

FULL PLANNING APPROVAL **DRAFT DECISION NOTICE**



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Expiry Date: 5 June 2026

Application Number: 260117

Location: Manor Farm, Longwater Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3SE

Proposal: Full application for the proposed conversion of barn to 3no. residential dwellings and associated changes (C3).

Recommendation: Refused

Reasons

1. The application proposes the conversion of an existing barn to form three open market dwellings in the open countryside, outside defined settlement limits. The building is currently in lawful use as seasonal agricultural workers' accommodation which continues to serve an identified rural enterprise. No substantive evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that this accommodation is redundant or no longer required for its existing rural purpose.

The proposed conversion to unrestricted residential use would result in the unjustified loss of rural workers' accommodation and would undermine the functional role of the building in supporting the rural economy. The development therefore fails to comply with the principles of sustainable development in the countryside and is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP11, which seeks to strictly control residential development in rural areas, and paragraph 88 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. The proposal would introduce residential activity, associated curtilage, parking, domestic paraphernalia and boundary treatments into a sensitive countryside location. Insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate how these elements would be appropriately designed, controlled or integrated into the surrounding rural landscape. In particular, the application fails to demonstrate how existing landscape features, including the historic hedgerow along the northern boundary, would be protected and retained.

As a result, the development would erode the rural character of the area and result in harm to the intrinsic character and appearance of the countryside, contrary to Core Strategy Policy CC03, Managing Development DPD Policy TB21, and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The application has failed to provide sufficient ecological information to demonstrate that existing habitats, including priority habitats and an important historic hedgerow, would be adequately protected, retained or mitigated. Furthermore, the proposal fails to demonstrate that a measurable biodiversity net gain would be achieved, as required by legislation and policy.

In the absence of adequate information, the Local Planning Authority cannot conclude that the development would not result in harm to biodiversity or ecological connectivity. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP7, Managing Development DPD Policy TB23, and paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021).

4. The proposal would result in a net increase in residential dwellings within the zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). No mitigation measures have been secured to address the likely significant effects of the development on the SPA, and the existing lawful use of on site caravans cannot be relied upon to offset or neutralise the impacts arising from the proposed permanent residential development.

In the absence of secured avoidance or mitigation measures, the Local Planning Authority cannot conclude that the proposal would not adversely affect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA. The development is therefore contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP8, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, and paragraphs 193 and 195, and footnote 71 of the National Planning Policy Framework and South East Plan Policy NRM6.

5. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the parking provision would meet the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD, and that the scheme would provide an appropriate level of off-street parking and cycle stores. This is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP3 and CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Policy CC07.

6. Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development will manage surface water runoff in a sustainable manner. This is contrary to NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10 and Core Strategy Policy CP1.

Informatives

1. This decision is in respect of the drawings and plans numbered 001A, 002A, 003A, 004A, 005A, 006A, 2411055-01, 2411055-02, 2411055-TK01, 2411055-TK02, 2411055-TK03, 2411055-TK04, 2411055-TK05, 2411055-TK06, 2411055-TK07, 2411055-TK08 and 87485 100 P02 received by the Local Planning Authority on 19/01/2026 and 15/05/2026.

2. The Council engages with all applicants in a positive and proactive way through specific pre-application enquiries and the detailed advice available on the Council's website. On this particular application, discussions were held regarding matters such as TBH SPA, rebuttal, internal space standards and arranging a second site visit. These discussions did not result in a solution to the concerns raised by the proposed development.

Recommendation and conditions/reasons agreed:

Date: 4.6.26



REMEMBER - The earliest date for a decision on this application is: **1 April 2026**