

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251400
Site Address:	Malmesbury Estate, Remenham Hill, Remenham, Berkshire, RG9 3HN
Expiry Date:	6 August 2025
Site Visit Date:	20 November 2024 (enforcement case)
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. triple unit, 3no. double units and 1no. single unit stables (retrospective)	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Local Authorities
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Green Belt
Ground Water Zones
National Historic Parks and Gardens
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Borough Wards
Radon Affected Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Minor

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt
MDD Local	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping

Plan (MDD)	CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB25 – Archaeology TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM6 - Green Belt DM7 - Conserving the Historic Environment DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM15 - Site History
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242596	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the construction of 2 no. earth mounds.	Approved 29 November 2024
242602	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of a building, concrete base and gravel hardstanding to the front of the building	Approved 05 December 2024
242603	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the installation of a sewage treatment plant and power unit.	Approved 05 December 2024
242607	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 2 no. pony lines.	Approved 29 November 2024

242606	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for gravel tracks, asphalt driveway, asphalt hardstanding and concrete linkway with rubber paved surfacing.	Approved 09 December 2024
242612	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for a change of use from staff day area to a self-contained dwelling occupied by staff employed at Park Place Stables (shown edged in red on the plan attached).	Approved 20 December 2024
242597	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 10no. wooden stable buildings (comprising a total of 24no. individual stables), concrete enclosure and timber shed.	Approved 09 December 2024
242628	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of 4no. marquee frames and associated hardstanding	Approved 11 December 2024
242629	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the erection of a building, raised paved terrace and hard paving.	Approved 18 December 2024
250370	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for building operations comprising the permanent siting of 7 no. portacabins, a WC unit and shed on the land.	Split Decision 09 April 2025
182327	Full planning application for the proposed erection of grooms accommodation with a players gym following the demolition of existing outbuilding.	Refused Appeal dismissed 11 March 2020
182524	Full planning permission for the erection of a stable (consisting of 24 boxes, tack room, feed room and storage) with outdoor area.	Refused Appeal dismissed 11 March 2020
170791	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent 162288 (8/12/2016). 3. Ground and building levels. 4. External materials. 5. Details of boundary walls and fences. 6. Landscaping. 7. Lighting Scheme. 8. Programme of Archaeological work. 9. Parking details. 14. Construction Method statement.	Approved 14 September 2017

160871	Full application for the proposed creation of a private polo facility, including polo field, practice area, exercise track, stable block and summer pavilion.	Withdrawn 10 August 2016
162288	Full application for the proposed creation of a polo facility for private use, comprising of a polo field, exercise track, stable block, all weather practice area, summer pavilion and widening of existing access onto A4130.	Approved 08 December 2016
161849	Full application for the proposed erection of a new dwelling.	Withdrawn 22 February 2017
130981	Application to extend implementation date for planning consent RM/2010/1243 for a further 3 years (Reserved Matters application on outline consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one dwelling (Aspect West- New Dairy Farm) Reserved Matters to be considered for the siting, design (including floorspace, height massing, internal layout & external appearance), access and landscaping.)	Approved 24 July 2013
122056	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consents RM/2010/1243 & RM/2010/1240: 4. (On both consents) Submission and approval of details of hard and soft landscaping proposals.	Split decision 29 March 2012
122391	Erection of one dwelling. Demolition of existing dwelling.	Withdrawn 12 March 2013
112582	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consents RM/2010/1237 & RM/2010/1245: 5. Landscaping proposals (RM/2010/1237). 6. Landscape management plan (RM/2010/1237). 9a - d. Arboricultural works (RM/2010/1237). 10. Plan of residential curtilage at 1:500. (RM/2010/1237). 4. Landscaping proposals (RM/2010/1245). 5. Landscape management plan (RM/2010/1245). 6. Work to trees (RM/2010/1245). 7a-d. Arboricultural works (RM/2010/1245). 8. Plan of residential curtilage at 1:500 (RM/2010/1245).	Approved 03 August 2011
110781	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of Reserved Matters planning consent RM/2010/1237 (for	Split Decision 19 October 2011

	Templecombe Farm): 1. Removal of agreed volume of built form 3. Details/s amples of external materials 4. Demolition and removal of barns 5. Landscape and planting scheme 6. Landscape management plan 7. Details of earthworks 9. Arboricultural works scheme 10. Plan showing residential curtilage 13. Detailed drawings of new external joinery 14.Details of brickwork	
110885	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consents RM/2010/1240 & RM/2010/1243: 4. Details of hard and soft landscaping (both applications)	Refused 13 December 2011
112581	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent RM/2010/1243: 4. Landscaping scheme. 5. Landscape management plan. 7. Arboricultural works. 8. Plan of residential curtilage at 1:500.	Approved 03 August 2011
112580	Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions of planning consent RM/2010/1240: 4. Landscaping scheme. 5. Landscape management plan. 7. Arboricultural works scheme. 8. Plan of residential curtilage at 1:500.	Approved 03 August 2011
100459	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent RM/2010/1237: 15. Record of the existing brick buildings at Combe Dairy.	Approved 03 December 2010
101748	Reserved Matters application on outline consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one dwelling (Aspect West- New Dairy Farm) Reserved Matters to be considered for the siting, design (including floorspace, height massing, internal layout & external appearance), access and landscaping.	Approved 4 August 2010
101723	Application for Reserved Matters on Outline Consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one dwelling (Aspect Park East) Reserved matters to be considered is Siting, Design, (Including floorspace, height, massing, internal layout and external appearance), access and landscaping.	Approved 04 August 2010
101512	Application for Reserved Matters on Outline consent O/2008/1353 for the erection of one	Approved

	Dwelling (Conway Park House). Matters to be considered are Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale.	04 August 2010
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CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection
WBC CIL – No comments received
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

Historic England – No comments to make
Berkshire Gardens Trust – No objections subject to Portacabin A being removed.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site is part of the Malmsbury Estate on the South side of the A4130. The site is part of an extensive approved equestrian polo complex.

The site lies within the countryside towards the top of Remenham Hill and to the east of Henley-on-Thames. They are located to the south of the A4130 and close to the northern boundary of the 240ha Park Place and Templecombe Grade II* Registered Park and Gardens.

Background to the site:

There was an original masterplan for restoration of the Registered Park and Gardens comprising O/2008/1353 for:

Outline application for the demolition of 8 dwellings and erection of 5 new dwellings. Change of use of 3 dwellings to form 2 boathouses and guest accommodation. Conversion of 2 dwellings to form 1 dwelling. Alterations to the barns and the bungalow to form a single residential unit plus alterations and extensions to existing buildings.

There were significant very special circumstances to allow this development:

1. Restoration of main house (listed building)
2. Restore landscape setting of registered park and garden
3. Remove harmful buildings and hardstanding.
4. To remove major traffic generating issues in the Countryside
5. To safeguard long term management of the overall estate
6. Demolish 8 houses but construct 5 new ones.

This application agreed principles of development across the park offsetting the volume against the demolition of various buildings across the site and seeking to restore the landscape. These benefits are now seen, the masterplan has been achieved and the overall estate restored. These circumstances cannot be re-used for other development. Similarly, volumes etc. cannot be re-used for other applications. However, the local authority has recently carried out a review of the volumes remaining on across the wider Park Place estate, however, each new application must be assessed on its own merits.

With each application made on the whole of the Park Place Estate (that within the original O/2008/1353 area information must be provided demonstrating the volumes proposed against any traded off volumes and overall volumes available. This approach has been accepted in previous applications and is an appropriate means of restoring the Estate and Registered Park and Garden whilst improving the built form within the Green Belt.

The above being said, while the traded volumes hold weight in the planning balance, the overall justification for the re-development of the Park and Garden was to provide an overall public benefit in terms of the designated heritage assets and openness of the Green Belt (through the signing of a maintenance plan and through removal of volumes). The outline permission was granted over 10 years ago and the improvement of the estate has been largely achieved. The traded volume is therefore not the sole consideration.

Proposal:

This application seeks to regularise the erection of 1no. triple unit, 3no. double units and 1no. single unit stables.

The stables re individual units and each is 3m x 3m but are adjoining in pairs or triples forming a visual stable block of 35m x 4.5m. Although there are small gaps less than 0.5m between the pairs/triplets. They are permanently stationed in the same place and share electricity cables and guttering/drainage. They are considered to be a building operation within the meaning of Section 55 of the Act.

Polo Information:

The high goal polo team based at the site competes at national and international level, which requires significant resource, as well as appropriate infrastructure / facilities. The polo season runs from May – August. During this time approximately 120 horses are kept on site, the majority of which are polo horses. During the winter, most of the polo horses are put out to pasture at farms in West Sussex. A small number of polo horses are kept on site, for winter practice, along with the family's own horses.

The stables are used to accommodate polo horses during the season (capacity of 10 horses). The additional stables are to remain in private use by the occupier of Park Place.

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.

Green belt:

The site is located within the Green Belt and the Countryside. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF establishes that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 154 states that: "Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate, unless one of the following exceptions apply".

There are certain exceptions to this listed at paragraphs 154 and 155. The proposed development falls within exception *"(b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it"*

Core Strategy Policy CP12 advocates a similar approach.

The 2024 NPPF no longer strictly requires an assessment of openness where the principle of development is considered acceptable as outlined above, however, the aim of preventing urban sprawl and keeping land permanently open remain of key relevance, in particular to the character and appearance of the area.

Impact on Countryside:

CP11 of the Core Strategy 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 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.

Criterion 4-7 of CP11 are not relevant to this proposal as they relate to residential extensions, replacement dwellings, affordable housing and community facilities.

There is no in principle objection to an equestrian use, as it constitutes both a countryside based enterprise and activity which promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the Countryside, thereby satisfying criterion 1 of Policy CP11

As identified above the proposed equestrian stables are considered to be a country based enterprise/activity. The stables are well grouped with the existing stables and American barn (using the NPPF definition of original buildings) and do not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion away from these buildings.

Minerals and Waste Local Plan:

The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period. The policy response to address the shortfall is the identification of a 'Minerals Safeguarding Area' (MSA), where Policy M2 of the plan applies, and also an 'Area of Search' where Policy M4 applies. This approach is to demonstrate the potential for, in effect, windfall provision within the Plan area.

The site is located within the MSA and is therefore considered commercial available/suitable for extraction & removal. Policy M2 requires non-minerals development in the Minerals Safeguarding Area may be permitted if it can be demonstrated through the preparation of a Mineral Resources Assessment, that the option of prior extraction has been fully considered as part of an application.

The supporting text states: “A minimum plot size of 3 hectares will apply in the safeguarding process to avoid repeated consideration of prior extraction where this can be assumed to be uneconomic, due to the small size of the parcels of land involved” Based on the size of the site, there is no conflict with this policy.

Character of the Area:

Paragraph 174(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by ‘recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.’

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 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).

The site is already in an equestrian use with significant buildings and hardstanding adjoining these proposed stables. The proposed additional stables remain both visually and physically contained and although it introduces additional built form, it is not in otherwise undeveloped land. The grouping the new stables alongside existing buildings, the proposal prevents isolated development that would be harmful to the rural character of the area.

The low profile and simple utilitarian appearance are typical of rural stable structures and are not considered to be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding countryside.

As such, the development accords with Policy CP1(1) and CP3(a), which require development to respect and respond to its surroundings in terms of built form, layout, and massing.

Heritage:

The site is located within the Park Place Grade II* Registered Park and Gardens. The Gardens Trust have stated that:

The units would not significantly increase the footprint of the built area or extend it further into the RPG. Nor would it increase the visual impact of this built up area on the remainder of the RPG. Having said that, any further development expansion into

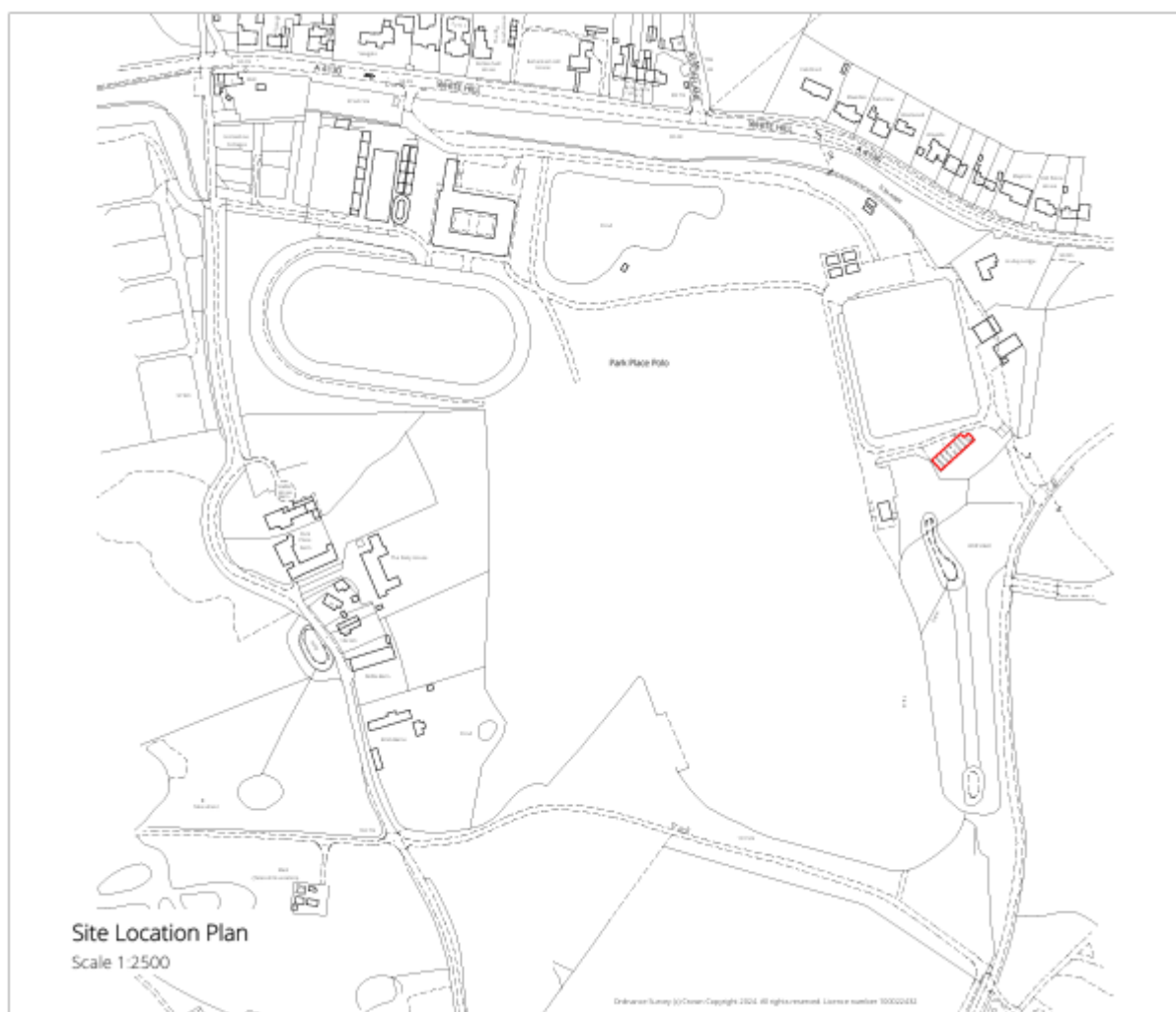
the RPG would compound the loss to the historic significance of the Park Place as a Grade II RPG.*

Subject to the removal of the 5no. linked portacabins (Portacabin A) and a shed, and subject to no further expansion of inappropriate development, whether physical or visual, into the RPG, we support this application.

The WBC Built Heritage Officer has no objection in terms of the impact on listed buildings within the Registered Historic Park and Gardens or those on Remenham Hill.

The stables mirror the existing stable on the site and are understood to be on metal bases (“skids”) placed on the ground with no foundations therefore the RPG land on which these stables sit could be easily restored in the event that the polo use ceased.

The applicant accepts in the Design, Access and Heritage Statement that the proposal is a “trade-off” for the removal of portacabins and restoration of the land on which they are sited (paragraph 1.13). Portacabin A is subject of Certificate application 250370 and is within the blue line of this planning application.



On the basis that this would be a positive improvement to the RPG and would provide a public benefit in heritage terms, the removal of these portacabins will be secured by condition.

Trees & Landscape:

There are no trees located on the site, nor were there any prior to the retrospective stables being built.

The site is located within the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA) dated November 2019 identifies the site as being within Landscape Character Area E1: Remenham Arable Chalk Slopes, the Chiltern Chalk Valued Landscape and within the area of the Integrated Estate Management Plan (IEMP) 2008.

TB21 requires all development to demonstrate how it has addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character assessment including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues.

Although the Applicant has not addressed these issues, it is clear from both the character and heritage assessments above that there is limited harm to the surrounding landscape arising from the proposed development and that the removal of Portacabin A would benefit the wider landscape.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Due to the location of the stables within the existing polo complex and the only dwelling immediately adjacent to the site being the groom's accommodation. There is not considered to be any concerns relating to noise, odour, loss of light, loss of privacy or any overbearing impact on neighbouring occupiers.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposed development has no impact on the existing parking provision as the original application as considered to have "*plenty of space for adequate parking to be provided*" and the details were secured as part of conditions 9 and 10 of permission 162288.

Furthermore, polo can require up to 120 horses per match, despite each polo team being comprised of only 4 players. The additional horses/stabling is unlikely to increase the traffic for parking of visitor/player vehicles, although there may be some additional traffic for horse boxes and transportation. There is adequate parking available within the blue line area for these vehicles adjacent to the training school and pony lines marquee. The site access approved as part of the original equestrian permission was design to accommodate these types of vehicles therefore is acceptable in this regard.

No comments have been received from the Highways Officer.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located in Flood Zone 1, at low risk of flooding therefore there are no objections on flood risk grounds.

Ecology:

The application is submitted retrospectively therefore exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain.

All species of bats receive special protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

There is no indication on the WBC mapping system that the site is suitable for bats or that a bat survey would be required for an application despite the site being in a rural location with bat habitat nearby.

Other matters:

The stables are to support the existing polo complex at the site and therefore any approval should be subject of a similar personal condition and HGV access conditions.

Planning Balance:

The application seeks retrospective permission for the erection of 1no. triple unit, 3no. double units, and 1no. single unit stables to support the existing polo operations at Park Place. The site lies within the Green Belt, Countryside, and within a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden. The proposal has been the proposal must be carefully assessed against relevant local and national planning policies, with particular regard to the Green Belt, heritage impacts, landscape character, and the context of the site.

In accordance with paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the proposed development must be assessed in terms of its contribution to sustainable development, having regard to the three overarching objectives:

Economic

The proposal supports the continued operation of an established polo enterprise with a national and international profile. The development contributes to the local rural economy through employment, equine services, and event-related spending. Retaining and enhancing on-site facilities ensures the long-term viability of this rural business.

Social

The development provides facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, which aligns with the requirements of CP11. The removal of unsightly portacabins (secured via condition) will also improve the visual and functional quality of the site for users and will provide a heritage public benefit to the RPG as the structure detract from the significant of the historic landscape. Paragraph 213 of the NPPF states that public benefits may include heritage enhancement, particularly where it secures the optimum viable use of heritage

assets or contributes positively to their conservation. In this case, the removal of unsympathetic structures will reverse prior harm and deliver a net heritage gain.

Environmental

The stables are appropriately sited within the established complex and do not encroach on open countryside. Their form, scale, and materials are consistent with rural character, and there is no unacceptable harm to landscape, heritage assets, or ecological interests. The removal of Portacabin A will result in a modest but tangible visual benefit. The proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt and accords with relevant exceptions in the NPPF.

On the basis of the above, the development is recommended for approval.

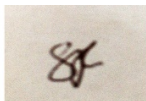
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. 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:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	18 June 2025
Earliest date for decision:	4 July 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	31.7.25