

MEMORANDUM

From:	Brigitte Crafer Landscape Architect		
Service	WBC Landscape and Trees	App No:	252639
Address:	Lower Rivermead Farm, Willow Lane, Wargrave, Wokingham, RG10 8LH.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of an all-weather equestrian arena with associated landscaping works.		
Type of Development:	Minor All other developments		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The site is located in the Green Belt and in deep countryside accessed via Willow Lane from Henley Road which is Green Route. Willow Lane is also a PRow WARG 10. The site is between Hennerton Backwater and the River Thames, between Wargrave Marsh to the east a Local Wildlife Site, and the River Thames lined with vegetation and pasture.

Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBLCA), dated November 2019, identifies a number of different landscape character areas (LCA's) across the Borough and provides key information regarding each of the LCA's. The site falls within A1 Thames River Valley LCA, a high quality landscape, of high sensitivity with a low capacity for change. The Landscape Strategy is to;

To conserve and enhance the peaceful, natural character of the meandering river channel, network of streams and channels, belts of bankside woodland and distinctive willow pollards and other trees and picturesque floodplain edge settlements.

The key aspects to be conserved and actively managed are the river itself, and the adjacent open rural landscape and its features including: large country houses and their associated parklands and pleasure grounds which are important to local landscape character, woodland and wetland habitats, and traditional rural features including pollarded willows. In particular there is an opportunity to consider restoration of the hedgerow framework, and

restoration of pasturage along the floodplain, in areas where arable land uses now dominate.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern and maintain the low density domestic character.

A number of Valued Landscapes within Wokingham Borough were initially identified through a Topic Paper on Valued Landscapes by WBC dated January 2020 to respond to paragraph 187 (a) of the NPPF and prepared as part of the evidence base for the Emerging Local Plan Update and associated Policy NE6. Further work has recently been undertaken to make refinements to the boundaries of the valued landscape areas to update the assessment and this has now been published in the Valued Landscapes Assessment dated September 2024 as part of the evidence studies produced for the current consultation related to the Local Plan Update: Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19).

it is noted that (a proportion of) the application site falls within River Thames Valued Landscape. The NPPF indicates that these landscapes will need to be protected and enhanced, so therefore we will need to understand how development on this site can address this aspect.

The site is a rectangular field 175m wide by 90m depth and it is located just to the east of a group of 2 Beech trees classified as 'Notable' (See Ancient Tree Inventory) – Tree ref. 218472 to west and Tree ref. 218330 to the east of the group and this tree is next to the western site boundary of the field. There is a Norway spruce to the north side of Willow Lane close to the entrance, protected by TPO 354/1988.

According to the Drainage Plan, plotted on A4 plan at 1:2500, the menage is set back from the western field boundary and the 'Notable' trees by 39m. The menage is therefore set within the field rather than to the western edge. It is proposed to erect a 1.4m high post and wire fence around the menage. Currently horse grazing is managed by moving an electric fence around a field.

The menage will be constructed on a stone sub-base with non woven geotextile membrane and topped with sand fibre/sand/ rubber mix , The surfacing is to remain dry. Its not clear what the height above ground level will be and if the surfacing will be retained by an edge of some sort. A section drawing would confirm this.

As the site is within flood zones 2 and 3 it is proposed to place perforated drainage pipes at 5m intervals with outlets to north and east connecting to a shallow pond to N and existing ditch to NE that drains to Hennerton Backwater.as illustrated on Lower Rivermead Farm, Willow Lane, Wargrave, RG10 8LH - Construction of outdoor equestrian arena - plan ref: RG108LH/EM/NB - Drainage October 2025 (proposed)

I have checked the BioDiversity Net Gain information and it seems as though there are 18 new trees to be planted in a random location in a 'copse' to the north of the field boundary. As the development is within the field away from the field boundaries, how will the development relate to the existing field and is further development proposed?. Although the proposed development is in deep countryside and mostly

screened, its not screened within the overall site itself and is possibly visible from Willow Lane itself. The existing field boundaries appear to be fenced. As the Landscape Strategy for LCA A1 includes restoration of hedgerows, I suggest that screening the wider field within which the development sits would fulfil the aims of the strategy as well as meet with Policy TB21 which requires proposals to demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment including the landscape quality, landscape strategy, landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposal shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape, as well as Policy CC03 particularly 2a) 'Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development. , and 2c) to promote integration of the scheme with any adjoining public open space or countryside.

SUMMARY

The application is lacking a clear, scaled plan that shows development in relation to its setting, particularly the 'Notable' trees to the west.

There is also no clear reason as to why the proposed 18 small trees are placed where they are shown on the Proposed Block Plan - RG108LH/EM/NB. What species are they?

Will the rest of the field continue to be used for grazing and if so will the trees be predated on from grazing animals and what are the species of tree, are they poisonous to grazing animals?

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Date:	1.12.25	Signed:	BRC
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