch. The inclusion of the entrance porch is the sole reason that this proposal was not submitted under a S.73 application.
- 1.4 The reasons for proposing a partial conversion remain the same as the earlier approval which is due to the fact that a large portion of the equipment store has become redundant for storage use. When the store was originally approved in 2008, it was commonplace for the polo player to use their own equipment to maintain the holding. However, due to rising costs and security concerns, the situation has changed, and it is now increasingly more common on cost effectiveness grounds to outsource this to external contractors leading to the unused space which can now be re-used for grooms' accommodation.

- 1.5 As stated above, the existing log cabin will be removed. In conjunction with the grant of permission, the owner would also enhance the CCTV security camera coverage to improve visibility of the site to encompass all areas.

2 APPLICATION SITE HISTORY

- 2.1 Planning permission for the keeping of horses and the construction of the stable block was originally granted in 1997 under planning ref. 96/64623/F. Following the refusal of two applications for barns in 1998 (97/65625/F) and 1999 (98/68504/F) and refusal for a mobile home (on the grounds of insufficient justification) and barn in 2001 (F/2001/4399), planning permission was granted in 2002 under ref.F/2002/6112 for the erection of a barn and formation of a ménage. The barn was subsequently constructed although the ménage element has never been implemented.
- 2.2 Since acquiring the site in 2004, the current owner Lisa Spiers has sought to further improve the facilities at the site. In February 2008, planning permission was granted for an equipment store, mess room and WC together with an increase in the height of the entrance gates under ref. F/2007/3050. This consent was amended in July 2008 under ref. F/2008/1419 by re-siting the new store in the location of the existing barn and subsequently relocating the barn on the site where the store was proposed to be sited. The height of the store / workshop was increased by 1.2m from 4.6m to 5.8m under application ref. F/2012/1254 in August 2012.
- 2.3 In June 2016, permission was granted for a new all-weather surface exercise track for polo ponies (F/2015/0887). A revised location of the track was subsequently approved in November 2018 under ref.182579. This was implemented in March 2019.
- 2.4 Planning permission for a mobile home was granted (5-year period) in July 2009 under planning permission ref. F/2009/1060. The applicant was granted permission for 12-month occupation of the mobile home in August 2015 for a further 5 year period. This permission was made permanent in August 2020 under application ref.201418. Planning permission was granted in December 2023 (Ref.232230) to re-site the existing log cabin a short distance to the south of the existing structure and

with a different orientation (i.e. facing the main entrance). This permission has not been implemented but is still extant.

- 2.5 As stated above, permission was granted in September 2025 (ref.251843) to convert part of the equipment store to residential use. This revised proposal is largely identical to this permission as it also seeks minor alterations to the building. The main difference is that this revised proposal includes a modest enclosed entrance porch.

3 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 Relevant planning policy guidance is contained within the adopted Core Strategy.

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)

3.2 Policy CP3 sets out the general principles for development proposals. The policy requires, amongst other matters, that proposals are:

- Of an appropriate scale, activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and design;
- Provide for a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;
- Use the potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;
- Contribute to a sense of place;
- Do not lead to a net loss of recreational facilities / land or infrastructure.

3.3 Policy CP11 is concerned solely with proposals outside the development limits including the countryside. It aims to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment outside of settlement boundaries generally by restricting development. Acceptable development includes proposals for sustainable rural enterprises or countryside recreation. The criteria requires that in assessing new development, that proposals do not result in excessive encroachment upon the countryside or expanding development away from the original buildings.

3.4 In respect to conversions, this is acceptable where the building is suitably located and appropriate for conversion.

4 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Planning permission for the change of use of this holding to equestrian use was originally granted in 1997 under planning permission ref. 96/64623/F. The current owner, Lisa Spiers purchased the holding including the stables, barn and yard in 2004 with the intention of keeping her own 'string' of polo ponies on the site. The activity is a private recreational use with 5-6 polo ponies being based on the property. Initially the ponies were used for polo between early March and the end of September on grass surfaces. However, the sport has evolved and is now played between October and March (both indoors and outdoors) on all-weather surfaces, and this is an activity that the applicant regularly undertakes.
- 4.2 The Council granted a permanent planning permission for the dwelling in August 2020 under ref.201418. A re-siting of the log cabin was approved in December 2023 although this has not been implemented. The applicant has continued to invest in further facilities which support the all-year round polo use including the granting of permission for an all-weather exercise track which has also been implemented (March 2019).
- 4.3 Attached to this statement at appendix 1 is a personal statement from the owner/applicant setting out the case in more detail and corroborating the facts provided in this Planning Statement. This information was also provided under the earlier approval and is lodged for completeness.
- 4.4 The partial conversion of the store would include some modest fenestration changes as well as the insertion of a new first floor level inside part of the building to house the sleeping accommodation and a modest enclosed entrance porch. Apart from the removal of the log cabin, the layout of the yard would otherwise remain unchanged.
- 4.5 As stated above and under the earlier submission, the reason for submitting the application is due to the gradual shift in maintenance practices which has taken place over the past several years. Whereas most private polo enterprises would

have typically owned their own maintenance equipment (i.e. tractor, tedder, topper, hay rake, baler, trailer, hedge cutter etc), there is now a greater tendency for these activities to be contracted to specialist contractor firms on cost grounds. This has over time led to a large part of the existing storage building becoming redundant and it is this space which the owner now wishes to utilise for a replacement residential use.

- 4.6 Planning permission has already been granted for an identical extent of conversion and floorspace through planning permission ref.251843 earlier this year. This proposal is also for minor alterations to the external elevations and a new first floor level, but with the addition of a small enclosed entrance porch. The application is otherwise almost identical to the earlier approval which remains extant.
- 4.7 This revised proposal is still considered to meet the Development Plan as set out below:

- The proposed conversion and removal of the log cabin do not conflict with any of the general principles for development (Policy CP3) as the same number of dwellings are being maintained (i.e. one dwelling replacing another);
- The proposal continues to amount to a sustainable rural enterprise and a form of countryside recreation. The essential need has already been established on numerous occasions, and the Council have consistently concluded that this need justifies onsite groom presence for supervision and animal welfare purposes;
- The proposal would not materially result in any form of encroachment away from the original buildings as the proposal is to utilise the redundant space within the existing storage building. The application includes a modest extension to the existing building in the form of a small enclosed porch (circa 5sqm) together with modest changes to the buildings fenestration through the insertion of new windows and doors with the internal introduction of a new first floor level across part of the building.

The building itself is of a substantial construction and is appropriate for conversion in accordance with paragraph (3) of CS Policy CP11;

- In terms of volume uplift, the proposal will be as follows:

Existing volume = 670m3

Proposed volume = 681m3

Proposed % uplift = 1.64% increase

- The proposal would result in substantial improvements to the spread of built form across the site as the existing dwelling which is housed within the log cabin would be removed. The removal of the log cabin would therefore enhance the separate identity of neighbouring settlements, thereby exceeding the principal aim of Policy CP11 which seeks to 'protect' the separate identity of settlements. The small porch is enclosed on two sides by existing built form and would therefore not be in conflict with Policy CP11 as the spread of development would not materially change;
- In conjunction with the proposed conversion works, the applicant would enhance the security of the yard by installing a new CCTV camera system.

Planning balance and conclusions

4.8 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning 1990 require that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. On this occasion, the proposal is in full compliance with Policy CP11 on the basis that it would enhance the separate identity of settlements whilst also resulting in a marked reduction in the expansion of development away from the site's original buildings. The need for an essential rural worker remains and this proposal includes enhanced surveillance to aid crime

prevention and to benefit animal welfare. The site already has permission to convert the same extent of the equipment store to a residential use (251843) and therefore this permission is a material consideration to be considered against the changes proposed which are modest in their extent.

5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The application is to convert part of the existing equipment store to residential use (with associated alterations and an enclosed porch) and to remove the existing log cabin which has a permanent permission in its current location. The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The same extent of the equipment store already has planning permission for residential re-use under application ref.251843 (granted 12.09.25). This revised application is also for modest external alterations with an alternative internal layout and external fenestration. The addition of a small porch precludes these changes being considered under a S.73 submission. This proposal is therefore an alternative application to the permission already granted which is an important material consideration and a fallback position in terms of how this application should be considered.
- ii) The justification for the conversion remains the same as the earlier permission which is that the space to be converted has gradually arisen over several years through changes in the way that the holding is maintained which has meant that the owner no longer keeps large maintenance equipment on-site but instead outsources the main tasks on cost grounds.
- iii) As agreed under the earlier permission, the building is of substantial construction and is suitable for conversion in accordance with paragraph (3) of CS Policy CP11. Modest alterations to the exterior are required together with the insertion of a new first floor level. A small enclosed entrance porch is the only physical extension required in terms of additional built footprint.
- iv) The existing log cabin (which has a permanent permission) would be removed which would enhance the separate identity of neighbouring settlements thereby exceeding the intentions of CS Policy CP11 which aims to 'protect' the separate identity of settlements. The small porch would be

attached to two existing external walls and would therefore not be in conflict with Policy CP11.

- v) The applicant intends to enhance on-site security and monitoring of animal welfare through the introduction of a new CCTV camera system providing greater coverage.
- vi) The proposal for a replacement dwelling fully complies with CS Policies CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy.

APPENDIX 1

Broadacre Place
Broadcommon Road
Hurst
Reading
RG10 0RE

To Whom it may concern
Wokingham Borough Council

30th July 2025

Dear Sir/Madam,

I purchased Broadacre Place in 2004 for keeping my polo ponies. Over that time the level of polo I play has progressed and increased to a semi-professional level. I have no plans to change this and will continue playing for the foreseeable future. In addition, I have increased my string of polo ponies from 5 to 6 to enable me to keep playing at the current level. The fact that I now play the sport all year round is reflected in the current permission for the log cabin to remain permanently on the site.

The site is approaching 7 acres which requires considerable management and maintenance. In addition, I used to cut/make hay from the paddocks. I owned all of the associated equipment to do so (Tractor, Topper, Tedder, Hay Rake, Baler, Trailer, Hedge cutter etc) which was stored in the equipment storage building. However, over time, the ongoing servicing and maintenance costs of the equipment became very expensive by comparison with an external contractor completing the work instead. It is much more common place these days for external contractors to be used with polo sites of this size. Having therefore gradually sold the equipment it has resulted in surplus space in the equipment storage building. I do not intend purchasing equipment of this nature again in the future as it is not viable anymore.

Whilst planning permission was granted for the re-siting of the log cabin, I no longer feel this structure is necessary when the accommodation can be provided in the surplus space in the existing equipment storage building. It would consolidate the number of buildings on site and reduce maintenance costs and there would be no change in terms of the permanent presence of residential accommodation on the site.

The existing log cabin provides reasonable (but not comprehensive) visibility of the site and I therefore intend to install an upgraded (discrete) CCTV system to provide improved visibility covering the full site by locating additional cameras on the existing buildings. This will improve the surveillance from both a security (of the site) and welfare perspective of the horses.

As part of these proposals, the existing log cabin would be removed once the new accommodation is completed and occupied and I am happy to accept a planning condition to this effect.

Yours faithfully,

Lisa Spiers