

Planning and Development
Wokingham Borough Council
Shute End
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 1BN

Our ref: 5132

26 January 2026

Dear Sir/Madam

PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE EXTENSION OF EXISTING CAFÉ TO PROVIDE ENCLOSURE FOR WALK IN FRIDGE – LOCKEY FARM, ARBORFIELD CROSS, READING RG2 9JH

We are instructed to submit the enclosed planning application for Mr Graham Adams for the above development at Lockey Farm. Enclosed with the application is the following:

- Site Location Plan: 2203 – P500 P2
- Block Plan: 2203 – P501 P2
- Proposed Plan: 2203 – P502 P2
- Ground Floor Plan – (Existing): 2203 - P101 P3
- External Elevations (Existing): 2203 – P102 P2
- CIL Form 1

The contents of this letter should be taken to be the supporting planning statement.

The Site

The application site is located off the Sindlesham Road (B3030) and relates to an existing café on Lockey Farm near to the settlement of Arborfield Cross.

The sites surroundings are of a mixed form, use and development. Immediately to the south of the site are the settlements of Arborfield Cross and Arborfield. To the north and east are areas of more open countryside with a few dispersed residential dwellings, although the more immediate surrounds are made up of various buildings and uses, including agricultural, retail and commercial within the Lockey Farm, as well as an outdoor play area.

The Proposal

The proposed development relates to the construction of a single storey enclosure to the rear of the existing café to house a walk-in-fridge. The new structure, which has already been constructed, is a single storey timber framed building finished in timber boarding to match the external appearance of the existing café. It is located between the cafe and existing outbuilding and is accessed externally. It has been made

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necessary to provide additional cold storage for foods/ingredients for the café and to maintain food hygiene standards.

Planning Assessment

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of this application the Development Plan comprises of:

- Adopted Core Strategy (CS) Development Plan Document - January 2010
- Adopted Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan – February 2014
- Policies Map

The Council's new Local Plan Update 2023-2040 has also been prepared and is currently going through its examination stages. It does not yet have full weight but is a material planning consideration.

Regard is also given to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government's planning policy aims and objectives. It sits outside of the statutory development plan but is a weighty material planning consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Principle of Development

Core Strategy Policy CP11 relates to development in the countryside and serves the purpose of seeking to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the borough's environment. Whilst it serves to restrict development in the countryside it does allow for development 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) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement;

In this case the proposal relates to an existing café which contributes towards the rural diversification of Lockey Farm and has operated since 2013. The café is well used by visitors to the farm which provides various offerings to the public that enable access and enjoyment of the countryside in this location.

This modest addition sits behind the main café building in a gap between it and an existing outbuilding. It measures circa. 10sqm (internally) and is single storey only, designed to house the walk-in-fridge. It is not excessive in size and has not led to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.



Whilst it has led to a new building, or rather an extension to the existing café, Policy CP11 is not consistent with the NPPF in this regard. The NPPF, in seeking to support a prosperous rural economy allows for the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings. The Council's emerging Local Plan (Policy SS5) also allows for extension of existing buildings which do not lead to disproportionate increases in scale, form or footprint beyond the original building.

The development therefore accords with the aims of the Development Plan and NPPF in relation to countryside policies. The principle of development is therefore acceptable.

Design and Neighbouring Amenity

Core Strategy Policy CP3 seeks to ensure that proposals:

"Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life"

In this case the constructed building is small in scale measuring 4.3m (length) x 2.8m (width) x 2.7m (height) and so adds a modest area to the café building. We set out the volume increase below:

Existing building by volume = 485.95m³
Proposed building by volume = 518.45m³
Increase 6.6%

It has been finished in materials that match the main building and so does not out of keeping. Due to the fact that it sits amongst existing structures, the extension also remains relatively concealed and has not material impact on the wider landscape.

In terms of amenity, the building is essentially a cold store. This does not need any extraction and does not emit significant noise (no noise is audible from outside the building) and so there are no impacts in this regard.

Equally, there are no windows with the only opening being the entrance door, so there is no scope for overlooking.

The proposal is therefore considered to be of a design that complies with the aims of the relevant Development Plan policies.

Landscaping Details

Under the Planning Portal requirements, the Council requires 'Landscaping Details' to be submitted. In this case, due to the small scale and nature of the development no new landscaping is proposed.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

Policies CP7 of the Core Strategy and TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Document seek to protect important biodiversity. In this case the site does not form or impact on any sites of national or international importance, and in terms of the site specifics the development made use of land that previously formed part of an outdoor seating area and so had no biodiversity value. The extension has also been added without works to the existing café building or roof. Consequently, there was very little potential for disturbing or effecting any protected species.



In relation to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the proposal falls under the de-minimis exception which applies to developments that:

- Do not impact a priority habitat; and
- Impact less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m x 5m) of non-priority onsite habitat (such as modified grassland); and
- Impact less than 5m for non-priority onsite linear habitats (such as native hedgerows or linear watercourse habitats).

None of the above thresholds are met. Therefore, there is no requirement to provide BNG.

It is otherwise understood that the site is located in an amber risk zone modelled for Great Crested Newts. Notwithstanding, the building sits on an area that previously formed part of the outdoor seating area and therefore was subject to daily footfall from customers and visitors. Therefore it is not considered suitable for GCNs.

Community Involvement Statement

Under the Planning Portal requirements, the Council requires a 'Community Involvement Statement' to be submitted. In this, because of the scale of the development, the application has been discussed with the café managers, which is an appropriate level of engagement for the application. The Council's validation checklist only requires a community involvement statement for major schemes.

Highways

In respect of highway impacts, the undertaken works relates to the existing café operation and has not resulted in any increase in tradable floor area, staff or visitor numbers. Consequently, there are no additional highway impacts associated with the proposal.

Summary and Conclusion

The proposed development, whilst retrospective, relates to an existing business that was formed to help diversify and supplement the existing farm operation. It complies with the aims of Policy CP11 in that it is needed in connection with that business and does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development. Whilst CP11 still direct development to within existing or replacement buildings, this position is inconsistent with the NPPF and policies within the emerging Local Plan. The principle of development is therefore acceptable.

In respect of design and amenity policy requirements, the new building is modest in scale, so not to be out of keeping with the host building in terms of size, scale, mass, layout, built form, height, etc. The choice of materials also matches the host building so again is in keeping. Similarly, the use of the extension for a walk-in-fridge does not present any amenity issues.

Due to its location, the extension is also visually contained by other development and so it has not impacted on the wider landscape or character of the countryside. It is also considered that the proposal is acceptable in all other respects.

In conclusion, the proposal has not resulted in harm, and no material planning considerations weigh against the proposal. Planning permission should therefore be granted.



Should the appointed Case Officer wish to discuss the application or elements of it, then please contact the writer.

Kind Regards

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