

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260437
Site Address:	Broadacre Place, Broadcommon Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RE
Expiry Date:	14 May 2026
Site Visit Date:	9th February 2026
Proposal: Full planning application for the proposed change of use of an existing building to residential use (C3) to create 1no. dwelling house, including alterations to fenestration and the installation of roof lights, alongside the erection of a front porch, following the removal of an existing mobile home.	

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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP17 – Housing Delivery
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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix 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 SS10 – Meeting our housing needs SS16 – Safeguarded routes SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development

	CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting 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 H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses H3 – Affordable housing FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage FD3 – River corridors and watercourses NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC6 – Air pollution and air quality HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document A Design for Hurst

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
F/1996/64623	Use of land for keeping of ponies and construction of barn for stables, tack and harness room	Approved January 1997
F/1997/65625	Erection of barn	Refused August 1998
F/1998/68224	Erection of wall and gates (retrospective/with enforcement)	Refused October 1998
C/99/1020616	Appeal against refusal of F/1998/68224	Dismissed August 1999
F/1998/68504	Erection of barn	Refused February 1999

F/2001/4399	Stationing of mobile home	Refused December 2001
F/2002/6112	Erection of barn and formation of manege	Approved July 2002
F/2007/3050	Erection of equipment store, mess room and WC an increase in height of entrance gates	Approved February 2008
F/2008/1419	Erection of equipment store, mess room and WC and relocation of existing hay barn	Approved July 2008
F/2009/1060	Temporary stationing of mobile home for grooms accommodation (seasonal for five years)	Approved July 2009
F/2015/0887	All weather polo pony exercise track (lapsed)	Approved June 2015
F/2015/0917	Temporary stationing of mobile home for grooms accommodation (seasonal for five years)	Approved August 2015
182579	Installation of an all-weather exercise track for use by polo ponies	Approved November 2018
201418	Permanent retention of mobile home to provide groom's accommodation	Approved August 2020
222377	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 201418 for the proposed permanent retention of existing mobile home to provide groom's accommodation. Condition 2 refers to the occupation and cessation of mobile home use, and the variation is to change the wording of the condition	Dismissed at appeal 09/05/2023
232230	Full application for the stationing of a mobile home following the removal of the existing mobile home.	Approved December 2023
251843	Full application for the proposed partial change of use of existing building to residential to create 1no. dwellinghouse, along with changes to fenestration to include installation of rooflights, plus removal of existing mobile home	Approved September 2025
253069	Full planning application for the proposed partial change of use of an existing building to residential use to create 1no. dwelling house, including alterations to fenestration and the installation of rooflights, alongside the erection of a front porch, following the demolition of an existing mobile home.	Approved February 2026

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health- No objection
WBC Drainage - Objection
WBC Highways- No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Landscape and Trees – no recommendation provided.
WBC Ecology Newts - No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Ecology - No comments received

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd- No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Site Description: Broadacre Place is located on the south-western side of Broadcommon Road, south of the village of Hurst. The site consists of equestrian buildings including, a mobile home, stables, hay barn, storage and a shed. The site also has an exercise track to the east of the buildings and is surrounded by rural fields. Furthermore, the site is located within the designated Countryside.

Planning History: Broadacre Place has extensive planning history. The use of the land for the keeping of the ponies and access onto the site was granted under application F/1996/64623 in January 1997. Following this, an application for a mobile home for groom's accommodation was approved by F/2009/1060 in July 2009. The need for on-site accommodation was demonstrated on the basis that the site was used for the stabling of polo ponies. The level of care required for polo ponies falls into the same category as that for racehorses or competition horses, particularly where training and veterinary treatment is concerned. This was supported by a full assessment by the Council's agricultural consultants. It was ultimately considered that despite the fact new residential accommodation within the Countryside is unacceptable in principle, the polo pony use was considered an 'exceptional circumstance'. As a result, application F/2009/1060 was approved subject to a 5-year temporary permission.

This temporary permission was then extended for five years to 20 August 2020 under application F/2015/0917. In 2020, an application for the permanent retention of the mobile home was approved (201418) but due to the exceptional circumstances surrounding the need for the home in association with the polo pony use, a condition was imposed requiring the home's removal if the number of polo ponies on site was reduced to less than five. The condition read as follows:

"The mobile home hereby approved shall only be occupied by a groom working on the site under the employment of Lisa Spiers. When the land ceases to be used for the keeping of not less than five polo ponies owned by Lisa Spiers or is used for the keeping of anything other than polo ponies, the use of land for the stationing of a mobile home

for residential purposes shall cease, the mobile home (and any footings) shall be removed and the land, including the parking area, shall be restored to its original condition before the original development took place”

The reason behind the condition was:

“The site is within an area where a dwelling would not normally be permitted and permission is only granted because the dwelling is intended to serve the specific needs of the site, being the need to care for polo ponies. The land also comprises an adequate acreage for polo pony stabling but it would be inadequate for other forms of equestrian use, resulting in an unsustainable use at the existing level of intensity. Relevant Policies: NPPF (Paragraph 79) and Core Strategy: CP3 and CP11”

In 2022 the applicant submitted a variation application (222377) regarding this condition. Initially, they wanted to remove the condition in its entirety but if not possible, they requested that the personal reference to Lisa Spiers was removed. This application was approved 21st September 2022 and the condition was varied, instead of removed altogether, to read as follows:

“The mobile home hereby approved shall only be occupied by a person(s) solely or mainly employed for the care of polo ponies on the land, and any dependants of that person(s). When the land ceases to be used for the keeping of not less than five polo ponies or is used for the keeping of anything other than polo ponies, the use of land or the stationing of a mobile home for residential purposes shall cease, the mobile home (and any footings) shall be removed and the land, including the parking area, shall be restored to its original condition before the original development took place within three months of the use ceasing.”

The reason for the condition remained the same as the reason imposed under application 201418. The applicant appealed this decision on the grounds that the varied condition failed to comply with the 6 tests of planning conditions within the NPPF. This appeal was dismissed in September 2023 by the Planning Inspectorate, and the following conclusions were made by the Inspector:

“Accordingly, the condition is necessary, relevant to the development permitted, precise, enforceable and reasonable to ensure the siting of the mobile home for residential purposes is justified. Despite the technical breach with CP11 of the Core Strategy, the mobile home with the condition is compliant with aims and objectives of the Policies CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 80 of the Framework.”

Following the dismissal above, application 232230 was consented in December 2023 to relocate the existing mobile home on site to a different orientation. The conditions referenced above were re-applied to this permission.

Two planning permissions were granted for the removal of the mobile home and the relocation of the groom's/equestrian worker accommodation into part of the barn building, while retaining a substantial proportion of the building for storage purposes. Those permissions were subject to Condition 3, which restricted occupation of the residential accommodation to an equestrian worker only and required the building to be vacated if the use for keeping polo ponies ceased, or reduced to a level where an on-site residential presence was no longer necessary.

Principle of Development: Core Strategy policy CP11 states that, in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, development outside defined settlement limits will not normally be permitted except where it falls within the specific exceptions identified within the policy.

One such exception relates to development that supports diverse and sustainable rural enterprises, or countryside-based enterprises that promote recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside. The lawful baseline established by previous permissions accepted a limited and tightly controlled element of residential accommodation, justified solely by the operational needs of the equestrian use. That residential presence was first established through a mobile home and subsequently relocated into part of the existing barn. While the precise wording of occupancy conditions has evolved through successive permissions, the underlying principle has remained consistent: the residential accommodation must be functionally linked to the equestrian use of the land and occupied by an equestrian worker.

The presence of an equestrian worker living on the site is therefore established in principle. However, the current proposal represents a material departure from the lawful baseline. It would not simply enlarge, reconfigure or modestly alter the approved groom's accommodation; rather, it would result in the complete conversion of the equestrian storage barn from a mixed equestrian/storage and ancillary residential use into a wholly residential dwelling. In doing so, the proposal would remove the remaining secure and enclosed equestrian storage function that formed the original justification for the building.

The proposal therefore fails to satisfy the rural enterprise exception within Policy CP11. It would not contribute positively to a sustainable rural enterprise; instead, it would result in the loss of purpose-built, secure and enclosed storage space that supports the lawful equestrian use of the site and the ongoing management of the land. This would materially reduce the operational flexibility of the holding and undermine its ability to function effectively over time.

The earlier part-conversion of the building to form groom's accommodation under permissions 251843 and 253069 was accepted as a carefully balanced exception to normal countryside restraint policies. Those permissions were supported, in part, because they facilitated the removal of an existing mobile home while retaining a substantial element of equestrian storage within the building, thereby preserving both functional and character considerations. The current proposal provides no additional benefit in this regard, as the removal of the mobile home has already been secured and forms part of the established baseline position.

The Planning Statement acknowledges that secure and enclosed storage remains necessary for the operation of the site but suggests this function could instead be accommodated within the existing hay barn through its enclosure. Firstly, this would be separate operational development requiring planning permission which has not been approved. Therefore, there is no facility that compensates for the loss of the secure and enclosed storage space that was only applied for by the applicant in 2008 (F/2008/1419).

Secondly, a hay barn is inherently an open and ventilated structure specifically designed for the storage of hay. It does not perform the same role as a secure enclosed building used for the storage of machinery, tack, equipment and other operational materials associated with the equestrian use. Enclosing the hay barn would also displace its intended purpose and remove an important functional component of the holding. This displacement would not represent a neutral outcome. The loss of open hay storage would likely create pressure for additional buildings or structures elsewhere on the site in the future in order to meet operational needs.

Furthermore, under permissions 251843 and 253069, the retained storage space was located directly adjacent to the groom's accommodation, providing a functional relationship and degree of passive surveillance associated with the management of the site. The separate hay barn would not provide the same operational relationship or level of oversight. The Design and Access Statement for the storage barn (F/2008/1419) also explained that such storage should be located away from the road for security reasons, *"because of the continuing problem of site security, the applicant, in reflection, feels it would be advantageous to move the existing hay barn to the approved location of the equipment store and build the store on the site of the hay barn"*. The opposite is being propositioned now by suggesting the open barn next to the road would be suitable for secure storage.

Whilst the applicant states that operational storage requirements have been reassessed, planning permissions run with the land. The need for secure and flexible storage was submitted as a necessary component of the lawful equestrian use when permission was originally granted for the building in 2008 under application F/2008/1419. More recently, the retention of storage space formed an integral component of permissions 251843 and 253069, approved in 2025 and 2026 respectively. The storage function of the building has consistently been a component of applications to support the established use of the site, including one approved only several months previously. It follows that if it was needed previously in the very recent past, then it is logical it would be a requirement again.

Equestrian and agricultural uses are subject to changing operational requirements over time, and buildings of this nature provide important flexibility to respond to changing management practices and land-use demands. The loss of the remaining enclosed storage space would materially reduce that flexibility and would be harmful to the long-term management and functionality of the holding.

Whilst earlier permissions allowed a limited and carefully balanced degree of residential accommodation associated with the equestrian use, the current proposal would remove the remaining equestrian element of the building entirely creating a large residential dwelling. The proposal would therefore undermine the rural and operational justification previously relied upon and would result in development that is no longer appropriately related to its countryside setting. It would also undermine any condition to vacate the residential use of the building once the use of the site for polo ponies ceases because it would be a fully converted residential dwelling with limited potential for other rural or equestrian use.

Overall, the conversion of the entire storage barn into a residential dwelling would conflict with Policy CP11 by introducing an unjustified large residential building into the

countryside, reducing and displacing practical and secure storage capacity, and resulting in an excessive domestic use on an equestrian holding in the countryside.

Character of the Area: Core Strategy policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that developments are of appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to other adjoining land users. 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.

MDD Local Plan policy TB21 states proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues and retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The application site is within Landscape Character Area I4: Hurst Farmed Clay Lowland. The Landscape Guidelines for the area is *"in terms of development, the aim is to conserve the low density settlement pattern of farmsteads along rural lanes and the small village of Hurst."* Guidelines for the area include:

- Maintain the rural settlement pattern
- Enhance sense of place through careful design
- Protect the perceptions of rural tranquillity in the landscape

Broadacre Farm is located in a rural setting where the character of development is defined by equestrian activity, associated storage buildings and their functional relationship with the surrounding countryside. The appeal building is a barn-type structure historically used for equestrian storage, with ancillary mess room and WC facilities. Planning permissions ref. 251843 and 253069 authorised the partial conversion of the building to provide residential accommodation for an equestrian worker, following the removal of an existing mobile home. Those permissions were granted on the basis that a substantial proportion of the building would remain in equestrian storage use, thereby preserving the building's barn-like appearance, its operational role, and the rural character of the site.

The current application seeks permission to convert the entire building to residential use, which would result in a large domestic property in the countryside. The proposal includes a prominent large bank of glazing to the front elevation, which would materially alter the character and appearance of the building and give it the clear visual identity of a substantial detached dwelling rather than an equestrian or agricultural structure. It is well established that harm to character is not dependent on visual impact. Even though the building is set back from the site entrance, the proposal would introduce a significant degree of domestication to the plot through its scale, form and domestic detailing. Residential use would no longer be ancillary to the equestrian function of the site but would instead become a primary and defining feature of it.

While earlier permissions introduced limited domestic elements, these were carefully contained. The groom's accommodation was located to the rear of the building and incorporated only modest openings, allowing the structure to continue to read as an

equestrian or agricultural barn with ancillary accommodation. The current proposal represents a fundamental change, as the entire building would be converted into a large residential dwelling. The extensive glazing to the principal elevation would clearly indicate that the building is no longer an equestrian storage building or barn. As a result, the character of the site would change from an equestrian holding with a storage building and ancillary accommodation, to one dominated by a substantial single dwelling, harming the rural character and appearance of the area.

The removal of the existing log cabin/mobile home has already been secured through earlier permissions and therefore forms part of the established baseline position. It does not represent an additional benefit arising from the current proposal and does not outweigh the harm associated with the full residential conversion of the building.

The application suggests that storage could instead be provided by enclosing an existing open hay barn. This indicates that the proposal would give rise to a knock-on requirement for additional built development to replace displaced storage. Enclosing the hay barn would also result in the displacement of open hay storage and the requirement for further built form to replace this.

Condition 3 attached to the earlier permissions requires that the residential accommodation shall not be occupied once the associated equestrian use ceases. If the entire building were converted to residential use, compliance with this condition could result in a large, fully converted dwelling remaining vacant in the countryside should the equestrian use end. This outcome would be undesirable and highlights the importance of the earlier permissions retaining a substantial storage element within the building to preserve its rural character and functional adaptability.

Overall, the proposal would result in a substantial and unjustified domestication of the site, fundamentally altering the character and appearance of the building and its relationship with the surrounding countryside. The development would fail to conserve the rural character identified in the Landscape Character Assessment and would conflict with Core Strategy Policy CP1, CP3 and CP11, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21, the Landscape Character Assessment and section 15 of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity: There are no immediate neighbours adjacent to the site. Therefore, no concern for overlooking, loss of light or overbearing.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the above application. As the existing access from Broadcommon Road will be retained, this is considered acceptable.

WBC Car Parking standards require each parking space to have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. Given the development in a village location, it will require two to three parking spaces within the red line, however, this is deemed as acceptable as the proposed driveway can accommodate three or more parking spaces and of suitable dimensions.

EV Charging Points: New dwellings are expected to provide a minimum of one EV Charging Point under the latest Building Regulations (Approved Document S). The

position of EVCP is indicated in Drawing No. 25072 PL200 A, which is acceptable. This may be subject to further authorisation via Building Control.

Cycle Provisions: According to the WBC Parking Standards, three cycle parking allocation will be required per dwelling with 6+ habitable rooms. The applicant shall indicate direct access to the rear garden, cycle store or garage of suitable sizes for cycle storage on a plan or when discharging conditions.

Refuse Collection Strategy: According to Manual for Streets, the maximum carrying distances for households (30m) and refuse collection operators (25m) from the collection point. While kerbside collection will likely be suitable, as the proposed dwelling will be sited over 30m from the public highway, the applicant shall indicate the position of the bin collection point on a plan or when discharging conditions.

Flooding and Drainage: The Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning identifies the application site as lying within Fluvial Flood Zone 1. However, Flood Zone 3 lies immediately to the south of the application building, extending along parts of the site frontage. In addition, the Environment Agency surface water flood mapping identifies areas of high (1 in 30), medium (1 in 100) and low (1 in 1000) risk of surface water flooding abutting the building, including areas directly affecting the northern part of the structure.

The Council's Flooding and Drainage Officer has reviewed the proposal and confirmed that, given the site's close proximity to Flood Zone 3 and the identified surface water flood risks, the development is subject to elevated flood risk considerations. The Officer has advised that a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is required and that insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposal would be safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

While the building is existing and the southern part of the structure benefits from planning permission for residential use, the current proposal seeks the conversion of the entire building to residential use. The full conversion of the remaining storage area would result in a change in use from less vulnerable (equestrian storage) to more vulnerable (residential). This represents a material increase in flood risk sensitivity, particularly as the northern part of the building is directly affected by areas of identified surface water flood risk. The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear, including at footnote 7, that a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment is required where development would introduce a more vulnerable use on land that may be subject to flooding from any source.

In this case, the conversion of the remaining part of the building would introduce additional residential accommodation within an area affected by surface water flooding. As such, the proposal increases vulnerability to flood risk beyond that associated with the previously approved part-conversion.

In the absence of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would be safe for its lifetime, that it would not place future occupants at unacceptable risk, or that it would not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere. The

application therefore fails to comply with the flood risk requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and cannot be supported on flood risk grounds.

Ecology: The site is situated within a Bat Roost area. The development involves the demolition of the existing log cabin. However, no comments have been received by our WBC Ecology Officer, and it was confirmed in the previous application (241843) that no bat survey was required.

Nature Space: While the application site falls within an amber Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts, due to the small scale of the development it is considered unlikely that great crested newts and/or their habitats will be impacted as a result of the proposed development. Given this information, any residual risk of impacting GCN can be managed by following reasonable avoidance measures detailed in the GCN statement supplied by the applicant.

Environmental Health: The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed this application. There are no contaminated land concerns arising from the historical use of the site, which has been in equestrian and ancillary storage use for an extended period. The proposal involves a building conversion only and does not include significant ground disturbance.

Potential noise, odour and air quality impacts are consistent with the established lawful equestrian use of the site. Residential occupation already exists alongside these activities, and the proposal is not considered likely to give rise to unacceptable environmental health impacts, therefore, no objection has been raised.

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.

Conclusion:

The proposal would conflict with development plan policies and the NPPF and result in material harm for the following reasons:

1. The proposal change of use of the entire equestrian storage barn into a one large residential dwelling would result in a substantial and unjustified domestication of the site, fundamentally altering the character and appearance

of the building and its relationship with the surrounding countryside. The removal of the remaining secure and enclosed equestrian storage would fail to support a diverse and sustainable rural enterprise and would materially reduce the operational flexibility and long-term functionality of the use of the land for equestrian purposes. The development would fail to conserve the rural character identified in the Landscape Character Assessment and would conflict with Core Strategy Policy CP1, CP3 and CP11, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy TB21, the Landscape Character Assessment and section 15 of the NPPF.

2. In the absence of a site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would be safe for its lifetime, that it would not place future occupants at unacceptable risk, or that it would not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere. The application therefore fails to comply with policy CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 and CC10 and Section 14 of the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	13 May 2026
Earliest date for decision:	15 April 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	14.05.2026