

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

MR MICHAEL BALL

PLANNING STATEMENT

**MOOR GREEN BARN
LOWER SANDHURST ROAD
FINCHAMPSTEAD
BERKSHIRE
RG40 3TJ**

**Change of use of existing office building (Use Class E (g)(i) to
an independent dwelling with associated external alterations.
Change of use of land to residential curtilage.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of a full application for the conversion of an existing office building to an independent dwelling with associated external alterations together with a change of use of adjacent land to residential curtilage.
- 1.2 The application is submitted on behalf of Mr Michael Ball and follows the grant of a lawful development certificate for the use of Moor Green Barn as an independent office in Use Class E (g)(i) on 7th November 2025 (LPA ref: 252293).
- 1.3 This statement is divided into the following sections:
- Site and Surroundings
 - Site History
 - Planning Policy Context
 - The Planning Application
 - Summary and Conclusions
- 1.4 The statement will demonstrate that the conversion of the building to a residential dwelling is acceptable in principle and would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the area, which is already dominated by residential uses, or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. It will also demonstrate that the proposal is acceptable in terms of highways and parking, trees and ecology.
- 1.5 Reference will be made in particular to the fact that the Council does not have a five year supply of housing. The most recent published figure contained within the Wokingham Borough Five Year Housing Land Supply Statement of 31 March 2024 (published 30 January 2025) is that on 31 March 2024, the Council could only demonstrate a 1.7 year housing land supply. As a result, the tilted balance is

engaged. When applying the tilted balance, the adverse impacts are not of such magnitude that they would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

1.6 The application is accompanied by the following consultant report:

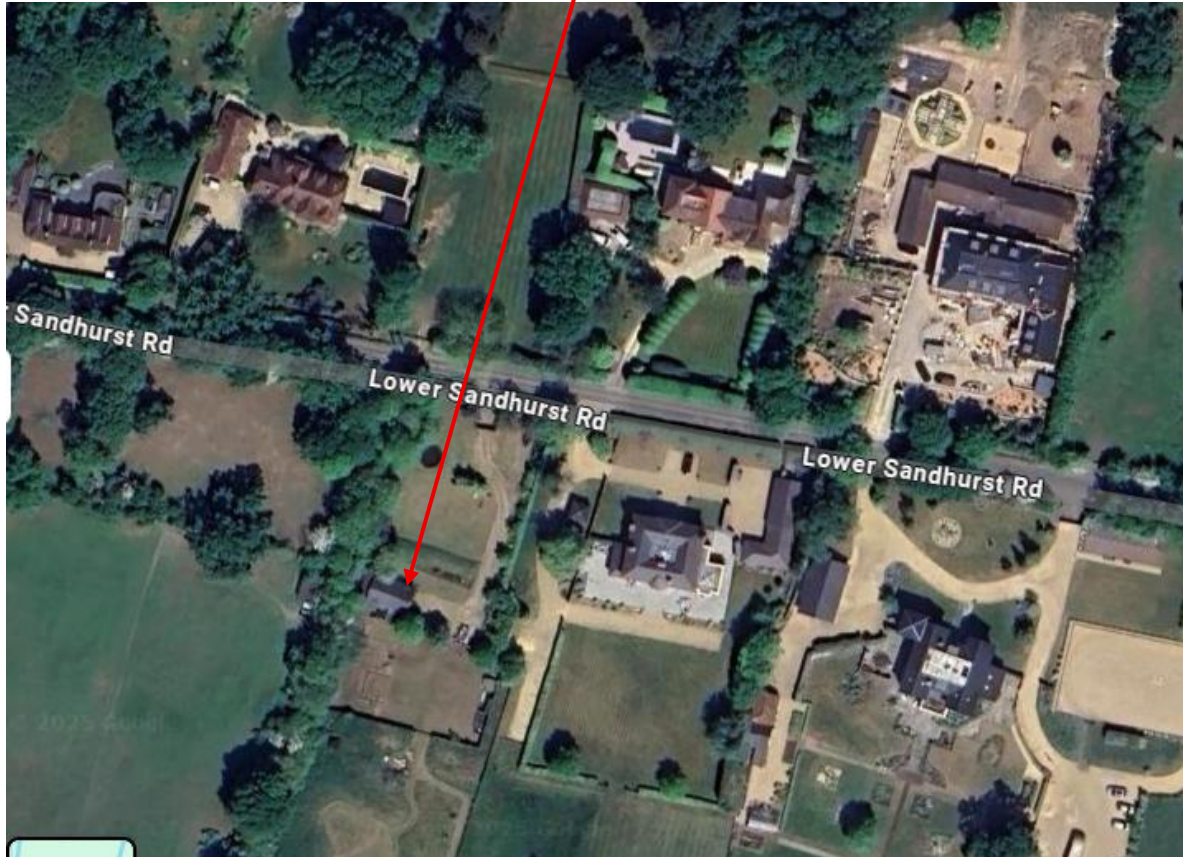
- Planning Statement (see below)
- Transport Statement (Highway Planning Ltd)
- Bat Roost Assessment (Echological Ltd)

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site lies on the southern side of Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead within land defined as being 'Countryside' in the Proposals Map. The building is currently lawfully used as an independent office as confirmed by the LDC granted on 7th November 2025 under Ref. 252293.
- 2.2 The site is accessed from Lower Sandhurst Road through an existing independent access road leading to a gravel driveway and parking area to the front of the building. The existing building has a lower ground and upper ground floor levels and is of brick construction with a tiled pitch roof. The building is of solid and sound construction and clearly capable of conversion, having been in commercial use for many years. No extensions to the building are proposed, with the only external alterations relating to the insertion of 6no. small window openings.
- 2.3 The existing building is set back substantially from Lower Sandhurst Road and is well screened on all sides by trees and hedges. The surrounding area is characterised by large, detached properties, paddocks and fields. To the east of the site is Moor Green Farm, a substantial two storey dwelling set within a large plot whilst to the north of the site are a row of large, detached dwellings fronting onto Lower Sandhurst Road. Open fields lie to the south and west of the site.
- 2.4 The proposal will not require the removal of any hedging or trees and no changes are proposed to the existing access arrangement. The site falls within Flood Zone 1.
- 2.5 The site is not considered to be isolated, being adjacent to numerous other dwellings. The Transport Statement submitted with this application confirms that the proposed house would generate considerably fewer traffic movements than the lawful office use equivalent to a reduction of 50%.

Extract from Google Maps

The Site



3 SITE HISTORY

3.1 Relevant planning history is set out below:

160159 – Householder application for proposed new access. Approved 29/03/2016

251080 - Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of the existing building as Office Use Class E (g) (retrospective). Refused 1 August 2025.

252293 - Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of the existing building as Office Use Class E (g) (retrospective). Determined to be lawful on 7 November 2025 (see below):



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACTS
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990:
SECTION 191 AND 192

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE)
(ENGLAND) ORDER 2015: ARTICLE 39

Mr Neil Davis
Davis Planning Ltd
19 Woodlands Avenue
Wokingham
RG41 3HL

NOTIFICATION OF APPROVAL OF CERTIFICATE OF LAWFUL EXISTING USE OR DEVELOPMENT

Application Number: 252293
Applicant Name: Mr Michael Ball
Site Address: Moor Green Barn, Lower Sandhurst Road,
Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TH
Proposal: Application for a certificate of existing lawful
development for use of the existing building as Office
Use Class E (g)(i)
Date of Decision: 7 November 2025

Wokingham Borough Council hereby certifies that on 25 September 2025 (being the date of application for this certificate), and subject to any conditions and/or informatives below, the operations described in the First Schedule to this certificate in respect of the land specified in the Second Schedule hereto and edged red on the plan attached to this certificate, would have been lawful within the meaning of section 191 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), for the following reason(s):

1. Based on the evidence provided and the Local Planning Authority's own information, it is considered to have been demonstrated that the use of the building as Office Use Class E (g)(i) on the site known as 'Moor Green Barn' has been occurring for a consecutive period of ten years.

FIRST SCHEDULE

Proposal: Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of the existing building as Office Use Class E (g)(i)

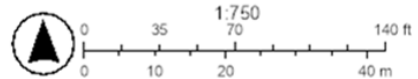
SECOND SCHEDULE

Address: Moor Green Barn, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham,
RG40 3TH

Moor Green Barn



07/11/2025, 14:13:04



Wokingham Internal
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4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

i) National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 4.1 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 states that in achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. Paragraph 10 states that *'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development** (paragraph 11).*
- 4.2 Paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.3 Chapter 12 is concerned with achieving well designed places. Paragraph 131 states that the creation of high-quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments (among other things):
- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development;

- Sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.

ii) The Development Plan

Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)

- 4.4 Policy CP1 (Sustainable Development) requires that a number of criteria are met. These include maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment; providing attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes; demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel particularly by the car; and contribute towards reaching zero – carbon development as soon as possible.
- 4.5 Policy CP3 (General Principles for Development) requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality. Proposals should not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring land uses.
- 4.6 Policy CP11 is concerned with proposals for development on sites located outside of the Development Limit (including Countryside). The policy sets a series of criteria which new developments are required to meet including the following:
- It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings;
 - It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvements;

Wokingham Borough Managing 'Development Delivery Document (2014)

- 4.7 Policy CC01 states that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Planning applications that accord with policies in the Development Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.8 Policy TB07 – Internal Space Standards. Proposals for new residential units, including change of use or conversions, should ensure that the internal layout and size are suitable to serve the amenity requirements of future occupiers. The Council will assess all development proposals against minimum standards (as set out in the policy).

iii) Wokingham Borough Design Guide

- 4.9 The following guidance is considered to be of relevance:
- 4.10 R16 – New housing must provide easy access to some form of amenity space. Confirms that the size of garden should relate to the house type and to the proposed number of occupants. Confirms that the minimum garden length of 11m is a generally accepted guideline.
- 4.11 R23 – States that alterations and extensions to buildings should be well designed; respond positively to the original building; contribute positively to the local character and relate well to neighbouring properties.
- 4.12 RD10 – States that proposals for conversions should be based on a detailed understanding of the building and its appropriateness for conversion, which will depend on factors such as its heritage significance, where relevant; the proposed use; the structure and construction of the building and its condition.

5 THE PLANNING APPLICATION

5.1 The application proposal is for the conversion of the existing office building to an independent dwelling with associated external alterations and a change of use of adjacent land to residential curtilage. As stated above, the building benefits from an LDC confirming that its use as an independent office is lawful.

5.2 This chapter considers the proposal in relation to the following matters:

- i. The principle of re-use and location of development
- ii. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
- iii. The effect of the proposal on the amenity of neighbouring and futures occupiers;
- iv. Highway and Trasnport considerations
- v. Trees and Biodiversity

i. The principle of re-use and 5-year housing land supply

5.3 The site is located in the countryside, outside of any settlement boundary. However, the building is not in an isolated location having regard to its proximity to existing dwellings and other uses. The use of the building as a small, two bed dwelling would generate a lower level of traffic movements than a continuation of the current use as an independent office. Within this context, the proposed development is considered to be a more sustainable option as it would result in a reduction of between 6 and 8 traffic movements per day equivalent to a 50% reduction.

5.4 The proposal is considered to be supported by Policy CP11 of the Wokingham Core Strategy (CS), which seeks to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. In particular, the proposal relates to the re-use an existing building and does not therefore lead to any 'excessive' encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. The

residential use would be contained within the existing structure which is of solid and sound construction and appropriate for conversion. No extensions to the building are proposed and therefore there would be no material increase in the scale, form or footprint of the original building. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

- 5.5 This proposal is for planning permission to change the use of the building from offices to residential use. As the site is not within any of the designations set down under paragraph MA.1(d) of the General Permitted Development Order (Class MA), there is obviously an alternative route available to the applicant which could be regarded as a 'fallback' position under the Prior Approval route. This is considered to be material to the consideration of this proposal and a further factor in support of the change of use.
- 5.6 In addition to these points, it is also relevant to note that the policies that establish the development limits are currently out of date due to the fact that the Council do not have a NPPF compliant housing land supply. The latest published figure is that the Council on 31 March 2024 could only demonstrate a 1.7 year supply of deliverable housing sites. This factor alone reduces the weight that can be applied to the conflict with the Council's locational policies.
- 5.7 The updated Standard Method confirms that the revised annual supply now equates to 1,336 dwellings per annum. In line with footnote 8 to paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the development plan policies which are most important for determining the application are therefore deemed out of date and the 'tilted balance' set out in paragraph 11(d) (ii) of the NPPF is engaged in respect of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

ii. Character and appearance

- 5.8 As the proposal is for the conversion of an existing building, the form and appearance of the building is largely retained with external changes to the existing structure limited to the insertion of windows and doors which would positively enhance its visual appearance. The proposed conversion is therefore sympathetic to the original building. The proposal complies with the guidance on conversions set out in the Borough Design Guide (RD10) and the proposed external alterations also respond positively to the original building as required by the guidance at R23.
- 5.9 The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing access and ample parking and turning space is available on the existing gravel driveway. No trees or other natural features would be affected by the proposal.
- 5.10 A modest curtilage area is sought in connection with this proposal for residential re-use. The land itself sits well beyond the road frontage and is mainly to the rear of the existing building. The area sought is proportionate to the size of the property.
- 5.11 The proposal would not therefore have any adverse effect on the character and appearance of the site or the surrounding area and, accordingly, would comply with the BDG and Policy CP3 of the CS which requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality.

iii. Amenity

- 5.12 The proposal would not have any adverse effect on the living conditions of occupiers of nearby dwellings. The closest dwelling to the application site is Moor Green Farm, however the building is located some distance away from the boundary with that dwelling and as such the residential use of the building would not result in any material harm to neighbouring occupiers.
- 5.13 The proposed dwelling will offer a high standard of amenity internally in compliance with MDD Policy TB07 and will be provided with a private and secluded garden with

a depth well in excess of 11m. The proposal therefore complies with Core Strategy Policy CP3 and R23 of the Borough Design Guide in respect to amenity.

Highways and parking

- 5.14 The proposed dwelling will utilise the existing access onto Lower Sandhurst Road. Given the size of the property, the proposed use of the building as an independent dwelling is likely to generate considerably fewer transport movements than that of the existing office use (50% fewer movements). The existing access offers good visibility in both directions, and the proposal is considered acceptable in respect to all highway matters (see Highway Planning Ltd statement).
- 5.15 Ample parking space (at least 4 parking spaces) is available on the existing graveled driveway adjacent to the building, in compliance with the Council's parking standards.

iv. Trees and biodiversity

- 5.16 The proposal relates to the conversion of an existing building whilst utilising the existing access and parking areas. No trees on or adjacent to the site would therefore be affected.
- 5.17 The application is accompanied by a Bat Roost Assessment (Echological Ltd). This confirms that the existing structure is not considered to be suitable for hibernation and also that during the inspection there was no evidence of droppings. No roosts were observed during the dusk emergence survey carried out on 29th July 2025.

v. Planning balance and conclusions

- 5.18 Importantly, the Council accepts that it does not currently have a 5-year housing land supply and that the tilted balance is engaged as a result (1.7 years which represents a substantial shortfall). Paragraph 125 (d) of the NPPF confirms that planning decisions should promote and support the development of underutilised land and buildings especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained. The Government acknowledges that small to

medium sized sites are especially important as they tend to be built out quickly. These factors weigh heavily in favour of this submission and the acute need for housing in the Borough. This factor also contributes towards the 'wider benefits to the community' requirements and is sufficient to outweigh the very limited harm caused through constructing housing on land that is defined as 'countryside'.

- 5.19 The proposal would not result in any loss of existing landscape features can be accessed safely meeting all highway and parking standards. The existing building is of low ecological value, and the dusk emergence survey did not record any roosts. No further survey work has been recommended.
- 5.20 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives. This proposal would secure net gain across each objective:
- 5.21 Economic objective: The change of use of the site to provide for 1no. new dwelling will provide benefits to local businesses in the immediate vicinity. In addition, the development would provide initial short-term employment in the construction industry followed by longer term benefits in terms of additional support for a variety of local business including pubs, restaurants, shops, local trades and private leisure and recreational establishments. None of the land is actively used as agricultural land.
- 5.22 Social objective: The application would make a meaningful contribution to the local housing stock. Noting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, this contribution towards the Borough's identified shortfall in housing land supply should be afforded substantial weight. The occupants of the property would contribute towards the local community, and the proposal would fulfill a positive social role.
- 5.23 Environmental objective: The site will make effective use of land in accordance with paragraph 11 and Chapter 11 of the NPPF. Whilst the site is located on land defined as 'countryside', it is not in an area which contains or affects assets of particular environmental importance and is not protected land. The proposal will generate between 6 and 8 fewer transport movements per day than the lawful office use. As

confirmed in the Transport Statement, the proposed conversion would therefore be less car reliant than the lawful use and a 505 reduction overall.

- 5.24 Having regard to the above considerations, the policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance do not provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. There are no significant adverse impacts that would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal' and the proposal would make a meaningful contribution to the supply of housing in the Borough where there is a substantial shortfall.

6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The proposal seeks the conversion of an existing building that is currently lawfully used as an independent office. The proposed residential use would generate less traffic than the existing office use and would therefore be a more sustainable option than the existing office as it would be less car reliant. Within this context, the proposed development is considered to be appropriately located. The Transport Statement is accompanied by two compelling case examples which clearly support the applicant's case in this regard.
- ii) The application meets CS Policy CP11. The proposed use would be contained within the existing building which is suitably located and is appropriate for conversion. No extensions are proposed, and the proposal would not lead to any further encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.
- iii) The Council remain unable to demonstrate an adequate housing land supply (i.e. 1.7 year supply) and there is a consistent history of under delivery in the Borough. The updated Standard Method now requires an annual supply of 1,336 dwellings in the Borough. There are no significant adverse impacts that would 'significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal'. The proposal would make a meaningful contribution to addressing this shortfall by providing five new dwellings in a sustainable location adjacent to the settlement edge with numerous other planning benefits. CS Policies CP1, CP3, CP7 and CP11 are either out-of-date or at the very least should be afforded reduced weight.
- iv) When assessed against other policies in the NPPF there is not considered to be any conflict. The proposal meets each of the three objectives to

sustainable development (i.e. the economic, social and environmental objectives). The additional householder expenditure has the potential to provide significant benefit to existing businesses in the area.

- v) The existing office use falls within Use Class E (commercial, business and service). Under the Prior Approval route afforded by Class MA of the General Permitted Development Order there is considered to be a clear and obvious route to obtaining permission which in effect would amount to a 'fallback' position. As the site does not fall within any of the designations under (d) to Class MA, the alternative potential route is a material consideration in the determination of this proposal.
- vi) The proposed external alterations are limited to new window openings and the proposed conversion is therefore sympathetic to the original building's character and appearance. The proposal complies with the guidance on conversions set out in the Borough Design Guide (RD10) and the proposed external alterations also respond positively to the original building as required by the guidance at R23. The proposal would not result in any harm to the character and appearance of the site, the existing building or the surrounding area.
- vii) Given the scale of the existing building and the generous separation distances involved, the conversion of the building to a residential dwelling will not result in any harm to the living conditions of nearby occupiers. The proposal would meet the Council's internal space standards and provides for suitable garden space in excess of that set out in the Borough Design Guide.
- viii) The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing access onto Lower Sandhurst Road and ample parking in compliance with the Council's standards is provided on the existing gravel driveway adjacent to the building. The use of the building as an independent dwelling would generate fewer transport movement than the existing office use. The existing access offers good visibility and the proposal is considered acceptable in respect to highway safety and parking.

- ix) The proposal would not have any implications for trees on or adjacent to the site. The proposal does not increase built footprint and would utilise the existing access and parking arrangement. Accordingly, there are no implications arising from the proposal in relation to trees.
- x) The accompanying Bat Roost Assessment confirms that no roosts were observed during the dusk emergence survey in July 2025.