

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	243162
Site Address:	Long Meadow Farm, Edneys Hill, Wokingham, RG41 4DS
Expiry Date:	11 February 2025
Site Visit Date:	28 January 2025
Proposal: Full application for change of existing use of part of agricultural barn to B8 storage.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Countryside
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Land Terrier
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones
PRoW Within WB Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourse

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
221532	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 202003 for the reduction of roller shutter door widths, introduction of intermediate wall panels between doors on the east elevation and removal of a pedestrian door from the west elevation.	Approved: May 2022
220394	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 202003 to allow the addition of rooflights and 3 no. additional roller shutter doors to bays 2, 3 and 4.	Approved: March 2022
212910	Full application for the proposed erection of hardstanding and new access gate.	Approved: November 2021
211539	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 202003 (28/03/2020) to allow the extension of the length of cladding sheets on the barn to change lower half of external wall and roof colour to Juniper Green to match upper half of external walls.	Approved: May 2021
211526	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 202003 dated 28.9.2020. Condition 4 Landscaping and Boundary Treatment details.	Approved: May 2021
202003	Full application for the proposed erection of an agricultural barn for the storage of tractors, machinery, hay and feed.	Approved: September 2020

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objection

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Barkham Parish Council	No comments
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One letter received raising concern that the change of use would be in conflict with the rural nature of the site and that it would be likely to increase traffic along Edneys Hill.

APPRAISAL

Context: The application site is an agricultural holding located in Wokingham. It is accessed via Edneys Hill, a rural lane that extends off Barkham Road. Synonymous with its countryside designation, the site is bounded by mature trees and hedgerows.

The application building was approved in September 2020 (ref: 202003), and is a large agricultural barn currently used for storage of tractors, machinery, hay and feed.

This application seeks planning permission to formally change part of the barn, equating to two fifths of the existing floor space, to create a new B8 storage use.

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.

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 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 in certain circumstances. Relevant to this development, these exceptions are:

- 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.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states:

Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings; b) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and d) the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

The proposed storage use would utilise 2 of the existing 5 bays of the building (as shown on the Site Block Plan). The agricultural uses in the other parts of the building would be retained and isolated from the storage area by an internal wall.

For the proposed change of use to be considered compliant with exception 1 of policy CP11, the storage in the building would have to be associated with, and necessary to, a rural enterprise. Whilst the items to be stored are not specifically detailed within the

Planning Statement, it is stated that the storage would be for vehicles and machinery/tools required by the business called 'Garden Angels', a local grounds maintenance company that operates in the area. It was also confirmed by the applicant during the associated site visit that the storage area would, in fact, be used for the vans that are owned by the business. The business has no intrinsic link to agricultural activity and represents a commercial enterprise. This does not in itself prevent compliance with exception 1 of CP11, however, as the storage required by the business could be located anywhere and is not restricted to a countryside designation, it is therefore not considered to contribute to a diverse and sustainable rural enterprise within the borough, or contribute and/or promote recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside.

Notwithstanding the provision of the adopted development plan, the current Employment Land Needs Review by Stantec prepared as part of the evidence base for the emerging local plan establishes additional industrial floorspace continues to be needed within the Borough of circa 50 hectares.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposal would not lead to any encroachment or expansion of development away from existing development, as it would operate within an existing building which is appropriate for conversion. Consequently, the proposal would comply with exceptions 2 & 3 of the Core Strategy.

The wording of Policy CP11 requires compliance with all three of the requirements listed above for development to be supported in principle. As the proposal fails to comply with the first requirement of CP11, the proposal is unacceptable in principle. Notwithstanding, this must be weighed against the benefits of the scheme and adjudged against the level of harm, if applicable.

Character of the Area: The proposed development comprises internal alterations only and therefore would not impact the appearance of the subject building. As such, the visual impact of the development remains unchanged as it relates to storage within the existing building and there would be no subsequent harm to the countryside setting. Given the proposed use of the building for vehicles and the prominent location on a raised parcel of land that slopes up and away from the public highway, a condition has been included to ensure that there is no external storage in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the Countryside.

Neighbouring Amenity: Due to the nature of the proposal, there are no concerns on neighbouring amenity grounds. A local resident raised concern for the potential of increased traffic movements along Edneys Hill, however, as discussed in further detail in the following section of this report, WBC raised no concerns as to the impact on the highway network.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The proposed use is for B8 storage associated with an existing gardening business. It is stated to be used for the storage of machinery, tools and vehicles for the business. The business has 7 members of staff and use of 4 vehicles. Highways do not consider that the movements associated with this would result in a significant impact on the highway network. There is an existing access to the agricultural barn and this is considered acceptable.

WBC parking standards for 129sqm of B8 use recommends parking provision for 5 vehicles. The supporting information indicates that only 2 of the businesses 4 vehicles are to be stored on site, and this is to be within the building.

Notwithstanding the above, it is considered that there is space on the hardstanding adjacent to the unit for short-term parking and turning of vehicles (ie. for collection of tools/equipment).

WBC standards also require provision of 1 x cycle parking space. It is considered that this could be accommodated within the storage unit.

Conclusion: In summary, the proposal fails to wholly comply with CP11 and is unacceptable in principle. However, this conflict with policy must be weighed against all other material considerations. The benefit of the proposal is providing storage space for a small local business within an existing building where there is no impact on the character and appearance of the area or on adjoining land uses. These factors hold substantial weight, such that the proposal is considered to be acceptable, and the application is therefore 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:	4 February 2025
Earliest date for decision:	16 January 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>JMM</i>
Date:	5 February 2025