

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251441
Site Address:	Rosebarys Farm, New Bath Road, Twyford, Wokingham, RG10 9RX
Expiry Date:	12 August 2025
Site Visit Date:	22 July 2025
Proposal: Full application for the permanent retention of an agricultural workers dwelling with associated parking and amenity space. (Retrospective)	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

Countryside
Green Belt
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Green Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts
Radon Affected Area

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) National Design Guide
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements 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 CP12 – Green Belt
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 TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards 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 SS6 – Development in the Green Belt SS10 – Meeting our housing needs SS15 – Securing infrastructure SS16 – Safeguarded routes SS17 – Transport improvements CE7 – Low carbon and 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 ER3 – Supporting the rural economy H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses H5 – Rural workers' dwellings NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY		
App No.	Description	Decision/Date
R/1958/8	Vehicular access to Bath Road	Refused
T/1999/69582	Portable building for offices and storage	Refused on 24 November 1999
F/2011/1271	Retrospective application for the construction of a roadway for agricultural use	Refused on 20 July 2011
172390	Part retrospective application for a change of use for a mobile home and pole barn	Refused on 28 September 2017
172391	Unilluminated sign at entrance gate (part retrospective)	Approved on 28 September 2017
173203	Full application for the proposed erection of a pole barn (part retrospective)	Approved 1 January 2018
173204	Unilluminated sign at entrance gate	Approved 1 January 2018
180199	Removal of condition 4 (Landscaping) of 173203	Approved 5 March 2018
180998	Temporary rural worker's dwelling (caravan)	Approved 5 March

		2019 (expiring 5 March 2021)
211934	Full application for the proposed change of use of the land for the temporary siting of a mobile home to form an agricultural worker's dwelling (retrospective)	Approved 17 August 2021 (expired 17 August 2024)

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objections
WBC Highways – No objections

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	<u>Twyford Parish Council:</u> Twyford Parish Council's Planning & Amenities Committee have no objections to the positioning of a mobile home on the site however, request that any permissions become null and void if continuation of the current commercial operation ceases. <u>Ruscombe Parish Council:</u> No comment. <u>Wargrave Parish Council:</u> No comments received.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site is located on the southern side of New Bath Road, between Firgrove (Twyford) in the west and Hare Hatch in the east. It comprises a rectangular plot measuring 2.64ha currently used for rearing of farm animals, including laying hens, turkeys, roasting chickens, laying geese and laying ducks. Development includes two sheds on the southern boundary (including an evisceration house and pole barn) and temporary outbuildings, several vehicles, a small silo, and other farm equipment concentrated in the north-western corner.

The site is located within the designated Countryside and the Green Belt.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the permanent retention of an agricultural workers dwelling with associated parking and amenity space.

As outlined in the planning history above, the site has been subject to two previous 2-year temporary consents for the stationing of a mobile home (180998 and 211934), the most recent of which expired in August 2024. The farm has therefore been in breach of the occupancy condition for over a year.

The applicant now seeks a permanent permission for the dwelling as they believe the farm is now in a financially sustainable position to support its retention in perpetuity. The applicant has provided their financial accounts since the 211934 consent to help justify this, plus an updated business plan.

It is important to note that upon the Case Officer's visit to the site on 12 August 2025, the mobile had been extended with a side porch. As a result of this alteration, the mobile home is no longer considered to fall under the definition of a caravan and is instead considered a building. The plans and description of development have been updated to reflect this.

Principle of Development:

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.

Paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should enable the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.

Paragraph 89 follows on from this, stating 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.

Green Belt:

Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy refers to national policy to enforce its aims, therefore attention turns to the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. National Green Belt policy has however substantially changed since the determination of application 212446, namely with the addition of the 'Grey Belt' definition with a primary focus on previously developed land.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF provides a list for exceptions for development that can be considered appropriate in the Green Belt. Of particular relevance to this application scheme is sections a) and b) which read:

a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;

b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;

With regards to exception a), the proposed involves an agricultural workers dwellinghouse, which reasonably complies with this exception.

Similarly, exception b) does not limit specific uses for appropriate facility provision and it is reasonable to conclude that these uses cover agriculture; agricultural buildings and facilities are supported by national Green Belt Policy, as seen in section a) above.

The second part of section b) requires appropriate facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. The mobile home, albeit now a building, has been established on site and in the landscape since 2018. It is modest in scale and will be strictly controlled to ensure it is removed from site should the agricultural use cease, thus reducing any permanent impacts to the Green Belt. With this in mind, the development would adequately preserve the openness of the Green Belt, subject to conditions.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt, subject to the assessment of essential need below.

Countryside:

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. This criteria is 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.

An agricultural workers dwelling complies with the first exemption criteria of CP11 as the farm is considered to be a sustainable form of rural enterprise.

With regards to exception 2, the dwelling is modest in scale, as is its relevant curtilage. The original buildings on site are classed as the agricultural buildings to the south of the site, which the dwelling is within close proximity to. Subject to a condition requiring the removal of the dwelling should the agricultural use cease, the permanent retention of the dwelling would not result in the excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.

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 as per CP11.

Essential Need:

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF 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.

It has been well established since the 2019 permission that there is a need for an agricultural worker to be present on site. Upon review of the farm's current stock of animals, both the Case Officer and Agricultural Consultant commissioned by the LPA to review the scheme agree that this need has not changed, and the presence of agricultural workers on site is justified.

Whilst an essential need has been established, the key assessment surrounding the permanent retention of agricultural workers dwellings is whether its retention is financially viable in perpetuity. In this regard, the applicant has submitted their financial statements since the 2021 renewal permission which have been reviewed by an independent agricultural consultant the LPA sought advice from during the assessment period.

On review of the accounts and supporting evidence including the recent Business Plan, the agricultural consultant has determined that the Applicant has shown this to be a viable agricultural business. They were pleased to see the Applicant has carried out a review of the business and the recent decision to focus on the free-range egg production shows a commercial minded approach of the Applicant and Business.

Overall, the agricultural consultant has concluded that the farm has shown a healthy and sustainable increase in their profits. This supports the proposed long term growth potential of the business and ultimately, the permanent retention of the dwelling, subject to an appropriate agricultural occupancy condition.

Character of the Area:

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).

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;

Assessment:

The dwelling is located to the western side of the agricultural holding and within close proximity to the evisceration house and pole barn to the south. Its single storey nature and siting within the plot ensures no public viewpoints of its form and overall, its permanent retention would have a minimal impact on the prevailing character of the area. Subject to the removal condition highlighted above, the development's impact on the character of the area would be acceptable.

Neighbouring Amenity:

There are no neighbouring amenity concerns as the dwelling is well separated from any nearby residential properties.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The principle of an agricultural workers dwelling in this location has already been established by way of previous temporary consents. There was no Highway objection associated with those applications. Highways consider that the provision of agricultural workers accommodation reduces the need to travel and therefore offers sustainable merits.

The access, parking and turning areas all remain as previously deemed to be acceptable for the previous consents.

Amenity Space:

There is ample space within the farm for amenity space and therefore no objections are raised in this regard.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and given the minimal nature of the dwelling and its location within the existing farm, there are no concerns with the proposal with respect to flooding and drainage.

Landscape and Trees:

The dwelling is to be sited where there is no impact upon existing trees and no foreseeable impact upon farm operations. The landscape character of the site will be retained, including as viewed from the roadway, with existing mature landscaping lining the boundary with New Bath Road unaffected. In this regard, the proposal is acceptable.

Ecology:**Great Crested Newts:**

The site is located within a Green Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts, which indicates a low risk. As the development is already established on site, there are no anticipated impacts on this protected species.

Utility Connections:

The site benefits from existing water and power connections and an existing septic tank.

Contamination:

The site is located within a Radon Affected Area. Considering the principle of residential accommodation here has already been established, no objections are raised in this regard.

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.

Conclusion:

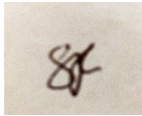
Overall, the proposed development complies with the development plan. Subject to conditions, this application is recommended for approval.

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:	7 November 2025
Earliest date for decision:	9 July 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10.11.25