

April 2025

Application for the Erection of 2no Agricultural Buildings

Supporting Agricultural Statement

At

Moor Green House

Lower Sandhurst Road

Finchampstead

Wokingham

RG40 3TJ

Gate House
Beechwood Court
Long Toll
Woodcote
RG8 0RR

01491 684 233

www.reading-ag.com

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	BACKGROUND	3
3	PRE APPLICATION ADVICE.....	8
4	RELEVANT POLICIES	9
5	APPRAISAL.....	11
6	ASSESSMENT AGAINST CP11.....	13
7	CONCLUSION	14

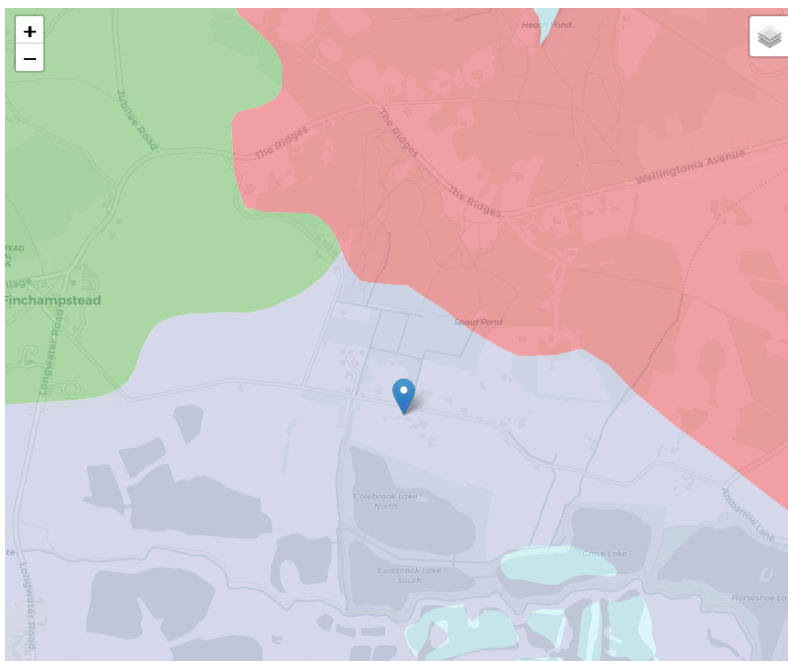
1 Introduction

- 1.1 Reading Agricultural Consultants Ltd (RAC) has been instructed by Mr Stephen Hazell (the applicant) to provide a supporting statement for the erection of two agricultural buildings to support an existing agricultural use at Moor Green House, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TJ.
- 1.2 In responding to these instructions RAC has:
- Visit the site in March 2025 and discussed with the applicant the need for the two agricultural buildings and details of the current use of the land; and had regard to:
 - the previous planning history of the site;
 - the applicant's agricultural use of the site;
 - the Council's Pre Application Response; and
 - sources of published information and correspondence relevant to the activities being undertaken by the applicant.
- 1.3 The report has been carried out by Olivia Wojniak an Associate Member of RAC. I am an independent consultant in agriculture and rural land use, an Associate Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (AssocRICS) and an Associate Member of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants (ABIAC). I hold an Honours Degree in Rural Land Management from the Royal Agricultural University.

2 Background

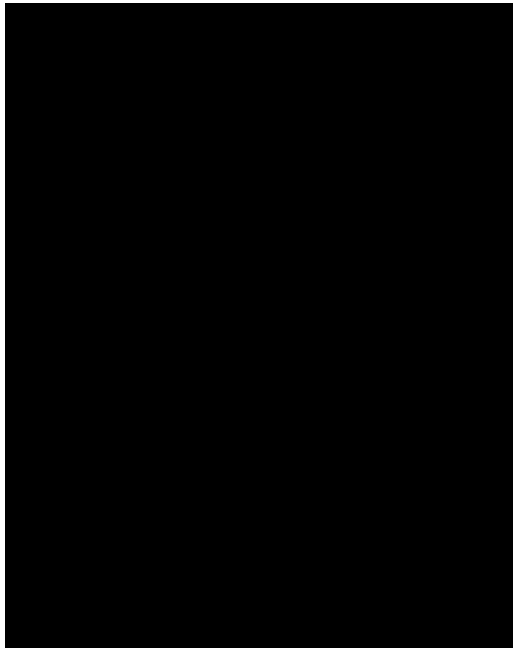
- 2.1 The application holding at Moor Green House extends to 2.5 acres located adjacent to the residential dwelling, with a further 0.5 acres owned and 3 acres rented opposite Moor Green House.
- 2.2 The applicant has been carrying out improvements to the grassland on the land holding, including drainage improvements as the land currently sits wet from September to March each year meaning much of the 2.5 acres has been unsuitable for winter grazing due to damage that would be done to the soils and grass.
- 2.3 The applicant currently grazes a herd of 10 pedigree Dexter cattle owned by a local farmer on his land during the summer months however it is intended that the cattle grazing will cease once alpacas are on site.

- 2.4 The applicant's CPH number is 02/176/0341 and his Single Business Identifier is 201053669. For reference an SBI number is a unique number given to a farmer or business that is involved in an agricultural activity.
- 2.5 As detailed in the Pre-Application supporting documents, the grazing is limited until underground cabling works is completed by SSE and the land drainage works are completed. In addition, the applicant is unable to keep livestock on site year round without appropriate shelter and storage facilities.
- 2.6 The applicant intends to keep a small herd of alpacas, comprising two males and three breeding females. The applicant will purchase the females at a young age, beginning with two females and one male, and allow them to mature before breeding. The applicant will sell all progeny, unless any are viable as replacement breeding stock.
- 2.7 The applicant will rotate the alpacas between the two main fields at the application site, and the 0.5 acres opposite will provide a suitable weaning field to separate the cria (young alpaca) from the mothers.
- 2.8 The applicant has carried out improvements to the existing track which allows vehicle movements between the three fields and minimises soil compaction and erosion, in particular with the addition of surface water drainage. Further works are discussed later in this report.
- 2.9 Soilsapes identifies the application site as loamy soils with naturally high groundwater however, the area is on the edge of a loamy and clayey soil type and sandy and loamy soil type.



- 2.10 The application site has been divided into three paddock area with stockproof fencing, and each paddock can be accessed directly from the existing track.
- 2.11 The applicant carries out all land management and maintenance himself, with the exception of spraying.
- 2.12 Photographs taken at the site visit show the paddocks, track and temporary equipment storage structure. The applicant's tractor is too large for the structure and is kept off-site at a neighbouring farm.

RAC Photograph 1 – [REDACTED]



RAC Photograph 2 – Access Track



RAC Photograph 3 – Left Paddock



RAC Photograph 4 – Middle Paddock



RAC Photograph 5 – Right Paddock



RAC Photograph 6 – Waterlogged Area in Right Paddock



RAC Photograph 7 – Entrance and Track



RAC Photograph 8 – 0.5 acre owned



RAC Photograph 9 – 3 acres rented



3 Pre Application Advice

- 3.1 The Council's Pre Application Advice Response Letter for pre-application 242345 concluded in the summary that:

[REDACTED]

- 3.2 Under the Principle of Development section, the Council detail that any application would be assessed under Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy and notes that there is no strict definition of 'enterprises' within the policy and therefore it can *'be understood that enterprises encompass a range of scale of business of activity, including those of limited scale and profitability.'*
- 3.3 RAC would highlight that the Planning Inspector considered in a recent Appeal Reference: APP/L1765/X/24/3336411 (decision date 21 February 2025) that the s336 definition of agriculture does not need to have a commercial element and that the definition may include hobby farming, subsistence or smallholding farming, or be akin to allotment production where no commercial element exists.

3.4 The response comments from Wokingham Borough Council that:

[REDACTED]

3.5 RAC notes that the Council's site visit to the application site appears to have been carried out in November 2024 and as detailed in this report, the land sits very wet at this time of year and the applicant does not keep the cattle on site due to the land becoming poached.

3.6 The response comments that the site is a single field of approximately 0.7ha. RAC query this size as the holding extends to 1.2 hectares of owned land and 1.2 hectares of rented land.

3.7 It is therefore considered that agricultural activities can take place on the site, albeit with a small breeding alpaca herd alongside good agricultural and environmental land management activities on the holding.

4 Relevant Policies

4.1 National planning policy is provided in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which was updated in December 2024. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out the core land-use planning principles that should be adopted and these expressly include:

- a presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of the area and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
- provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses;
- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; and,

- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission.

4.2 Paragraph 39 requires that decision makers:

- should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way;
- work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area; and
- seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

4.3 Section 6 of the NPPF is concerned with 'Building a strong, competitive economy' and at paragraph 85 it notes:

"planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt..."

4.4 At paragraph 88 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' it notes:

"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 businesses;..."*

4.5 The Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted January 2010) Policy CP11 – Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) 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 ..."*

5 Appraisal

Storage Building

- 5.1 As detailed in the Pre Application submission documents, the site previously comprised a tractor shed however it was in a state of dilapidation and for safety reasons required demolition. The previous shed had no base or foundations which resulted in the building falling down.
- 5.2 The hardstanding has been laid by the applicant and the applicant has sited the temporary structure on the site for interim storage. The concrete base can be seen in the RAC photograph below:



- 5.3 It is advisable to store agricultural machinery under cover to protect it from the elements. It protects machinery from corrosion and in particular damage to any moving parts and therefore minimises maintenance requirements and periods of downtime.
- 5.4 It is generally considered within the industry that an additional 25% to 30% of machinery storage space is acceptable to allow for the safe manoeuvring and handling of agricultural machinery within the agricultural building.
- 5.5 The proposed agricultural building measures 8m x 6m (48m²) and has an eaves height of 2.9m and ridge height of 3.42m. It comprises two bays, each 4m wide, and the building is clad in timber boarding and accessed via two roller shutter doors on the front elevation and a pedestrian door on the side elevation. The building will also provide a secure machinery storage area, a deterrent to would be intruders.
- 5.6 The building has been designed to allow safe access and storage of the applicant's tractor which is 2.5m high and the roller shutters are designed to this height specification.

- 5.7 RAC considers the proposed building is an appropriate size for the storage of the applicant's machinery and agricultural implements and equipment which are used for the management of the agricultural land, boundaries and trees and hedges within the application site and adjacent land.

Livestock Shelter

- 5.8 The applicant proposes to site a livestock shelter on the site of the earlier concrete base within the middle paddock where a building was previously sited which was used for temporary refugee accommodation and then as an agricultural store. This structure was constructed with metal and asbestos and was professionally removed from the site in 2023 along with the concrete base.
- 5.9 The current concrete base on site is smaller than the earlier base.
- 5.10 The agricultural building is proposed to provide a sheltered area where livestock can be housed during the winter months and housing for any animals requiring stock tasks or medical attention.
- 5.11 The building is designed with three bays, with two enclosed bays for hay, feed and bedding storage, and the final bay open for livestock housing.
- 5.12 The building measures 12m x 6m (72m²) and has a mono pitch roof with a height of 3m at the front and 2.5m at the rear. The bays are each 4m wide and the storage area will be accessed via a single roller shutter door on the side elevation.
- 5.13 As detailed, the applicant will graze 10 Dexter cattle periodically on the site alongside his small alpaca breeding herd which will comprise a total of 5 alpacas plus progeny and when housed during the winter period the livestock have a feed and bedding requirement.
- 5.14 The applicant intends to buy in the required hay, straw and concentrate feeds monthly and these will be stored within the enclosed two bays of the proposed building.
- 5.15 It is accepted that the storage of hay undercover protects the hay bales from the elements and prevents mould growth from wet and damp conditions when stored out in the open. Mouldy hay can be a health risk to both livestock and stockpersons. Dry storage under cover maintains the hay's nutrient value.
- 5.16 The bedding will be used within the opened livestock housing area for overwinter housing and any other periods that livestock require housing.
- 5.17 The enclosed bays will provide 48m² of storage space and safe storage of bales to a height of 2.5m in the building.

- 5.18 The building will also provide an overflow storage area for any farm implements, fencing materials and livestock handling equipment.
- 5.19 The open livestock housing area will provide 24m² of accommodation which is considered suitable for short term cattle housing and alpaca housing.
- 5.20 Guidance states that at least 2m² per alpaca should be provided for housing as they will have access to the grazing land.
- 5.21 The livestock shelter proposed will provide a secure handling area for any cattle or alpacas which require medical or veterinary attention.

Improvements to Track

- 5.22 The original construction was builders' rubble with no substance or structure. This was reused and compacted, and then a porous layer of road planings was placed on top to allow natural draining to the newly laid land drains to allow the water to run off to an existing provision.
- 5.23 The original track route comprised two additional gateways into Hall Farm. The applicant has closed these gateways to make better use of the space and allow easier movement of machinery around the application site.
- 5.24 The applicant has only carried out improvements to an existing track and no new track has been created or developed at the application site.
- 5.25 The track allows safe movements of livestock and machinery between the paddocks and minimises soil compaction and erosion which is vital at the site which sits wet in the autumn and winter months.
- 5.26 The Pre-Application response comments on the requirement for a turning head to avoid the spillage of loose material on to the highway, however it has not taken into account the space located by the final paddock where there is an existing turning area which has been created by the applicant which is shown on the submitted plans.
- 5.27 RAC considers the farm track improvements are appropriate for ground and soil management and safe handling and manoeuvring of livestock and machinery and such procedures are carried out on many farms.

6 Assessment against CP11

- 6.1 As detailed in the Pre-Application submission documents and the Council's response, there is no strict definition of '*enterprise*' within CP11.

- 6.2 As detailed earlier, the Planning Inspectorate have considered that the s336 definition of agriculture does not need to have a commercial element.
- 6.3 RAC considers that the proposed agricultural buildings and improvement to the existing track will enable the applicant to contribute to the diverse and sustainable rural activities within the Borough.
- 6.4 The proposed agricultural buildings will be sited on the former site of previous buildings which were used for agricultural purposes but have since been demolished due to being dilapidated and unsafe for storage and livestock accommodation. As such it is considered there will be no further or additional encroachment into the open countryside.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed agricultural buildings are of a size and design that is commensurate with the agricultural activities on the application site and wider agricultural holding and are considered necessary and appropriate to provide suitable storage and meet housing requirements for livestock for the applicant's agricultural activities.
- 7.2 The external design of the buildings are typical of modern agricultural buildings seen in the rural area.
- 7.3 The track improvements are required to minimise damage to the soils by vehicle movements.
- 7.4 The proposed buildings and track improvements are compliant with National and Local Planning Policy.