

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251843
Site Address:	Broadacre Place, Broadcommon Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RE
Expiry Date:	1 October 2025
Site Visit Date:	12 August 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed partial change of use of existing building to residential to create 1no. dwellinghouse, along with changes to fenestration to include installation of rooflights, plus removal of existing mobile home.	

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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP17 – Housing Delivery
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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs SS16 – Safeguarded routes SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings

	CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses H3 – Affordable housing H5 – Rural workers' dwellings H7 – Specialist accommodation FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document A Design for Hurst

PLANNING HISTORY		
App No.	Description	Decision/Date
F/1996/64623	Use of land for keeping of ponies and construction of barn for stables, tack and harness room	Approved 13 January 1997
F/1997/65625	Erection of barn	Refused 24 August 1998
F/1998/68224	Erection of wall and gates (retrospective/with enforcement)	Refused 8 October 1998
C/99/1020616	Appeal against refusal of F/1998/68224	Dismissed 18 August 1999
F/1998/68504	Erection of barn	Refused 2 February 1999
F/2001/4399	Stationing of mobile home	Refused 28 December 2001
F/2002/6112	Erection of barn and formation of manege	Approved 10 July 2002
F/2007/3050	Erection of equipment store, mess	Approved 19 February

	room and WC an increase in height of entrance gates	2008
F/2008/1419	Erection of equipment store, mess room and WC and relocation of existing hay barn	Approved 31 July 2008
F/2009/1060	Temporary stationing of mobile home for grooms accommodation (seasonal for five years)	Approved 29 July 2009
F/2015/0887	All weather polo pony exercise track (lapsed)	Approved 19 June 2015
F/2015/0917	Temporary stationing of mobile home for grooms accommodation (seasonal for five years)	Approved 20 August 2015
182579	Installation of an all-weather exercise track for use by polo ponies	Approved 13 November 2018
201418	Permanent retention of mobile home to provide groom's accommodation	Approved 12 August 2020
222377	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 201418 for the proposed permanent retention of existing mobile home to provide groom's accommodation. Condition 2 refers to the occupation and cessation of mobile home use, and the variation is to change the wording of the condition	Approved 21 September 2022, Dismissed at appeal 09/05/2023
232230	Full application for the stationing of a mobile home following the removal of the existing mobile home.	Approved 08/12/2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections subject to condition(s)
WBC CIL – Development is CIL liable
WBC Ecology – No comments received
WBC Waste Services – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Broadacre Place is located on the south-western side of Broadcommon Road, south of the village of Hurst. On the site are five equestrian buildings adjacent to the main entrance (mobile home, stables, hay barn, storage and shed) with high fencing and hedgerow to the road. An exercise track is located to the east of these buildings. The remainder of the site and surrounding area consists of open rural fields.

The site is located within the designated Countryside.

Planning/Appeal History:

The use of the land for the keeping of ponies and access onto the site was granted by F/1996/64623 in January 1997.

Following this, an application for a mobile home for groom's accommodation was approved by F/2009/1060 in July 2009. The need for on-site accommodation was demonstrated on the basis that the site was used for the stabling of polo ponies. The level of care required for polo ponies falls into the same category as that for racehorses or competition horses, particularly where training and veterinary treatment is concerned. This was supported by a full assessment by the Council's agricultural consultants. It was ultimately considered that despite the fact new residential accommodation within the Countryside is unacceptable in principle, the polo pony use was considered an 'exceptional circumstance'. As a result, application F/2009/1060 was approved subject to a 5-year temporary permission.

This temporary permission was then extended for five years to 20 August 2020 under application F/2015/0917. In 2020, an application for the permanent retention of the mobile home was approved (201418) but due to the exceptional circumstances surrounding the need for the home in association with the polo pony use, a condition was imposed requiring the home's removal if the number of polo ponies on site was reduced to less than five. The condition read as follows:

"The mobile home hereby approved shall only be occupied by a groom working on the site under the employment of Lisa Spiers. When the land ceases to be used for the keeping of not less than five polo ponies owned by Lisa Spiers or is used for the keeping of anything other than polo ponies, the use of land for the stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes shall cease, the mobile home (and any footings) shall be removed and the land, including the parking area, shall be restored to its original condition before the original development took place."

The reason behind the condition was:

"The site is within an area where a dwelling would not normally be permitted and permission is only granted because the dwelling is intended to serve the specific needs of the site, being the need to care for polo ponies. The land also comprises an adequate acreage for polo pony stabling but it would be inadequate for other forms of equestrian use, resulting in an unsustainable use at the existing level of intensity. Relevant Policies: NPPF (Paragraph 79) and Core Strategy: CP3 and CP11."

In 2022 the applicant submitted a variation application (222377) regarding this

condition. Initially, they wanted to remove the condition in its entirety but if not possible, they requested that the personal reference to Lisa Spiers was removed. This application was approved 21st September 2022 and the condition was varied, instead of removed altogether, to read as follows:

“The mobile home hereby approved shall only be occupied by a person(s) solely or mainly employed for the care of polo ponies on the land, and any dependants of that person(s). When the land ceases to be used for the keeping of not less than five polo ponies or is used for the keeping of anything other than polo ponies, the use of land for the stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes shall cease, the mobile home (and any footings) shall be removed and the land, including the parking area, shall be restored to its original condition before the original development took place within three months of the use ceasing.”

The reason for the condition remained the same as the reason imposed under application 201418.

The applicant appealed this decision on the grounds that the varied condition failed to comply with the 6 tests of planning conditions within the NPPF. This appeal was dismissed in September 2023 by the Planning Inspectorate and the following conclusions were made by the Inspector:

“Accordingly, the condition is necessary, relevant to the development permitted, precise, enforceable and reasonable to ensure the siting of the mobile home for residential purposes is justified. Despite the technical breach with CP11 of the Core Strategy, the mobile home with the condition is compliant with aims and objectives of the Policies CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 80 of the Framework.”

Following the dismissal above, application 232230 was consented in December 2023 to relocate the existing mobile home on site to a different orientation. The conditions referenced above were re-applied to this permission.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the part-conversion of the existing barn store (consented under application F/2008/1419) to a two storey, two-bedroom dwellinghouse. This conversion would replace the existing mobile home (log cabin) on site, resulting in its removal from the application site. The barn would be retrofitted with additional fenestration to serve the rooms of the dwellinghouse.

The rear of the barn store would be retained for storage in association with the site's equestrian use. The planning statement outlines that when the store was originally approved in 2008, it was commonplace for the polo player to use their own equipment to maintain the holding. However, due to rising costs and security concerns, the situation has changed, and it is now increasingly more common on cost effectiveness grounds to outsource this to external contractors. As a result, there is now unused space within the existing store which the applicant/owner would like to re-use as grooms' accommodation.

Principle of Development:

Policy Context:

Local Plan Update (LPU):

The Council are also progressing with their Local Plan Update (LPU) which has progressed beyond the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) stage, with representations received on the plan's legal compliance and soundness between 30 September and 13 November 2024.

The Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) consultation has now closed and the Council have now analysed the representations received. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive.

The Council however acknowledge that there are unresolved objections on substantive grounds pursuant on the majority of relevant policies listed above, meaning weight attracted to these policies is limited.

Core Strategy 2010:

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. 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; or
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 5) In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements;
 - or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.

National Planning Policy Framework:

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.

Paragraph 84 sets out that new isolated homes in the countryside should be avoided unless there are special circumstances and provides a non-inclusive bulleted list of the factors that may constitute such special circumstances, including at bullet point 1 where there is a need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside. Neither 'essential' nor 'rural' are defined by the NPPF.

Whilst Annex A to former Planning Policy Statement 7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas is no longer extant, it reinforces the interpretation of 'rural worker' by setting out that one of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified is where accommodation is required to enable agricultural, forestry and certain other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of their work. Superseding this, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) titled 'Housing Needs of Different Groups' provide some guidance relevant to paragraph 84 of the NPPF in the section 'How can the need for isolated homes in the countryside for essential rural workers be assessed?'. The first circumstance of the PPG mirrors that of paragraph 84 in that it requires evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land-based rural enterprise.

Assessment:

The need for the mobile home, that being for the stabling of polo ponies, has been established since 2009. Application 201418 for the permanent retention of a mobile home was subject to an equestrian appraisal in 2020, and it was concluded by the Council that the continued need for a groom was adequately justified.

The context, use and owner of the site has not changed since this determination, and the Case Officer counted a total of at least five ponies within the stables at the site upon visiting in September 2023 (when determining application 232230) and more recently in August 2025 for this application. The amount of accommodation proposed within the converted barn store would have the same number of bedrooms and whilst there would be an overall increase in habitable floorspace, it is not considered disproportionate to the use of the site.

It is therefore considered that the essential need for the mobile home remains justified and therefore complies with section 1 of CP11, that being the requirement for proposals to contribute to rural/countryside-based enterprise. Compliance is also achieved with paragraph 84 of the NPPF as there is a justified need for a rural worker's dwelling in this isolated location.

Regarding section 2 of CP11, the proposals re-use of an existing building and the removal of the existing log cabin would result in a net decrease of development footprint on site. Therefore, the development would clearly not result in the excessive

encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings, compliant with this criterion.

With regards to criterion 3 of CP11, the development involves the re-use of an appropriate building that would result in an overall betterment to the openness of the Countryside (due to the removal of the log cabin). Compliance with this criterion 3 is therefore achieved.

Overall, the development is considered acceptable in principle as per CP11 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Character of the Area:

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 alterations to the barn building, namely the inclusion of fenestration, would have a negligible visual impact on the character of the site and the surrounding Countryside. Furthermore, the removal of the log cabin would represent a visual and spatial improvement to the site, maintaining the site's rural and isolated surroundings.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential dwelling to the site is located approximately 160 metres to the north of the site. There are therefore no neighbouring amenity concerns.

Internal amenities:

Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity.

The overall GIA, bedroom sizes and the cumulative living, kitchen and dining spaces all meet the minimum standards outlined in TB07 which is acceptable.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

General:

Given the site is already in use as an existing dwelling ancillary to the equestrian use, Highways have no objection on site sustainability for the replacement of the dwelling. No additional traffic impact is anticipated from the replacement dwelling.

Access:

The existing access will be retained, which is acceptable.

Parking:

Parking According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Village location will require two parking within the red line boundary. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

The proposed driveway can accommodate three or more parking spaces of suitable dimensions, which is acceptable.

Cycle Provisions:

According to the WBC Parking Standards, two cycle parking allocation will be required per dwelling with 5 habitable rooms.

Details of cycle parking will be dealt with via a condition.

Refuse Collection:

According to Manual for Streets, the maximum carrying distances for households (30m) and refuse collection operators (25m) from the collection point.

While kerbside collection will likely be suitable, as the proposed dwelling will be sited over 30m from the public highway, the applicant is required to indicate the position of the bin collection point. These details will be dealt with via a condition.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of surface water flooding. WBC Drainage have no objections to the proposals as they re-use an existing building and result in a decrease in impermeable areas on site.

Landscape and Trees:

There are no arboricultural concerns, nor would the proposals generate any harm to the prevailing landscape character.

Ecology:

Bats:

The site is located within a Bat Roost Suitability Habitat, with the development involving works to the existing barn roof. However, upon visiting the site, the barn has an open void roof internally that is well sealed, with no visible roosting opportunities. WBC Ecology confirmed pre-registration of the application that a bat survey was not required.

The standard bat informative will be added to the decision notice as a precaution.

Great Crested Newts:

The application site is located within an Amber Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts. However, due to the decrease in development footprint and re-use of an existing building, there is no anticipated harm on this protected species.

Conclusion:

Overall, the development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval.

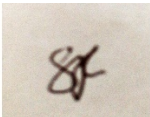
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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:	Approval
Date:	12 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	28 August 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	12.9.25

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS
Insert where relevant