

## **DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT**



**WOKINGHAM**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

|                                                                                                                            |                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Application Number:</b>                                                                                                 | 261060                                                                        |
| <b>Site Address:</b>                                                                                                       | Pine Copse Boarding Kennels, Pineridge F, Nine Mile Ride, Wokingham, RG40 3LU |
| <b>Expiry Date:</b>                                                                                                        | 9 October 2026                                                                |
| <b>Site Visit Date:</b>                                                                                                    | 18 June 2026                                                                  |
| <b>Proposal:</b> Full application for the erection of stables, tack room, trap storage and hay store (part-retrospective). |                                                                               |

### **PLANNING POLICY**

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>National Policy</b>      | National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)<br>National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Core Strategy (CS)</b>   | CP1 – Sustainable Development<br>CP3 – General Principles for Development<br>CP6 – Managing Travel Demand<br>CP7 – Biodiversity<br>CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals<br>CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits<br>CP15 – Employment Development                                                  |
| <b>MDD Local Plan (MDD)</b> | CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development<br>CC02 – Development Limits<br>CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping<br>CC06 – Noise<br>CC07 – Parking<br>CC09 – Development and Flood Risk<br>CC10 – Sustainable Drainage<br>TB21 – Landscape Character<br>TB23 – Biodiversity and Development |
| <b>Other</b>                | Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

### **PLANNING HISTORY**

| Application No. | Description                                                                                                                                                                 | Decision & Date        |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 171378          | Full application for the proposed change of use of land to equestrian, erection of building for use as hay barn and formation of existing track for access (Retrospective). | Approved:<br>July 2017 |

### **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

#### **Internal**

WBC Environmental Health – No comments  
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to a condition

WBC Highways – No objection subject to a condition  
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to a condition  
WBC CIL – No comments  
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection  
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions  
WBC Waste Services – No comments  
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments

#### **External**

Natural England – No objection

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

|                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wokingham Without Parish Council | <p>No objection subject to the stables remaining ancillary to the main accommodation.</p> <p>A separate point was raised by the Parish Council that it should have been known that a planning application was required prior to works commencing.</p> |
| Ward Member(s)                   | No comments received                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Neighbours                       | No comments received                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

### **APPRAISAL**

**Context:** Pine Copse as a wider site is located on the southern side of Nine Mile Ride and is characterised by a varied pattern of development, reflecting its mix of established uses. Further detail regarding the character and composition of the site is set out within this report.

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a stable building, in connection with the established equestrian use on part of the site. The development is part retrospective, with the external body of the building having already been constructed but the use has not commenced.

Planning application 171378 established the lawful use of the land for equestrian purposes, including the erection of a hay barn as part of that scheme. The building approved under that application was intended to provide hay storage; however, it is now in use for vehicle repairs and servicing, having subsequently obtained a Certificate of Lawfulness under application 230581. As a result, the site no longer benefits from dedicated hay storage associated with the equestrian use, and there is therefore a functional requirement for the provision of alternative storage facilities

Part of the adjoining equestrian/grazing field is currently the subject of an enforcement investigation relating to a storage use. However, the applicant has confirmed this will be cleared, the date of which still to be agreed with the Enforcement Officer. It should be noted that this application, if approved, does not authorised any unlawful development within the site that has not been specifically applied for. The development proposed is solely the stable building.

**Principle of Development:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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 proposal comprises the erection of a stable building incorporating stables, a tack room, trap storage and a hay store, to serve the existing equestrian use of the land. Planning permission was previously granted under application 171378 for the change of use of the land to equestrian use and the erection of a hay barn, thereby establishing the lawful equestrian use of the site.

The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundaries, within the designated countryside, and must therefore be assessed against Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. Policy CP11 seeks to ensure that development in the countryside is appropriate to its rural location, respects the character and function of the area, and does not result in an urbanising effect or an unacceptable intensification of land use.

There is no in principle objection to an equestrian use, as it constitutes both a countryside-based enterprise and activity which promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the countryside, thereby satisfying criterion 1 of Policy CP11. The development itself would not be located away from existing development on site and grouped with other buildings on an existing hardstanding. In this regard it would not cause an excessive spread of development away from original buildings, thereby complying criterion 2 of Policy CP11. Criterion 3-7 of CP11 are not relevant to this proposal as they relate to conversions, residential extensions, replacement dwellings, affordable housing and community facilities.

However, the acceptability of such development depends on whether its scale and nature are proportionate to the land being served and whether it would result in an unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the countryside and/or excessive encroachment to the detriment of the countryside setting.

The submitted information indicates that the development would facilitate the keeping of a limited number of horses (up to two) in connection with a private equestrian use. The application site is not intended to function as the primary grazing area, with the majority of grazing taking place on other land within the applicant's control. Instead, the site would be used on a more limited basis for stabling, storage and occasional turnout. Notwithstanding, the building is considered to be modest in scale and proportionate to the level of activity proposed. To ensure that this remains the case, conditions would be imposed requiring the building to remain incidental to the established private equestrian use of the site and restricting the number of horses kept within the application site to no more than two at any one time.

The site would provide suitable accommodation to meet the welfare needs of the horses, together with secure storage for hay, tack and associated equipment. By consolidating these functions within a single building, the proposal avoids the potential need for several smaller outbuildings, thereby reducing the potential for a more dispersed and visually intrusive form of development. Accordingly, the presence of the

building is not considered to represent an unacceptable intensification of the established equestrian use.

Reference has been made to the use of event carts and the movement of horses between sites. However, the information submitted confirms that the equestrian use is for private purposes and does not operate as a commercial livery, riding school or other commercial equestrian enterprise. Having regard to the personal (non-commercial) use and the maximum of 2 horses being kept on site, the development is considered to remain associated with the established equestrian use and would not generate any additional level of activity that would conflict with the objectives of Policy CP11.

In addition to the above, the NPPF recognises that meeting development needs in a sustainable manner will, in some circumstances, require development outside settlement boundaries. The Framework seeks to support the rural economy and rural communities whilst safeguarding the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. In this case, the proposal represents a form of small scale, land-based development that is characteristic of rural areas. As such, it aligns with the objectives of national policy in supporting appropriate rural development.

In further considering the national policy position relating to development outside settlements, Policy S5 of the NPPF states that only certain forms of development should be approved in such locations and identifies a range of uses which are generally appropriate within the countryside. The proposed use of the land for the grazing of horses and their occasional stabling falls within the forms of development supported by Policy S5. Grazing is consistent with the agricultural use of land, while the keeping and exercising of horses falls within outdoor sport and recreation. The proposal therefore accords with the principle of development outside settlements under Policy S5, subject to all other material considerations.

Overall, the proposal is considered to represent an appropriate form of development within the countryside. The development would support an established private equestrian use, which is a countryside-based recreational activity, and would provide facilities proportionate to that use, thereby complying with Policy CP11(1). The proposal would be sited within the existing equestrian holding and would not result in excessive encroachment into the countryside or expansion of development away from the established area of activity, in accordance with Policy CP11(2). Policy CP11(3) relates to the conversion or replacement of existing buildings and is not applicable in this case, as the proposal comprises a new building. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle and compliant with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy.

**Conflicting Development:** Notwithstanding the principle of the current proposal being considered acceptable, it has come to the Council's attention that a separate planning application has been submitted in respect of adjacent land at Pine Copse. The submitted plans indicate that this other proposal incorporates part of the land within the red line boundary of the current application and, importantly, appears to overlap with the area intended to provide access to the proposed stable building and associated equestrian land.

The separate application, which is currently invalid, seeks planning permission for the change of use of land to residential and the stationing of six mobile homes. If ultimately approved, the development has the potential to affect both the access arrangements serving the equestrian use and the amount of land available in connection with that use.

It is acknowledged that this proposal remains prospective and must be considered on its own merits. Nevertheless, its existence is a material consideration insofar as it raises questions regarding the future operation of the equestrian use and the extent of land available to support it. However, at the time of determining this application, no planning permission has been granted for the residential proposal and there is insufficient certainty regarding either its acceptability or implementation to justify withholding permission for the development currently under consideration.

Accordingly, whilst the Council has taken account of the existence of the overlapping proposal, it is not considered that there are sufficient grounds to refuse the current application on the basis of a separate and as yet undetermined planning proposal. The applicant is, however, advised that any future development affecting land associated with the equestrian use or access arrangements may have implications for the operation of the development hereby approved and would need to be carefully considered as part of any future planning application.

**Character of the Area:** Core Strategy Policy CP1 seeks to promote sustainable development, CP3 requires development to be of an appropriate scale, form, layout and character, whilst Policy CP11 seeks to protect the quality of the environment within the countryside.

The application site forms part of a wider parcel of land at Pine Copse, which is characterised by a mixed and varied pattern of development arising from its established and diverse uses. The wider site contains a combination of mobile homes, industrial/commercial buildings, hardstanding areas and parcels of open land associated with equestrian activity. Whilst located within the designated countryside, the application site does not exhibit the characteristics of an undeveloped rural landscape. Instead, it forms part of a wider area where there is an established presence of built form and associated infrastructure.

The proposed development is located within the existing cluster of buildings on the site and does not extend built development into undeveloped or visually exposed parts of the wider landscape. This is an important consideration, as it ensures that the development does not result in encroachment into the more open and undeveloped parts of the site, particularly to the southwest, which make a positive contribution to the rural character of the area.

The siting of the building alongside existing structures serves to consolidate development within an established footprint, thereby limiting the spread of built form and avoiding fragmentation of the surrounding countryside. It is acknowledged that, had the development been positioned in a more isolated or undeveloped part of the site, it would likely have resulted in a greater degree of landscape harm and would have been viewed less favourably in this regard.

In terms of its form and appearance, buildings associated with equestrian uses are generally appropriate within rural settings. In this instance, whilst the design of the building has a more utilitarian and agricultural character than is typically associated with traditional timber stable block this is characteristic of structures commonly found in rural and agricultural settings, including those associated with equestrian activities.

Policy DP3(1) of the NPPF requires development to *‘respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features...’*. As mentioned above, whilst the building is utilitarian in its design, it is comparable in scale and form to other structures within the wider Pine Copse site and would be viewed in the context of the existing developed cluster. As such, the proposal would integrate satisfactorily with its surroundings and would not appear as an incongruous or visually intrusive feature within the countryside. The proposal therefore complies with Policy DP3(1).

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the site or its countryside setting. The development is therefore considered to comply with Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and DP3 of the NPPF.

**Neighbouring Amenity:** The development would generate only a limited number of vehicle movements associated with the private equestrian use of the site, with supplementary information provided by the Agent confirming visits are very low level and are on a weekly basis rather than a daily basis. As such, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any material increase in traffic or activity that would adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring land uses. Furthermore, although the building would result in a minor intensification of the existing use, it would remain modest in scale and private in nature, and is not expected to give rise to unacceptable levels of noise, disturbance or other amenity impacts.

**Highway Access and Parking Provision:** The Highways Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development, subject to the building remaining incidental to the equestrian use. It is not considered that the proposal would result in any material increase in trip generation, nor would it give rise to additional parking demand or adverse impacts on highway safety.

**Flooding and Drainage:** WBC Drainage has requested further details to be submitted prior to the commencement of development. However, given that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal is of a modest scale, this requirement is not considered proportionate. As such, the details have not been pursued in this instance.

**Landscape and Trees:** The Council’s Landscape Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, subject to securing the retention and enhancement of hedgerows located to the north and east of the building through a landscaping condition. However, as these hedgerows fall outside the application red line boundary, they cannot reasonably be controlled or secured via condition. As such, in this instance, a landscaping condition is not considered necessary or reasonable to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

**Ecology:** Following the submission of further information pertaining to Ecological matters, including a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and Statutory Metric which demonstrate that the development would deliver a biodiversity net gain of 13.35% in habitat units and 193% in hedgerow units, the Council's Ecology Officer has raised no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions discussed below.

To compensate for the loss of potential nesting and roosting opportunities from previous tree removal, the Ecology Officer has recommended biodiversity enhancement measures comprising the installation of two bat boxes and two bird boxes. These measures can be secured through a planning condition and would provide a biodiversity benefit in accordance with Policy TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.

The site is also situated within an area that provides suitable habitat for bats, with woodland, railway corridors and other habitats in the surrounding area offering opportunities for commuting, foraging and roosting. The Ecology Officer has therefore recommended a condition requiring a sensitive lighting strategy to ensure that any external lighting does not adversely affect bat activity or ecological connectivity within the wider landscape.

Given the context of the site as identified by the Ecology Officer above, it is considered that both conditions are entirely proportionate and required in order for the development to comply with Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan. Subject to their inclusion, there would be no ecological objection to the application.

NatureSpace consider that the proposed development would present a low risk to great crested newts and/or their habitats. However, as the development is within the red Impact Risk Zone, as modelled by district licence mapping, an informative has been attached to the decision notice to inform the application of the appropriate steps should any newts be found during the construction.

**Conclusion:** The statutory starting point is the Development Plan. For the reasons set out above, the proposal is considered to represent an appropriate form of countryside development serving an established private equestrian use. The building is positioned within the existing cluster of built development at Pine Copse, thereby limiting encroachment into the more open parts of the site. Its scale, siting and functional relationship with the equestrian use are considered acceptable, and the proposal would not cause unacceptable harm to countryside character. Appropriate conditions would ensure that the building remains associated with the private equestrian use, limits its operation to an appropriate scale, and would secure the necessary ecological mitigation and enhancement measures.

Against these positive considerations, the development is part-retrospective, with much of the building having been erected without planning permission. Policy DM8(2) of the NPPF provides that, where it is concluded on the evidence that unauthorised development was intentional, that fact should be given substantial weight when considering whether retrospective planning permission should be granted. Whilst the building commenced prior to the updated NPPF, this is not directly relevant when applying the policy and it remains a significant drawback in the planning balance.

However, even when considered the weight that should be applied to DM8 in this instance, the retrospective nature of the application does not alter the assessment of the development's planning merits or outweigh the benefits of the proposal or compliance with the Development Plan. The planning balance therefore weighs in favour of the development, despite the significant weight attributed to DM8, on balance, the 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

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Conditions agreed:</b>          | Yes            |
| <b>Recommendation:</b>             | Approve        |
| <b>Date:</b>                       | 7 October 2026 |
| <b>Earliest date for decision:</b> | 12 June 2026   |

|                                                           |                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Recommendation agreed by:<br/>(Authorised Officer)</b> |  |
| <b>Date:</b>                                              | <b>8 October 2026</b>                                                               |

## PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Countryside*
- *Great Crested Newts – Red Risk Zone*