

Development Management Ref No	No weeks on day of committee	Parish	Ward	Listed by:
162321	22/8	Barkham	Barkham	Major

Applicant	Mr and Mrs Smith		
Location	Land to the north of Wood Lane (west of Meadowcroft) Wood Lane, Barkham	Postcode	RG41 4TS
Proposal	Application for the change of use of agricultural land to equestrian land, erection of a stable lock and storage of logs (retrospective)		
Type	Full		
PS Category	006		
Officer	Daniel Ray		

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on 1 st March 2017
REPORT PREPARED BY	Head of Development Management and Regulatory Services

SUMMARY

The application site is an area of land totalling 8.63ha on the west hand side of Wood Lane, Barkham. The application is a retrospective application for a stable and associated equine use as well as the storage of logs and chippings that are a by-product of the applicants tree surgery business.

The principle of development is acceptable in so far as the equine use is an acceptable countryside activity and the storage of logs supports a local business that benefits both the rural and urban areas of the Borough.

The small size of the stable and storage area ensures that views in to the site beyond the mature hedgerow is limited thus ensuring the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the countryside is not harmful.

As only five horses are kept on the site and the small number of movements associated with the storage of the logs takes place, there is no concern from highways officers regarding highway safety and the impact on the highway network of the existing use.

Conditions limiting the storage of wood to storage only with no production or wood working of any kind taking place defines the site to a very limited use and a condition requiring the storage area to be left open and uncovered at all times ensure the filtration of water in to the ground at all times without increasing surface water flooding issues.

Subject to the use of conditions outlined within this report, the application is recommended for approval.

PLANNING STATUS

- Countryside
- Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
- SPA 5/7km

RECOMMENDATION

That the committee authorise the GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following:

Conditions:

1. This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered 16.SRS.P01 and titled Location Plan received by the local planning authority on 15 August and 23rd September 2016 respectively and drawing titled 'Wood Storage Area' received by the local planning authority on 27 October 2016. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.
2. The area for the storage of wood shall be limited to the areas hatched red on plan titled 'Wood Storage Area' only. No storage of any kind shall take place outside of the hatched areas. The storage areas shall be left open to the air at all times and no form of cover, even on a temporary basis, shall occur.
Reason: To prevent increased flood risk from surface water run-off. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 10 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), Core Strategy policy CP1 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC09 and CC10.
3. The storage of wood shall be limited to the business 'Arborfield Tree Care' only.
Reason: To clarify the terms of the consent as the use is only acceptable and in accordance with Policy CP11 of Core Strategy subject to the storage of wood being ancillary to the applicants existing business.
4. There shall be no working of wood, or the production of wood of any kind on the site (this includes, but is not limited to, the cutting, sawing, milling, planing and burning of wood).
Reason: To ensure the character and appearance of the countryside is maintained and there is no detrimental impact to the amenity of any nearby residents by way of noise etc. and for clarity of the use permitted. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6
5. No more than 5 (five) horses at any one time shall be kept and allowed to graze on the application site with land being used for private personal use only. There shall be no business or rural enterprise use associated with the keeping of horses on the site.
Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure there is no detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the countryside. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6.
6. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no gates or barriers shall be erected unless set back a distance of at least 5 metres from the highway boundary and so as to open away from the highway.
Reason: To ensure that vehicles do not obstruct the highway whilst waiting for

gates or barriers to be opened or closed, in the interests of road safety. Relevant policy: Core Strategy Policies CP3 and CP6.

PLANNING HISTORY

- F/2008/0993 - Proposed change of use of land to use for the storage of timber & wood chips. – This application was refused on encroachment in to the countryside, flooding and highways reasons. The application in 2008 was solely for wood storage and chippings. This proposal sought a large area of hard surfacing on the north eastern boundary approximately half way up the existing field. The storage area was much larger than what is proposed in this application, was within flood zone 2 and required an access road within the site to reach the storage area.

SUMMARY INFORMATION

Site Area	8.63ha
Existing land use	Agricultural
Proposed land use:	Equine and storage
Equine Use Area	8.36ha
Log Storage Area	0.27ha

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Drainage	Clarification was sought regarding whether the wood storage area would be covered/on a non-permeable surface
WBC Environmental Health	No objection
WBC Highways	No objection subject to condition 6.
WBC Tree & Landscape	No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

Barkham Parish Council:

No objection

Neighbours:

One letter of objection was received highlighting concern that the lane is not suitable for additional vehicles with poor visibility (para's 19 and 20) and concern regarding noise from chainsaws and burning of wood (condition 4).

APPLICANTS POINTS

- The site is well screened and has minimal impact on the appearance of the area
- The site has been used for the grazing of horses for a long time
- Small number of vehicle movements
- Very small area for storage of logs.

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	CP1	Sustainable Development

	CP3	General Principles for Development
	CP7	Biodiversity
	CP9	Scale and Location of Development Proposals
	CP11	Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	CC01	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
	CC02	Development Limits
	CC03	Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
	CC09	Development and Flood Risk (from all sources)
	TB21	Landscape Character
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)	BDG	Borough Design Guide – Section 4

PLANNING ISSUES

Description of Development:

1. The application is seeking retrospective consent for the erection of a stable and the storage of wood and the use of land for equine purposes. The stable is L shaped with the ridge height being 2.9m in height, with the eaves being 2.4m in height. The stable is 12m x 3m from south west to north east, with the project to the north west measuring a further 7.5m x 3.3m. The stable has a total floor space of 60.75sqm. The walls are timber clad under black and green corrugated roof with UPVC guttering that feeds in to water butts. The application advises that the stable was constructed in June 2011.
2. Adjacent to the entrance (on the eastern boundary to the north of the stable) two small wood storage areas are present covering a total site area of 0.27ha. The wood is placed directly on to the ground and remains open to the air. No hardstanding has been introduced in to the site. The logs are a by-product of the applicants tree surgery company, Arborfield Tree Care. Following contact from the enforcement, the area of storage has been reduced.
3. The rest of the site is grass land and has not been used for any agricultural purposes during the ownership of the applicants (in excess of 8 years) but horses have been kept on the site for 5 years. The stable houses five horses and five horses are currently kept on the land.

Principle of Development:

4. The application site is located in an area designated as countryside in the Local Development Plan, outside any defined settlement area.
5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the Local Development Plan.

6. The NPPF is relevant to proposals in the countryside. The National Planning Policy Framework recognises that there are a set of core land- use planning principles. In particular principle No. 5 states that it should “take account of the different roles and character of different areas.....recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.....” and supporting thriving rural communities within it. In particular, it seeks to encourage development that respects the character of a locality. In this instance, the character is predominantly rural, with established vegetation through mature hedgerows around the site and development must respect this and not compromise these qualities. Notwithstanding this, adjacent to the site is a Woodlands Farm Industrial Estate which does not contribute to the rural character of the area, but instead is a result of farm diversification over long period of time.
7. In addition, Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that planning policies should support economic growth in rural areas, including promoting the development diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses.
8. With regard to the Local Development Plan, policy CP1 - Sustainable Development of the adopted Core Strategy requires that development proposals must maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.
9. Policy CP3 – General Principles for Development states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that:
 - a) “Are of an appropriate scale of activity..... and character to the area and without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life”
10. Policy CP11- Proposals outside Development Limits (including Countryside) of the adopted Wokingham Borough Core Strategy states that:

“In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside.”

11. The proposal for the keeping and grazing of horses is considered to be acceptable in principle as it promotes the recreation in and enjoyment of the countryside. Equine purposes are an acceptable countryside activity. The stable, is acceptable in principle subject to a more detailed analysis in terms of its impact on the character of the area, impact on highways and the impact on neighbouring residential amenity.
12. The use of the small area of the land for the storage of logs is ancillary to a business that benefits the Borough as a whole, tree surgery benefits both the countryside and urban areas and the storage of logs ancillary to this use would therefore be an acceptable countryside use subject to their being an acceptable impact on the rural character of the area, including visual amenity, the amenity of

neighbouring occupiers and highway safety.

13. As the use is only acceptable as it supports a local business it is appropriate for a condition limiting the storage to being personal to the applicant,

Character of the Area:

14. The site is bounded by mature hedgerow on all of the boundaries. The site is grass except for the location of the stable and the log storage area. Immediately to the south and east of the site is Woodlands Farm and associated industrial estate. To the south west, separated by open fields is the village of Barkham. To the north, beyond Wood Lane is a sewage treatment works with a large area of associated hardstanding.
15. Due to the reasonably low height of the stable and the mature hedging to the front of the site as well as around the site as a whole, the impact of built form within the countryside from the stable is minimal.
16. The Landscape and Trees officer has noted in recent years that there has been the loss of viability of small farms leading to neglect of agricultural land and decline in management of agricultural features such as hedgerows, when land is taken over by other commercial operations such as storage yards, plant hire, breakers yards etc.
17. These sites are often located along rural lanes, noticeable from their solid padlocked timber gates, security signage and cameras and fly tipping at the roadside in some areas detracts from this rural appearance, and the sense of peacefulness and openness that is expected in the landscape.
18. Opposite the site the Woodlands Farm industrial estate is typical of this, and has eroded the character of the lane and decline of the hedgerow. The use for equine purposes requires the hedge to be maintained to ensure the safety and containment of the horses. As the hedge is existing and suitable for this purpose, a condition requiring further planting is not required and the site would not benefit from Permitted Development and therefore cannot introduce a fence. The hedge provides a visual barrier between both the stable and wood storage so that the small area of development has not had a detrimental impact on the character of the wider area to a level that is unacceptable.
19. The applicant has noted that only five horses are present on the site and this accords with the size of the stable which provides housing for five horses. The number of vehicles movements (see para's 19 and 20) is minimal associated with this number of horses and log storage, however to ensure there is no intensification of use on the land, which has occurred for a period in excess of five years, a condition limiting the number of horses on the site to five would ensure there is no intensification of use, without prior consideration by the local planning authority, that would have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Residential Amenities:

20. The development is situated far enough from any nearby residents so that there

is no impact in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing issues. Notwithstanding this concern has been raised regarding noise from chainsaws and the rubbish associated with the burning of wood on the site.

21. The applicant has advised that nothing other than storage takes place on the site and no working of the wood takes place. The application proposes storage only and this is acceptable in terms of impact on the character of the countryside, however conditions would be included to ensure that the site be used for equine purposes (cond. 5) and the storage of wood only and that no working of the wood, including, but not limited to the cutting, sawing, milling, burning or working of wood take place on the site (cond. 4). Therefore no significant impact is considered to occur in respond of residential amenity.

Access and Movement:

22. Information provided through a Planning Contravention Notice (received in respect of the proposed retrospective development) advised that there are 14 car movements a week (2 per day) associated with the equine use whilst the log storage is visited twice a week in a 4x4. However the applicant has since advised the maximum number of visits for both uses is 24 movements).
23. Concern has been raised that the entrance to the site suffers from poor visibility and that the existing lane is not suitable for the increased traffic. Highways have advised that the small number of movements associated with the keeping of 5 horses and the storage of wood would not lead to a detrimental impact on the highway network, however to ensure that visibility be maintained and that no vehicles block the road. This is achieved through condition 6.

Flooding and Drainage:

24. The stable is within an area of low risk surface water flooding, rainwater is collected within water butts on the site and provides drinking water for the horses. There is no hardstanding around the stable nor the site as a whole.
25. The wood storage area however is within an area of high surface water flooding and as such clarification was sought as to whether the logs are on placed on a non-permeable surface and whether or not they are covered to keep the wood dry. Officers were advised that there has been no introduction of a permeable surface (the logs were placed directly on the grass) and that they are not covered at any point. As such water is able to infiltrate the ground and the storage of logs would not disrupt this process. Condition 3 is included to ensure that the logs remain uncovered at all times, thus ensuring that rain water infiltration is unaffected by the development.

Environmental Health:

26. The Environmental Health Officer has not raised any objection to the development.

CONCLUSION

The application is considered to be acceptable in terms of the impact on the character of the area, highway network and residential amenity. Conditions limiting the area for storage and that no working of wood or wood production takes place on the site ensures that that there is no detrimental impact on the character of the area or on neighbouring amenity.

As such, the proposal is recommended for conditional approval.

CONTACT DETAILS

Service	Telephone	Email
Development Management and Regulatory Services	0118 974 6428 / 6429	development.control@wokingham.gov.uk