

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260789
Site Address:	Hatch Gate Farm, Lines Road, Hurst, Wokingham
Expiry Date:	13 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	21 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for the change of use of the existing building to storage and distribution use (Use Class B8) plus external alterations and installation of additional hardstanding. (Retrospective)	

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 CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP15 – Employment Development
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 CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB18 – Garden Centres and other small rural units outside Development Limits TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM4 - Protection of Designated Landscape DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM7 - Conserving the Historic Environment DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM15 - Site History
Wokingham	SS16 – Safeguarded routes SS17 – Transport improvements

Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document A Design for Hurst

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
251293	Prior approval submission for the proposed erection of 1 no. agricultural building for storage.	Prior Approval Not Required 20/06/2025
213672	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 211634 dated 15/07/2021. Condition 3. Drainage. 4. Landscaping. 5. Archaeology.	Approved 06/12/2021
211634	Full application for the proposed erection of an agricultural building.	Approved 15/07/2021
181534	Full planning application for the proposed erection of an agricultural shed.	Approved 02/08/2018
160518	Full application for the proposed erection of cattle shed no 4.	Approved 25/05/2016
160517	Full application for the proposed erection cattle shed no 3.	Approved 25/05/2016
160516	Full application for the proposed erection of cattle shed no 2.	Approved 25/05/2016
150544	Full application for the proposed formation of cattle yard and associated cattle sheds and farm workshop, to be constructed in four phases.	Approved 16/09/2015

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection.
WBC Drainage – No objection, subject to condition.
WBC Highways – Request further information.
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection, subject to condition.

External

National Gas Transmission – No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	A letter was received from Hurst Parish Council. The Parish raise no overarching objection to the proposal but highlights that it is one of several similar applications received in recent years and requests that the Local Planning Authority apply the relevant planning policies in determining the application. The Parish Council further advises that, should permission be granted, conditions should be imposed to control vehicle numbers and traffic movements, hours of operation, and associated noise and light pollution, in order to safeguard the rural character of the area and the amenities of neighbouring properties.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received.
Neighbours	One letter of objection. Concerns relate to: - No objection in principle to agricultural use; objection is to distribution centre use. - Excessive HGV activity (up to ~12 vehicles) causing visual harm. - Noise disturbance from reversing alarms, yard activity and late/early movements. - Light pollution from vehicles and security lighting affecting neighbouring property. - Urban/industrial character (security measures, activity) harmful to rural setting. - Loss of privacy due to overlooking from yard and drivers. - Use considered akin to light industry and unsuitable for a rural residential lane.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site comprises a warehouse forming part of the wider Hatch Gate Farm complex, an established agricultural holding extending to approximately 170 hectares and used for cattle and sheep farming to the south of Hurst.

The site is positioned on the western side of the farm, adjacent to Dunt Lane. It consists of a single warehouse located towards the eastern side of the site, with the remainder of the site laid to hardstanding.

The site lies outside defined settlement limits within the open countryside.

Proposal:

This application seeks retrospective approval for the change of use of the existing building to storage and distribution use (Use Class B8) plus external alterations and installation of additional hardstanding.

Principle of Development:

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.

The proposed development is located within Wokingham Countryside and classified as a rural location. It is therefore limited by the principles outlined in policy CP11 of the Core Strategy (CS) 2010. Policy CP11 aims to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment and states proposals outside of development limits will not be granted planning permission except where it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprise and does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from original buildings.

In this instance, criterion 4-7 are not applicable.

It is considered that the proposal fails to comply with the principle of development set out in CS Policy CP11. The storage and distribution use is not appropriate or inherently dependent on a countryside location and does not contribute to or promote rural enterprise, recreation, or enjoyment of the countryside, and therefore conflicts with criterion 1.

The Planning Statement (Pegasus Group, March 2026) reports that the building was formerly used for lambing from 2022 to 2024 and used for storage at other times of the year. However, due to a drastic downscaling in the lambing operation, the building is no longer required for this function. Paragraph 4.4 of the statement states that the building is also no longer required for agricultural storage, as there is other storage available elsewhere within the wider farm. The statement justifies the use as B8 storage as the operation does not interfere with the farming operations across the wider site, and that the large building provides the floorspace required for the storage and distribution use. Whilst this may explain the applicant's desire to repurpose the building, it does not justify the introduction of a B8 use in this location. Furthermore, it is more typical for storage and distribution uses to typically be located within established industrial areas or out-of-town centre locations that benefit from good access to the strategic road and rail network, reflecting their operational requirements and the need to accommodate a range of vehicle types and movements (CS Policy CP15).

Common issues associated with B8 use class units often relate to hours of operation requiring 24 hours a day, 7 days a week access which can place pressure on the highways network and have adverse impacts on neighbouring properties. As such, permitted development from agricultural buildings to other use classes is extremely limited, and are subject to prior approval.

In contrast, the application site is located within a rural setting served by Dunt Lane, a narrow rural route forming part of the wider network of countryside lanes. The site is not well-related to the strategic highway network, with access to the M4 (Junction 10) requiring a journey of approximately 5.5 miles, of which a large portion would be along

rural roads. This raises concerns regarding the suitability of the location for such a use and the potential for increased pressure on the rural highway network.

In addition, very limited information has been provided regarding the operation of the business, including details of its hours of operation and any empirical data evidencing when site activities are undertaken. This is contrary to CS policies CP6 and CP9 where CP6 requires provision for sustainable forms of transport which are not available in this location as the only reasonable access is by motor vehicle, and the nature of the use encourages trips by motor vehicle. The introduction of the new development and uses adds to the impact of the use of motor vehicles to access the site as public transport is either not, or is not easily available, to the site. CS Policy CP9 requires development proposals to reflect existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location together with their accessibility. The site is not easily accessible by public transport and is not within one of the listed Strategic Development Locations and the cumulative impact of the unauthorised development causes harm to the countryside.

No robust justification has been provided to demonstrate why the proposed B8 use must be located at this site, or why alternative, more appropriate locations are not available. Although not a policy requirement, the economic benefits of the scheme carry limited to moderate weight in the absence of such justification having regard to the restrictive approach to development in the countryside, the proposal fails to comply with the requirements of Policy CP11.

Turning to the NPPF, while the Planning Statement refers to paragraph 88; supporting sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas and does not restrict this to rural businesses, it must be read in tandem with paragraph 187 (b), which states that 'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside...' The storage and distribution use, in open countryside does not respect the prevailing character. By virtue of this, it impacts on the countryside character of the area and as stated above, is contrary to Policy CP11 as it does not maintain the quality of the environment or result in environmental improvement.

The development is also retrospective and has resulted in a breach of conditions 2 (Approved plans), 4 (Landscaping details) and 6 (Materials) attached to the original permission (211634), particularly the failure to implement required landscaping, with the entire site instead surfaced in hardstanding. This is contrary to CP11 criterion 2 which specifies that development should not lead to excessive expansion of development away from the original building.

Furthermore, the proposal fails to comply with criterion 3 of Core Strategy Policy CP11, as the building cannot reasonably be regarded as suitable for conversion. This is because it was not constructed in accordance with the approved plans for permission 211634, and therefore does not constitute a lawful building in its current form. The approved scheme required the structure to be open-sided and finished in timber cladding; however, evidence from aerial imagery (World Imagery Wayback) and Google Street View confirm that, whilst the building was substantially completed between March and October 2023, it was neither open-sided nor constructed in timber cladding. As such, the development deviates materially from the approved plans. In addition, the associated landscaping approved under discharge of condition application

213672 was not implemented, further demonstrating non-compliance with the approved scheme. Taken together, these factors indicate that the building has not been lawfully implemented and is therefore not considered a suitable or lawful structure capable of conversion, weighing significantly against the proposal in principle. Put simply, it is a new building in the countryside.

The fact that the development would secure the employment of two full-time employees, aside from the lorry drivers, does not outweigh these concerns.

Accordingly, the proposal represents an unjustified and inappropriate form of development in the countryside that conflicts with Policy CP11. The use and development in terms of its location and its impact represents unacceptable and unsustainable development within the countryside and would have a harmful urbanising and industrialising impact on the open countryside which does not accord with the NPPF, MDD policies CC01 and CC02 and CS policies CP3, CP6 and CP11. This is expanded upon in the sections below.

Character of the Area:

The application relates to the retrospective change of use of a former agricultural building to a storage and distribution use, together with the formation of extensive hardstanding across the entirety of the site. Prior to the construction of the building, the site exhibited an agricultural character, with a softer, rural appearance defined by vegetation and open land. The area to the rear of the site remains agricultural in nature and the land to the north and south boast open countryside. The current unauthorised development changes the rural character by expanding the commercial development westwards into the surrounding countryside.

CS 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. Policy CP3 seeks to ensure that development proposals contribute positively to a sense of place, both in the design of buildings and spaces, and in the way they integrate with their surroundings, including the use of appropriate landscaping.

However, the works undertaken have resulted in the complete loss of any agricultural character. The site is now entirely hard landscaped with hardstanding. There is no planting or existing vegetation remaining. This represents a stark visual departure from the site's former rural appearance and fails to respond positively to its countryside setting.

Furthermore, the introduction of utilitarian features, including hard, palisade fencing around the full extent of the site boundary, reinforces an industrial character that is incongruous with the surrounding agricultural landscape. The cumulative effect of the hardstanding and security infrastructure creates a markedly urbanising and industrialising form of development within an otherwise rural area.

In addition, the application site forms part of the wider Hatch Gate Farm complex, an established agricultural holding extending to approximately 170 hectares to the north-east and south-east of the site. The surrounding area contains several designated heritage assets including the Grade II listed 'Byways', Dunt Lane, a late 16th- and 17th-

century timber-framed dwelling located approximately 150m to the north, from which partial views of the site are possible. Grade II listed 'Hatch Gate Farm Cottages' is located approximately 190m to the north-east from which longer range views of the host site are possible across open fields. Grade II listed St Nicholas Farmhouse lies approximately 180m to the south; however, intervening roadside vegetation limits intervisibility between the site and this asset. Notwithstanding these varying degrees of visibility, the presence of nearby designated heritage assets reinforces the historically sensitive rural context of the site.

Surrounding the site, the environment is characterised by its rural setting and public accessibility, with a network of Public Rights of Way traversing the area. In particular, footpath STNH17 runs eastwards from Dunt Lane across Hatch Gate Farm and continues northwards towards a cluster of heritage assets, including the Grade I listed St Nicholas Church and the Grade II listed Barker's Almshouses, Church Hill Cottages and The Castle Inn. To the west of the site, footpath STNH16 provides a connection between Davis Street and Lodge Road. Notwithstanding the clear presence of heritage assets and routes valued for their recreational and amenity contribution, the submitted Planning Statement does not adequately acknowledge or assess the significance of these features, nor their contribution to the character, sensitivity, and overall importance of the surrounding environment.

Further guidance on the character of the area is provided within the Parish Design Statement, A Design for Hurst (March 2005), which sets out design objectives and principles for the locality. It reads:

"As a small, rural settlement, Hurst lacks the facilities to make it sustainable for large-scale development. Therefore, any new development needs to be designed to meet the sustainability and limitations of the Parish.

Retention of open landscapes within built areas, development along only one side of the road and gaps between houses can help to maintain the open aspect of the Parish.

The shape and pattern of settlements with the Parish are unique, and development on open landscape between settlements would erode this and change the character of the area.

New development, including all re-development of old agricultural buildings as well as new agricultural buildings need to be appropriate to the physical and visual character and structure of the settlement area.

Soft, green boundaries and trees are characteristic of the Parish; any new development needs to respect this characteristic. The rural tradition of cultivated front gardens also needs to be respected wherever possible by appropriate building lines on developments".

The area also falls within the Hurst River Terrace C2 of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2019). The LCA evidence base takes account of the character and valuable attributes of Wokingham's landscape when considering new development or land uses, and to pursue opportunities to enhance and strengthen landscape character whenever possible. Page 4 states *"The need for this evidence base is all the more apparent in the context of continual pressures to*

accommodate new development and land uses and accompanying infrastructure within the borough”.

The LCA recognises the key characteristics of the area as a simple agricultural landscape, a rural and tranquil area which is predominantly agricultural and residential.

The assessment lists the Key Issues for the area. Two of significance include:

- Increasing traffic on rural lanes has led to creation of informal passing places and consequent demands for upgrading the winding network of rural lanes with new signage, line painting and widening is threatening the intimate rural character of the lanes.
- Large-scale modern agricultural buildings are prominent in the rural landscape.

To maintain the landscape and character of the Hurst River Terrace, the overall landscape strategy is to:

“Conserve and enhance the quiet, rural and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural farmsteads and small red brick villages connected by narrow rural lanes” (p101 of LCA).

Overall, the proposed B8 storage and distribution use of the former agricultural site, by virtue of its scale, operational characteristics and associated works, represents an incongruous and intrusive form of development that fails to respect or reinforce the prevailing rural and agricultural character of the area and is contrary to the overall landscape strategy for the Hurst River Terrace character area. The development fails to integrate appropriately with its surroundings and does not contribute to a positive sense of place.

The use introduces an overtly commercial and industrial presence into a sensitive countryside location, which is neither reflective of the site’s agricultural origins nor sympathetic to its wider setting within the Hatch Gate Farm complex and surrounding landscape and heritage buildings. The development would operate separately to the main farm and would represent a use that is neither beneficial for, nor dependent on the rural setting. As such, the development is considered inappropriate in this context and fails to accord with the identified character of the area and the objectives of the development plan and Parish Design Statement. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to MDD policies CC01 and CC02 and CS policies CP3, CP6 and CP11.

Landscape and Trees:

The Council’s Trees and Landscape Officer were consulted and raised no objection to the proposal, subject to a landscaping condition to ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity. They comment: *“The Landscape Strategy is to conserve the quiet, rural and agricultural landscape with its scattered rural farmsteads and small red brick villages connected by narrow lanes. There are opportunities to enhance the landscape through restoration and management of hedgerows”.*

Whilst no objection has been raised by the Council’s Trees and Landscape Officer, subject to the imposition of a landscaping condition, it is noted that a similar landscaping condition was imposed under planning permission 211634 and

subsequently discharged under application 213672. That scheme secured Copse planting to the frontage and a native hedgerow along the northern boundary; however, these works have not been implemented on site.

In this context, there is limited confidence that the imposition of an additional landscaping condition would be effective in securing meaningful mitigation or enhancement. Moreover, it is not considered that such a condition would overcome the identified harm, as the nature and intensity of the proposed use and associated activity would remain incongruous with the surrounding rural and tranquil environment. This would be contrary to paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF, which seeks to recognise and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It is also noted that planning conditions should not be relied upon as a means of screening or justifying fundamentally inappropriate development, but rather as a mechanism to support and enhance development that is otherwise acceptable in principle.

As such, the proposal fails to secure appropriate landscaping in a manner that would respect or reinforce the rural character of the site, and this weighs against the acceptability of the development. This is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP3, MDD Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 and section 15 of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

Due to the nature of the proposals and the re-use of an existing building, there are no overbearing or loss of light impacts that would be generated to neighbouring amenity.

Light pollution, Overlooking, Noise and Disturbance:

One letter of objection has been received raising concerns regarding light pollution and loss of privacy affecting the occupiers of Winton Lodge, located directly to the south of the application site. The occupiers report that, particularly during the winter months when vegetation provides reduced screening, they experience light intrusion from vehicles entering and leaving the site, as well as overlooking from drivers undertaking activities within the yard.

Whilst there is no specific guidance within the Borough Design Guide (BDG) relating to separation distances between residential and non-residential uses, it advises a minimum back-to-front separation distance of 10m between dwellings. In this case, the separation distance between the rear of Winton Lodge and the front elevation of the building is approximately 115m, and approximately 68m to Homewood Barn. In addition, established tree planting along the shared boundary provides a significant degree of screening, particularly during the summer months. Although it is acknowledged that this level of screening is reduced in winter, the separation distances involved are such that overlooking, in isolation, would not be sufficient to substantiate a reason for refusal.

Paragraph 198 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so, they should:

- a) Mitigate and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.
- b) Identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and
- c) Limit the impacts of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.

As set out earlier in this report, the area is defined by its prevailing rural and agricultural character, with only limited built development within the immediate vicinity. Notwithstanding this, the application site lies relatively close to residential properties (approximately 60m to the south, 179m to the west and 147m to the north). Particularly, Winton Lodge and Homewood Barn as they directly adjoin the site boundary to the south.

The submitted Noise Assessment provides a basic assessment of the likely impact of the proposed development on surrounding residential amenity. It concludes that the proposed storage and distribution use would generate limited noise, primarily from vehicle movements, which are stated to be comparable in type and frequency to those associated with the site's former agricultural use. It also notes that the site is in proximity to the A329(M) (approximately 830m to the south), where existing background noise is already present. On this basis, the assessment considers that the level of activity would not give rise to unacceptable noise or disturbance.

However, the submitted information is limited, therefore, there is no objective means of quantifying the noise impacts of the vehicle movements across the day. Nevertheless, storage and distribution generally involves a range of activities. Examples of noisy activities could include the use of mechanical equipment, the movement of forklifts and other heavy machinery and the noise from trucks moving within or around the facility.

Given that the development is retrospective and has reportedly been in operation since 1 July 2025, there has been sufficient opportunity for the applicant to submit empirical operational data to support the assessment of noise impacts; however, no such information has been provided. Furthermore, the application fails to specify the proposed operating hours, with the application form incorrectly indicating that no industrial or commercial processes would take place. The submitted information also makes no reference to recognised standards, such as the World Health Organisation's definition of daytime (07:00–23:00) and night-time (23:00–07:00) periods (WHO Guidelines for Community Noise (1999)), which are material in assessing the significance of noise effects. In the absence of baseline noise data and detailed operational parameters and having regard to the low ambient noise levels typically associated with this rural setting during the day and night, there is potential for the development to give rise to significant and intrusive noise impacts on surrounding receptors.

The only reference to operational timings is found on page 5 of the Planning Statement which states that "The operation typically involves the drivers setting off from the site on Monday with deliveries scheduled all around the country, and they return on Friday",

plus the Transport Statement Letter (Pegasus Group, 30 March 2026) which refer to 'typical' trips and estimates in the 'event that more intense activity occurs'. However, this contradicts the information provided by local residents in relation to planning enforcement case RFS/2025/090591. The case alleged that HGV lorries and vans had been seen and heard accessing and utilising the site across the whole week and throughout the day and with a much higher trip generation rate than that proposed in the Planning Statement/Transport Letter. There is no indication in the application to suggest that the proposal is a reaction to the complaints received.

It is therefore logical, that the activities and processes associated with the proposed use would give rise to significant levels of noise at certain time of the day/week. Furthermore, due to the site's rural and tranquil context, the noise impacts associated with the development are likely to be particularly intrusive. The level of noise associated with the proposed use is therefore considered likely to be detrimental to the living conditions of the occupants of the nearby neighbouring dwellings, given their close proximity.

Although the Council's Environmental Health Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, they operate under separate legislation which is more focussed towards statutory nuisance as opposed to amenity concerns.

It is also noted that a letter of objection was received from the occupants of a neighbouring property. The neighbouring objection raises concern that the change of use to a storage and distribution operation has resulted in significant harm to residential amenity through increased activity on the site, including frequent HGV movements, noise from vehicles and yard operations (such as reversing alarms), and disturbance from early morning and late evening activity. Additional impacts include light pollution from vehicles and security lighting, loss of privacy from activity within the yard, and the introduction of an urban, industrial character which is reinforced by hardstanding and security fencing. They consider that the development is wholly out of keeping with the rural setting and harmful to the living conditions of nearby occupiers.

In conclusion, in the absence of robust and sufficiently detailed evidence to quantify and assess the likely noise and lighting impacts arising from the proposed storage and distribution use and having regard to the site's close proximity to neighbouring residential properties within a predominantly rural and tranquil setting, it has not been adequately demonstrated that the development would not give rise to unacceptable harm to the living conditions of nearby occupiers.

The proposal therefore fails to satisfy the requirements of Core Strategy CP1, MDD Policy CC06 & Appendix 1, and paragraph 198 of the NPPF, which seeks to ensure that noise and light pollution are appropriately mitigated and do not adversely affect health or quality of life, and is consequently considered unacceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that:

- Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment

- Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car in line with Core Strategy Policy CP6

Policy CP6 states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that:

- Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice
- Are located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel

The Highway's Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises concerns, noting that the submitted information is insufficient to fully assess the impact of the development on the highway network.

Further clarification is required regarding the proposed operational details, including hours of operation, vehicle types and frequency of movements, as well as management measures to minimise impact.

Concerns are also raised about the suitability of the existing access for larger vehicles, including articulated HGVs, and the absence of a swept path analysis to demonstrate adequate and safe manoeuvring.

In addition, insufficient information has been provided in respect of vehicle numbers, parking, loading/unloading arrangements and whether adequate space is available on site to accommodate these activities without obstructing the highway.

As such, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposed development would not result in adverse impacts on highway safety or the efficient operation of the local road network, and the application is therefore unsupported in this regard. This is contrary to Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6 and CC07 of the MDD.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is in flood zone 1 and the Council's Drainage Officer raises no objection to the principle of development. They conclude that should approval be granted, it would be necessary to attach a condition to secure full details of the drainage system to ensure that there would be no increased flood risk from surface water run-off.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the proposed change of use of the former agricultural building to a B8 storage and distribution use is not considered acceptable in principle, as it fails to comply with criteria 1–3 of Core Strategy Policy CP11, which seeks to strictly control development within the countryside.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal would deliver a limited social benefit through the employment of two members of staff (excluding drivers), this benefit is afforded only modest weight.

Core Strategy Policy CP11 requires development to support a diverse and sustainable rural economy. Whilst paragraph 88 of the NPPF supports the growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, this must be balanced against the requirements of Section 15 of the Framework, which seeks to protect and enhance the intrinsic character and

beauty of the countryside. Furthermore, CS Policy CP15 directs business, industrial and warehousing uses towards designated employment areas and other appropriate locations within defined development limits. The application site does not fall within any such location.

In addition, given the nature of the proposed business, it would not provide a local service or facility to the surrounding community and would result in no meaningful benefit to the wider countryside. It is not considered to constitute a sustainable rural enterprise, nor would it promote recreation in, or enjoyment of, the countryside.

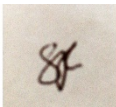
Overall, the limited benefits associated with the proposal are significantly outweighed by the identified policy conflicts and harm. Having regard to the development plan and in the absence of material considerations that indicate otherwise, the application is therefore recommended for refusal with formal enforcement action to follow, if considered expedient.

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	Refusal
Date:	16 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	15 May 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	9.7.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Outside Development Limits

Countryside

Great Crested Newt Impact Zone – Red

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 - Hurst River Terrace

Twyford, Ruscombe & Hurst Ward

St Nicholas Parish