

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261338
Site Address:	Newlands Mole Road, Sindlesham, Wokingham
Expiry Date:	11 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	14 April 2026
Proposal: (retrospective) Full application for the erection of decking.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside (CP11)
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – White Risk Zone
Tree Preservation Orders – TPO-1825-2021
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones – 7km Linear Mitigation Zone

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 CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 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 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	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs

Plan Update (LPU)	CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER3 – Supporting the rural economy H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H5 – Rural workers’ dwellings FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH6 – Archaeology DH7 – Equestrian development HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
081887	Proposed erection of one dwelling with garages and staff accommodation.	Refused 07/08/2008
201458	Full application for the proposed erection of an equestrian facility for training and livery purposes including fifty horseboxes, foaling yard, indoor and outdoor riding arenas, lunge ring and horse walker, reception, office, members clubhouse with bar, parking for 25 cars, three parking areas for HGV horse lorries, and three units of residential accommodation comprising managers three-bedroomed house, staff two-bedroomed flat and staff five-bedroomed flat, with access via Gravel pithill Lane and Ellis Hill.	Refused 07/10/2020
250785	Full application for the change of use of land and 3no. buildings to equestrian, erection of 1no. stable building and creation of a riding	Approved 20/10/2025

	arena with associated engineering works (Retrospective). 	
253039	Full application for the use of land for the stationing of a mobile home for use as equestrian staff accommodation. (Retrospective) 	Approved (3 Year Temporary Consent) 03/03/2026

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External
None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One objection received on the following grounds: - Impacts onto Valued Landscape - Question the ancillary nature of the decking - Unsure about the necessity of the decking or what it is to be used for, since the statement refers to an ancillary residential use but the justification surrounds the equestrian need. (Officer comment: The residential use is already directly linked to the equestrian use on site.) - Development would change the use of the mobile home (Officer comment: This is incorrect. As previously highlighted above, the home is directly linked to the equestrian use and is only permitted for residential purposes for that reason. The decking is additional, supplementary amenity space that would serve the same purpose as the mobile home does.) - The decking would create a separate planning unit (Officer comment: This is incorrect, it would be intrinsically linked to the equestrian use of the site and the mobile home.)

APPRAISAL
Site Description: The application site consists of an equestrian livery and riding area surrounded by an extensive array of grazing paddocks, accessed via a long winding vehicular road from Sindlesham Road to the north-west. The land is surrounded by undulating fields and hills and also enclosed by dense vegetation, some of which is protected by an area-wide Tree Protection Order (TPO-1825-2021). Application 250785 approved the equestrian use of an area of land which includes a riding area and 4no. stable buildings. The site has permission for full commercial livery, but condition 2 of the consent restricts the following operations due to its sensitive countryside location: - DIY Livery - Half Livery - Riding School Lessons - The hosting of competitions or events Following on from this, application 253039 approved the temporary siting of a mobile

home for use as equestrian staff accommodation for a period of three years. The decking associated with the current application originally formed part of the proposals for application 253039 but was removed prior to determination as the Local Planning Authority questioned the necessity of the decking to serve the equestrian use on site, especially due to the site's location within the designated Countryside.

To the south of the site are 3no. stable buildings and an informal vehicular parking area. The riding area is located immediately north-west of the 3no. stable buildings to the south. Further west is another stable block that includes 5 stables within.

The site is located within the designated Countryside, plus the Barkham and Bearwood valued landscape area. Bearwood College, a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden, is located 150 metres to the east.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks retrospective approval for the proposed erection of timber decking adjacent to the mobile home on site. It is important to highlight that the intended users of this decking will be employees of the site's equestrian use, under permission 250785, and would form an ancillary link to the mobile home on site, permitted under application 253039.

The planning statement states the following regarding its use:

"The decking responds to the particular functional characteristics of the approved mobile home, and affords the occupants amenity space for their own use as well as a welfare and meeting area and client reception and waiting area associated with the equestrian operations on site.

The decking is also used for conducting business meetings, competition schedule planning and tour plans. As many of the applicant's clients have more than two horses at Newlands, when they visit they may be on site for 3-4 hours at any given time. The decking therefore provides a space for them to rest.

The decking serves a practical role in connection with the approved temporary mobile home, providing additional space for occupiers undertaking equestrian duties throughout the day. The decking is also used on an ancillary basis for informal staff discussions and occasional meetings with horse owners on site as no staff meeting facilities existing elsewhere on the site."

Principle of Development:

Policy Context:

General:

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.

Local Plan Update:

The Council is currently progressing their Local Plan Update (LPU). The Proposed Submission Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on Friday 28 February 2025. Two independent Inspectors were appointed, with Part 1 examination hearings held in November 2025. The Inspectors have now written to confirm the examination can progress to Part 2 hearings.

As a result of the above, the weight applied to the LPU policies is currently limited. The most relevant policies are listed below.

Policy SS5 of the LPU relates to development in the Countryside. Paragraph 2 states that Development proposals in the countryside will in general only be supported for the types of development set out below:

- The construction of new dwellings which accord with Policy H4: Exceptions sites, Policy H5: Rural workers' dwellings and Policy H10: Traveller sites;
- Development proposals for which land is allocated;
- Development which supports the rural economy and equestrian uses in accordance with Policy ER3: Supporting the rural economy and Policy DH7: Equestrian development;
- Low carbon and renewable energy generation schemes in accordance with Policy CE7: Low carbon and renewable energy generation;
- The re-use or conversion of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction which would not require extensive reconstruction;
- The replacement, extension or alteration (including sub-division) of existing buildings of permanent and substantial construction, and which do not lead to disproportionate increases in scale, form or footprint beyond the original building;
- Redevelopment or infilling of previously developed land that does not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside or the rural setting of the village;
- Agricultural and forestry development that is demonstrated to be reasonable and proportionate to the need;
- Outdoor sports, recreation, leisure and nature conservation development that is demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate for the use;
- The provision of essential community facilities which cannot be located within settlement boundaries and are demonstrated to be necessary, reasonable and proportionate to the use;
- The provision of essential utilities and infrastructure (including development for strategic transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a countryside location), and cemeteries and burial grounds; or
- Minerals and waste development in accordance with relevant policies in the minerals and waste local plan.

Core Strategy 2010:

The site lies within the Countryside as designated in the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. Core Strategy policy CP11 states, 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 criteria are as follows:

- 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:

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable:

- the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed, new buildings;
- the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;
- sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside; and
- the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.

Paragraph 89 states that planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

Assessment:

With regards to criterion 1 of CP11, it is already established that the equestrian business on site is a rural enterprise. The decking would serve the enterprise in the following ways:

- Provide amenity space for the equestrian occupiers that live within the mobile

- home on site, plus staff on site as a welfare area.
- Utilised for staff and client meetings.

Whilst on the face of it, the purposes listed above do indicate that the decking does serve a meaningful purpose in relation to the rural enterprise, the LPA question the necessity of additional operational development on site to facilitate these purposes; The mobile home was, in part, permitted and designed to provide amenity space to equestrian workers on site. Internally, the home includes a large open plan kitchen and living area, plus an external front porch with space for seating. Staff/Client meetings could be held within the mobile home, and the application red-line for 253039 permitted a small area of grassland outside of the home that could be used for amenity purposes in the same way the decking is. The LPA therefore question why the existing development on site cannot serve as sufficient provision to achieve the aims of the proposed decking.

It is important to highlight that a 3-year temporary consent was given for the mobile home to ensure that the need for the dwelling is genuinely required and to monitor its wider impacts on the countryside. This approach provides LPAs with a controlled way to support rural enterprises while safeguarding the countryside from unnecessary or long-term development; temporary permissions recognise that the financial viability and operations of rural enterprises can change over time, so a temporary period enables the LPA to review the continued need for accommodation in the future alongside its associated impacts.

In light of the Local Planning Authority's view on the necessity of the decking and the fact it would form an ancillary connection to the mobile home on site, it is reasonable to impose a temporary consent on the decking too, tied to the expiry date for the mobile home (3rd March 2029). Subject to this temporary condition, the proposed decking is considered to broadly comply with criterion 1 of CP11.

Turning to criterion 2 of CP11, the decking is modest in both footprint and scale and immediately adjoins the mobile home on site. It would also require removal should the temporary period expire or the equestrian use of the site ceases, avoiding any permanent harm to the Countryside. Overall, subject to the temporary condition, it is not considered that the development would result in the excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. As such, compliance with criterion 2 is achieved.

The wording of Policy CP11 requires compliance with criteria 1, 2 and 3. Compliance with criteria 1 and 2 are noted and criterion 3 does not apply to the proposal. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area/Landscape Character:

Policy Context:

Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'

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).

Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan states that proposals must 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. Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

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 National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Site Context:

The application site is within the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape, which is wholly within the landscape character area (LCA) L1 known as 'Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills'. The valued landscape takes and its demonstrable physical attributes which would take this site beyond "*mere countryside*" and should be considered as more important than Countryside falling outside of this Valued Landscape designation as stated in the in the Valued Landscapes Topic Paper (2020).

The valuable landscape characteristics of the LCA include;

- Elevated wooded hills
- Varied topography which forms an intricate range of landscape spaces and backdrops
- Large expanses of mature mixed woodland
- The distinctive mosaic of interconnecting mixed woodland interspersed with small scale pastoral fields
- Peaceful secluded character
- Contrast of enclosed views within woodland and long views

The landscape condition is good. The main landscape strategy for the LCA is to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and parkland character of the landscape and its biodiversity. In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the unsettled character of the area.

Assessment:

The mobile home is a modest timber structure that maintains the low-key single storey character of other built development on site. It is well enclosed by dense vegetation, with there being no public viewpoints available of its form. It is also sited within close proximity to other built development on site.

Whilst it cannot be reasonably argued that the decking conserves the unsettled character of the area or retains or enhances the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape, the decking would cause no permanent material harm to the landscape subject to appropriate conditions. Its presence on site would only be tied to the equestrian use of the wider land, with its removal also required in the event the equestrian use ceases. WBC Landscape and Trees have also raised no objections on the impacts to the LCA or Valued Landscape.

From a wider character and visual perspective, the mobile home would have little to no noticeable impact on the locale, primarily assisted by its densely vegetated enclosure and distance from the public highway.

Overall, the impact on the character of the area and wider landscape character is acceptable, subject to appropriate removal and remediation conditions.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The nearest residential property is Newlands Lodge, located approximately 140 metres north-west of the decking. As such, there are no anticipated neighbouring amenity impacts.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

WBC Highways raise no objections to the proposals as they do not result in any additional parking demand or affect the existing parking provision on site.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and at low risk of surface water flooding. As the decking is a modest structure with large voids underneath it, WBC Drainage raise no objections to the proposals.

Landscape and Trees:

Arboricultural Matters:

As outlined above, a large amount of the site is covered by an area-wide Tree Protection Order (TPO-1825-2021). Due to the distance between the decking and any protected vegetation on site, there are no objections on arboricultural grounds.

Ecology:

Biodiversity Net Gain:

As the proposed development is retrospective in nature, it is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gains.

Protected Species:

The site is located within a Bat Roost Area Habitat but due to the nature of the works, there are no anticipated impact on this protected species.

In terms of Great Crested Newts (GCNs), the site is located within a White Risk Zone,

which indicates that GCNs are highly unlikely to be located within the area. As such, the proposals represent no risk to this protected species.

Conclusion:

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

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

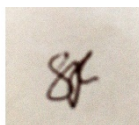
When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed 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 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:	Approval
Date:	20 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	13 July 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	20.7.26