

BIG FELLA BREWING LTD

Planning Statement

Lockey Farm, Sindlesham Road, Arborfield, RG2 9JH

Applicant	Big Fella Brewing Limited
Planning Portal reference	PP-15262404
Application type	Full planning permission
Proposal	Change of use of the existing building from Class E(g)(ii) to a mixed use comprising a commercial brewery (Class B2) and taproom (Sui Generis), together with the use of associated external land as an outdoor seating area and the erection of a pergola with associated external lighting.
Document	BFB-PS-01 Planning Statement

This statement should be read with drawings BFB-PL-01, BFB-PL-02, BFB-PL-03 and BFB-PL-04 and the other supporting information submitted with the application.

1. Introduction and Proposal

This application seeks full planning permission for the re-use of an existing commercial building at Lockey Farm as a small commercial brewery and taproom, together with the use of the associated fenced external area for customer seating, a timber pergola and low-level external lighting.

The proposal comprises:

- change of use of the existing building from Class E(g)(ii) to a mixed use comprising a commercial brewery (Class B2) and taproom (Sui Generis);
- use of the existing fenced external area as customer seating;
- erection of a timber pergola approximately 10 m x 3 m with a maximum height of 2.49 m; and
- associated low-level festoon lighting.

No new freestanding brewery building, external grain silo, extraction stack or external glycol chiller is proposed. The existing shared vehicular access and wider Lockey Farm communal parking arrangements are retained unchanged.

2. Site and Planning Context

The application site forms part of the established Lockey Farm complex on Sindlesham Road, Arborfield. The wider complex accommodates agricultural and commercial uses and is served by an existing shared access and communal parking area.

The application building is an existing commercial building with an associated fenced external area. The relevant building is subject to a Class E(g)(ii) restriction under planning permission 250120. This application therefore seeks express permission for the proposed brewery and taproom use.

The site lies outside the defined Development Limits. The principal element of the proposal is nevertheless the re-use and change of use of an existing commercial building rather than the introduction of substantial new commercial built form into the countryside. The only new external structure is a low pergola within the existing enclosed area.

In Appeal B APP/X0360/W/23/3321499 (2024), concerning two Class E buildings at Lockey Farm, the Planning Inspector found those buildings to be in a suitable and accessible location in Framework terms, noting opportunities for access by foot, cycle and bus and for linked trips with other businesses at the farm. The appeal was nevertheless dismissed because the landscape harm arising from the additional buildings outweighed those benefits. The present proposal is materially different: it re-uses an existing building and does not introduce comparable new commercial built form.

3. Proposed Operation

Big Fella Brewing will operate as a small commercial production brewery with a customer-facing taproom. Brewing is anticipated at approximately two brews per week.

- Grain will be delivered pre-milled and no grain milling will take place on the premises.
- Fermentation and conditioning plant, including glycol chilling equipment, will be located internally.
- Brewing vapour will be managed through an internal water-mist steam condenser rather than a new external steam flue.
- Spent grain, yeast and hop material will be collected separately as appropriate.

Routine brewery production is intended principally during weekday daytime hours. The application form records 08:00-17:00 Monday to Friday as the maximum weekday operating envelope for the B2 use, although routine brewing is expected principally earlier in the working week. The Planning Portal also groups Monday to Friday customer hours together; the 12:00-22:30 weekday hours entered for the Sui Generis use therefore represent the maximum weekday envelope. Normal customer opening is intended principally towards the end of the week, with Friday and Saturday forming the main trading days.

The premises licence has been granted separately by Wokingham Borough Council. Planning and licensing are separate statutory regimes, and the licence is not relied upon as a substitute for planning assessment.

4. Access, Parking and Travel

No new vehicular access or on-site parking is proposed. The application red-line contains no dedicated parking spaces and the development would not create or remove any parking spaces. The premises will continue to use the existing shared Lockey Farm access from Sindlesham Road.

The premises are served by the existing communal parking area within the wider Lockey Farm complex, outside the application red-line boundary. The applicant estimates that this shared area can accommodate approximately 26 vehicles

when efficiently arranged. The spaces are shared between occupiers and are not allocated exclusively to Big Fella Brewing.

The taproom's principal trading periods are intended to be later in the week and into the evening. This provides a degree of temporal separation from weekday daytime activity elsewhere at Lockey Farm, while recognising that the parking area remains a shared facility.

Big Fella Brewing also encourages visitors through its website to consider travelling to the taproom by bus or taxi rather than by private car.

Brewery deliveries and collections will be modest in scale and will use the existing shared access. The proposal is not a distribution or warehousing operation.

5. Noise, Customer Activity and Lighting

The main potential amenity considerations are customer activity, use of the external seating area, music and brewery process or plant noise.

A separate Noise Management Statement accompanies the application. Brewery equipment will be located internally, no grain milling will take place on the premises and no new external brewery plant is proposed. These measures limit the principal sources of external process noise.

The external seating area will be managed as part of the taproom operation and music levels will be controlled to avoid unreasonable disturbance to neighbouring occupiers. Any entertainment will remain ancillary to normal taproom operation rather than forming a separate dedicated events use.

External lighting is limited to low-level festoon lighting within the customer area. Lighting will be positioned to minimise unnecessary upward and lateral spill and will be switched off when the external customer area is no longer in use.

6. Landscape and External Works

The physical external works are deliberately limited. The proposal does not extend the built envelope of Lockey Farm through a new brewery building or large external plant.

The proposed pergola is approximately 10 m x 3 m and no more than 2.49 m high. It is contained within the existing fenced external area immediately adjoining the building and is intended to remain visually subordinate to the existing premises.

This limited intervention is materially different from the additional commercial buildings considered in the 2024 Lockey Farm appeal, where the Inspector's principal concern was the effect of new built form on the open and rural character of the surroundings.

7. Planning Considerations

The statutory development plan remains the starting point for decision-making. The site lies outside Development Limits, so Core Strategy Policy CP11 and Managing Development Delivery Policy CC02 are relevant to the principle of development in the countryside. The made Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan is also part of the development plan; Policy TC3 is relevant to the scale and impacts of countryside business proposals, including effects on neighbours and the natural environment, encroachment, access and parking.

The current National Planning Policy Framework (September 2026) is an important material consideration. Policy S5 identifies the re-use, extension or alteration of an existing permanent and substantial lawful building as a form of development that may be appropriate outside settlements, subject to the Framework's planning balance. Policy E4 supports the sustainable growth of rural businesses, including through the conversion of existing buildings, and recognises that rural business needs may require locations outside settlements where proposals make appropriate use of previously developed or well-related sites and respond to the character of their surroundings.

The application concerns an existing lawful commercial building and has been deliberately framed around re-use of that building, retention of the existing access and shared parking arrangements, limited external works and management of potential amenity effects. The 2024 Lockey Farm appeal is also material: the Inspector found the commercial buildings to be in a suitable and accessible location in Framework terms, but dismissed the appeal because landscape harm from the additional buildings outweighed the benefits. That particular harm is not replicated by the present proposal.

8. Economic and Community Benefits

The proposal will establish an independent local manufacturing business within existing commercial floorspace, provide employment, purchase goods and services from suppliers and distribute product to local trade customers. The taproom provides a direct customer-facing outlet for the business and contributes to the existing mix of small businesses at Lockey Farm.

These benefits form part of the overall planning balance alongside the limited physical intervention and the operational characteristics of the proposed use.

9. Existing Fit-Out and Commencement

Internal fit-out, installation and commissioning of brewery equipment have taken place within the building and are shown on drawing BFB-PL-01. Commissioning has included water-only testing. Commercial brewing and public taproom use have not commenced.

10. Conclusion

The proposal is a specific and contained re-use of an existing commercial building at Lockey Farm for a small brewery and taproom, with limited external works.

It does not involve the erection of a new brewery building or substantial outward expansion into the countryside. No dedicated parking lies within the application red line; the existing shared access and communal parking within the wider Lockey Farm complex are retained. The taproom's principal trading periods are later in the week and evenings, and visitors are encouraged to consider bus and taxi travel.

The proposed pergola and customer seating area remain within the existing enclosed external area and are modest in scale. Brewery plant is principally internal, no grain milling or new external brewery plant is proposed, and operational controls are set out for customer activity, music and lighting.

Taking these matters together, the proposal represents a contained re-use of existing commercial floorspace with limited external intervention. The site-specific accessibility findings from the 2024 appeal, the current national support for rural business development and re-use of existing buildings, and the measures proposed to manage landscape, access and amenity effects all weigh in favour of the development. Planning permission is therefore respectfully requested.