

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260231
Site Address:	Warren Farm, Forest Road, Binfield, Wokingham, RG40 5QY
Expiry Date:	9 April 2026
Site Visit Date:	14 April 2026
Proposal: Full application for the change of use of the building to provide 4 no. units for storage and distribution use (Use Class B8). (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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability 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 TB07 – Internal Space Standards 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 DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM5 - Protection of the Countryside DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS8 – Meeting our employment needs SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development

	CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER2 – Employment uses outside of Core Employment Areas ER3 – Supporting the rural economy NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

App. No.	Description	Decision & Date
183150	Application for agricultural prior determination for change of use of agricultural buildings to 3no residential dwellings.	Refused (Quashed by High Court) 31/07/2019
191355	Prior approval submission for change of use of The Warren Grain Barn at Warren Farm from Agricultural Use to dwellinghouses (class C3).	Refused 12/07/2019

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to condition
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions. *Officer comments: This will be discussed within the main report below.*
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments received

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is located within the designated countryside, as is one of a number of buildings situated within Warren Farm. The buildings subject of this application is

comprised as part of a “U-shaped” former agricultural barn, with a timber frame and corrugated cladding. The building comprises four self-contained units with access to each of the units through a series of doors on the front elevation. Each unit is approximately 60 square metres in area.

Description of Development:

This application seeks retrospective permission for the change of use of the former agricultural barn to provide 4 units of occupation for B8 use (Storage or Distribution).

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 site is located outside of settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where it does not result in an inappropriate increase in scale, form or footprint of the original building. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

In terms of employment, Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy states that development for business, industry or warehousing will be permitted, including the expansion or intensification of existing employment uses provided it is within a Core Employment Area. In addition to this, Policy TB20 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan states that planning permission will only be granted for commercial development proposals that demonstrate no harmful impact on amenity of adjoining land users, no adverse visual impact, no impact on highways safety, and no significant environmental impact.

Countryside Location:

The spatial strategy for the Wokingham borough is contained within the Core Strategy of 2010. Policy CP9 relates to the scale and location of development proposals and seeks to focus development within those identified major or modest development locations. This site is located outside of settlement limits, within the designated countryside and therefore is in conflict with the overall spatial aims of this policy. As the site is located outside of settlement limits, Core Strategy Policy CP11 ‘Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)’ is applicable.

Policy CP11 states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where certain criteria are met. The criteria applicable for this proposal 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;*

The proposed conversion of the building will contribute towards the existing rural enterprise located at the wider Warren Farm site as per the first criteria of Policy CP11. Additionally, paragraph 88 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansions of all businesses in rural areas through the conversion of existing buildings, which this application is proposing.

In terms of criteria 2 of CP11, the proposed storage use is within an existing building, and as such there is no encroachment or expansion away from existing buildings. For criteria 3 of CP11, the storage use is within a suitably located building on the site, and the building has demonstrated it is appropriate for the conversion, and this is evidenced as the use has been ongoing since March 2021.

Policy SS5 of the Council's Local Plan Update, 'Development in the countryside', which notably can only be afforded limited weight at this stage, states that proposals in the countryside will be supported where they include the re-use or conversion of existing buildings that are of a permanent and substantial construction. This demonstrates that should this policy be adopted, then the current proposal would be in line with the policy.

Therefore, on the whole it is considered that the proposed change of use of the former agricultural barn for use of B8 storage purposes would not have an adverse impact on the site's countryside setting that would warrant a reason for refusal of this application.

Character of the Area:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

The proposal does not introduce new built form and remains visually contained within the existing Warren Farm complex, where commercial activity is already established. The continued use of the structure does not materially alter the wider landscape. Additionally, the reuse and ongoing maintenance to the building is better than the building become redundant and falling into a state of disrepair, or with replacement development elsewhere. As such, it is deemed that the proposed change of use poses no harm to the appearance of the building or wider character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties.

Overlooking / Overbearing / Loss of Light

Given that the proposal falls within an existing building, whereby the footprint, height and scale remain unchanged, there are no concerns with regards to overlooking, overbearing and loss of light.

Noise

Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protects noise sensitive receptors (NSR) from noise impacts. This proposal is located circa 11 metres from Warren Farm Cottage which is an NSR. Given the scale of the storage use, there will likely be little activity arising from the use of the 4 units. Additionally, the applicant has confirmed that they are not aware of any complaints resulting from the activities related to the use of the 4 units. As such, in this instance the council's Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that this can be adequately controlled via a condition restricting the hours of use to be in line with surrounding units at Warren Farm. Accordingly, this condition is recommended.

Light Spill

Other than PIR Security lighting, there is no other lighting associated with the building. Therefore, there is no spillage of light outside of the site, and as such, there are no concerns with regards to light spillage.

Odour

The site is used for B8 purposes and the materials stored are inert and do not give rise to odours. In any event, should there be any such odours this would be covered by the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Highways Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has no objection to the proposal subject to two conditions. One condition requires parking spaces and turning circles to be in accordance with the submitted plans. Accordingly, this condition is recommended. The other condition is requiring details of cycle parking to be submitted and approved. Given the nature of the proposed use, it is unlikely that users will be arriving via bicycle, and additionally, there would be plenty of space on the site for the storage of a couple of bicycles. Accordingly, this condition is not recommended.

Conclusion:

For the reasons stated above, the proposal is acceptable in local plan policy terms and therefore 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 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.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	12 May 2026
Earliest date for decision:	7 March 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	12/05/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 1

#	NAME
1	Outside Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Countryside	Countryside

Areas of Search for Sand and Gravel | Total count: 1

#	OBJECTID	OBJECTID_1
1	71	71

Mineral Safeguarding Areas | Total count: 1

#	Type	SubType
1	Sharp Sand and Gravel	River Terrace deposits

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: Special Case Zone	ONR also requests to be consulted on planning applications, irrespective of distance from nuclear sites, for special cases. Developments that either introduce a new hazard or change the existing external hazards posed to nuclear sites.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	YES	YES

Submitted Sites Live | Total count: 1

#	SITE_REF	LUPP	ADDRESS
1	5HU014	Housing (C3 Planning Use Class).	Warren Farm, Forest Road

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 5

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YT705	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YT706	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YU705	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
4	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YU706	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
5	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	YU707	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Green	Consult NatureSpace for Major developments only

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0300000530000&es=&location=473915,172259%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland

Wards | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Twyford, Ruscombe & Hurst Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	Name of area	Closest Approximate Distance
1	St. Nicholas, Hurst CP	0 m