

# MEMORANDUM

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                           |                |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| <b>From:</b>                | Brigitte Crafer<br>Landscape Architect                                                                                                                                                              | <b>To (Case Officer):</b> | Kieran Neumann |
| <b>Service</b>              | WBC Drainage                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>App No:</b>            | 250785         |
| <b>Address:</b>             | Newlands, Mole Road, Sindlesham.                                                                                                                                                                    |                           |                |
| <b>Type of Development:</b> | Other Change of Use                                                                                                                                                                                 |                           |                |
| <b>Proposal:</b>            | Full application for the change of use of land and 3no. buildings to equestrian, erection of 1no. stable building and creation of a riding arena with associated engineering works. (Retrospective) |                           |                |
| <b>Site Visit Made:</b>     | Yes/No                                                                                                                                                                                              |                           |                |

## Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ Recommend approval but with condition(s) & reason(s) **stated below**;  
☐ Recommend approval with no conditions  
☐ Recommend refusal for the reason(s) **stated below**;  
☐ Negotiate the amendments **stated below**; or  
☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**.

## Comments On Proposal

The site is located in the Countryside and is within the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape and located in an area of mature woodland surrounded by improved grassland, woodpasture and parkland. Phase 1 habitat of broadleaved semi natural woodland within which are many veteran and notable trees surrounds the site. The site is in close proximity to the Coombes ANSW to the SE and the historic garden of Bearwood College to the east.

Woodland protected by TPO 1825/2021 extends into the western side of the site.

The site is within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Area Bearwood Sand and Gravel Hills. Valuable Landscape Attributes relevant to the site include;

- ***Elevated wooded hills forming a backdrop to the wider landscape and western settlement edge of Wokingham. The wooded hills provide physical and visual separation between settlements, including Wokingham and Reading, and the future development at Arborfield Garrison (Arborfield SDL) to the south of the area.***
- ***Varied topography which forms an intricate range of landscape spaces and backdrops emphasised by the largely enclosed and wooded***

*nature of the core of the area, with views out over farmland to the wider countryside.*

- ***Large expanses of mature mixed woodland*** which are designated as BAP priority habitats and LWS and provide important ecological habitats and a sense of place. Stands of Scots pine and beech woodlands on the hilltops provide characteristic landmark features.
- ***Peaceful secluded character*** with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies, largely unsettled and with limited access, which provides a rural retreat in close proximity to urban areas.

The site sits on sloping land and is somewhat screened by the relationship between the topography and the woodland.

Key issues affecting the L2 character relevant to the site are;

- *Decline in livestock grazing and conversion to horse and pony paddocks with temporary fencing and structures resulting in a decline in rural intactness*
- *Lack of the recruitment of very young trees (through natural regeneration or planting) required to rebalance the age structure of parkland and hedgerow trees is an ongoing threat to the character of the landscape.*
- *Pressure for alternative land uses within the woodlands leading to the erosion, clearance or inappropriate management of woodland areas.*
- *Pressure for built development on the wooded skyline leading to visual intrusion in the elevated landscape and in views to the wooded backdrop from elsewhere.*
- *The Landscape Strategy is to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and parkland character of the landscape and its biodiversity. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the unsettled character of the area.*

Landscape Guidelines relevant to the site include;

- **Conserve distinctive wooded skylines.** Consider the impact of any development on skylines, particularly where it would have the potential to be highly visible from adjacent character areas.
- **Conserve and enhance the wooded character of the landscape** including BAP priority habitats, ancient woodlands, and designated LWS. Continue to promote appropriate management through natural regeneration
- **Conserve and protect the landscape pattern of mixed woodland and pasture in the south of the area** and conserve and enhance the open and rural qualities of the pastureland on the edge of the landscape. Encourage appropriate management of grassland by grazing.

- **Manage the integration of equine related activities into the landscape** through the maintenance of existing boundaries and control of associated built elements.

There is sparse information relating to the application, and little information about landscape features around the site. The equestrian arena makes incursions onto root protection areas of existing trees. As part of a full planning application on sites with trees present we would expect an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) to BS5837:2012 in order to understand the impact of development on the existing trees and hedgerows. There is no submitted information relating to trees.

Development proposals located within or affecting a valued landscape should have particular regard to the following attributes:

- a) Landscape quality (condition);
- b) Scenic quality;
- c) Rarity;
- d) Representativeness;
- e) Conservation interests;
- f) Recreation value;
- g) Perceptual aspects; and
- h) Associations.

Development proposals affecting Valued Landscapes will only be supported where they protect, and where appropriate, integrate with and/or enhance the special features, characteristics and qualities of the landscape, unless the benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the harm.

In order to understand the impact of the retrospective development on the existing trees and valued landscape attributes, and to indicate mitigation for the development I require a Tree Survey and Tree Schedule of the area included in the redline boundary asap which will facilitate a landscape scheme which I require as a condition in accordance with Policies TB21 and Policy CC03d and e.

#### **Conditions & Reasons (if required)**

See above

|              |         |                |           |
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| <b>Date:</b> | 29.5.25 | <b>Signed:</b> | B. Crafer |
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