

PLANNING STATEMENT

Use of Existing Gravel Parking Area for the Siting of Two Food Trucks (retrospective) @

Bearwood Recreation Ground

Mole Road

Sindlesham

Wokingham

RG41 5TD

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a Full Planning Application for the permanent use of existing gravel parking area within the Bearwood Recreation Ground car park for the siting and operation of two food trucks (retrospective).

Planning permission is sought to allow the food trucks to trade for up to 365 days in any calendar year, between the hours of 4.00pm and 11.00pm.

The proposal has been prepared having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024), National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (2024), together with all other material planning considerations.

The proposal seeks to enhance the existing recreational facilities at Bearwood Recreation Ground by providing high-quality food and drink facilities for visitors, organised sports teams, spectators and members of the wider community, whilst making efficient use of an existing hard surfaced area within the established public car park.

2. Site Description

Bearwood Recreation Ground is a well-established public recreation facility providing sports pitches, children's play facilities, open space and community infrastructure serving Sindlesham and the wider Wokingham Borough.

The application site comprises five existing parking spaces located within the main public car park serving the recreation ground.

The proposal does not require any additional hardstanding, engineering works or the loss of recreational open space. The food trucks will be positioned entirely within the existing parking area and will utilise existing servicing arrangements.

Vehicular access will continue to be taken via the existing access from Mole Road, with no alterations proposed to the highway network or parking layout.

3. The Proposal

The proposal is for the retrospective siting of two food trucks occupying an existing gravel parking area.

The food trucks will provide freshly prepared food and refreshments to visitors using the recreation ground, sports clubs, local events and residents.

The operating hours of 4.00pm to 11.00pm minimises any impact on daytime parking demand.

No permanent structures are proposed, and the development remains wholly contained within the existing surfaced car park.

4. Planning Policy

The proposal accords with the overarching objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework by promoting sustainable economic development, supporting healthy communities and enhancing community facilities.

The proposal is also consistent with the objectives of the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (2024), particularly those policies seeking to:

- support sustainable economic activity;
- protect and enhance community facilities;
- encourage healthy lifestyles and active recreation;
- make effective use of previously developed and hard surfaced land;
- ensure high quality design that respects local character; and
- promote sustainable patterns of development.

The proposal represents a modest diversification of facilities available at an existing recreation ground and supports the continued vitality and attractiveness of this important community asset.

5. Highways and Parking

The application utilises an existing gravel parking area within an established car park containing a substantially greater number of spaces.

Given the scale of the proposal and its evening operating hours, the loss of this gravel area is not considered to materially affect parking availability or highway safety.

No changes are proposed to the existing vehicular access, pedestrian routes or internal circulation.

The proposal is therefore not expected to result in any significant adverse transport impacts.

6. Residential Amenity

The nearest residential properties are separated from the application site by existing roads, landscaping and areas of public open space.

Whilst the proposal introduces an evening commercial use, its scale is modest and is closely associated with the existing recreational use of the site.

Appropriate management of litter, waste collection and servicing arrangements will ensure the development operates in a clean and responsible manner.

The proposal is therefore not considered to give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring residential amenity.

7. Noise Disturbance

The proposal is for all activity to take place during daytime hours. Activity will include comings and goings of visitors to the food trucks only. No generators will be used by the food trucks as one is operated by woodfire and one connects to the existing site electricity supply.

8. Character and Appearance

The proposal involves no permanent buildings or engineering operations.

The food trucks will be located within an existing car park where vehicles are already an established feature and therefore will not appear visually incongruous.

The proposal preserves the open character of the recreation ground and does not adversely affect the wider streetscape or landscape setting.

9. Heritage Statement

The application site lies within the Sindlesham Conservation Area. As such, the Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty under Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal does not involve the demolition of any buildings, alterations to historic fabric, excavation works or the erection of permanent structures.

The food trucks are temporary, located entirely within an existing surfaced public car park. Their siting does not interrupt important views, harm the established layout of the recreation ground or detract from the significance of nearby heritage assets.

Existing mature landscaping surrounding the recreation ground will remain unchanged and will continue to provide visual screening from surrounding roads and neighbouring properties.

The proposal preserves the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area by making use of an existing developed area without altering its form or setting.

Consequently, the proposal accords with the heritage objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and the heritage policies contained within the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update.

10. Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposal does not affect or remove any existing habitat as it is placing vehicles on an existing hard standing area.

11. Great Crested Newts

Given the nature of the application and the absence of any physical works, the activity is considered to have negligible potential to impact Great Crested Newts, either directly or indirectly. The proposal will not result in the loss, fragmentation or degradation of terrestrial habitat, nor will it affect any breeding ponds or potential dispersal routes.

As the proposal represents a change in the use of an existing parking area only, with no modification to the physical environment, there is no reasonable pathway by which the development could adversely affect Great Crested Newts or their habitat.

12. Sustainability and Community Benefits

The proposal delivers a range of social and economic benefits including:

- improved facilities for visitors using the recreation ground;
- support for local sporting organisations and community events;
- opportunities for local independent businesses;
- increased visitor dwell time within the recreation ground;
- enhanced vitality of an existing community asset; and
- efficient use of existing infrastructure without the need for additional built development.

13. Conclusion

This proposal represents a sustainable and proportionate form of development that makes effective use of an existing public car park to provide additional facilities supporting recreation, health and community wellbeing.

The development requires no permanent buildings, results in no loss of public open space, preserves the character and appearance of the Sindlesham Conservation Area and does not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity, parking provision or highway safety.

The proposal accords with the National Planning Policy Framework and the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (2024) and delivers clear community and economic benefits through the enhancement of an established public recreation facility.

For the reasons above, we believe the application should be supported by Wokingham Borough Council.