

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(3)	22/01080/FUL Stratfield Mortimer	08 th July 2022 ¹	Conversion of existing farm building and replacement of existing to provide a 'Wellness Centre' (Use Class E(e) and E(d)). Manns Farm, Nightingale Lane, Mortimer, Reading, RG7 3PS LJ Strang & Partners
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 22 nd July 2022			

The application can be viewed on the Council's website at the following link:

<http://planning.westberks.gov.uk/rpp/index.asp?caseref=22/01080/FUL>

Recommendation Summary: Refuse planning permission

Ward Members: Councillors Graham Bridgman, Royce Longton, Geoff Mayes

Reason for Committee Determination: Called in by Councillor Bridgman if the application is recommended for refusal. To provide the committee an opportunity to debate the question of supporting the rural economy.

Committee Site Visit: 7th September 2022

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of an existing agricultural building and the replacement of an existing steel barn to provide a 'Wellness Centre'.
- 1.2 Manns Farm is located to the north-east of Mortimer, outside of a defined settlement boundary, and accessed from Nightingale Lane. The existing tenancy farm business at Manns Farm is solely arable and comprises of 432 acres of land and several agricultural buildings that are adjacent to Nightingale Lane. The two buildings subject to the application are located at the front of the complex of farm buildings immediately adjacent to the highway. The applicant advises that these buildings are redundant because they are unsuitable to modern day farming practices.
- 1.3 The 'Wellness Centre' is proposed to fall within Use Class E(d) and E(e) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. Use Class E(d) refers to 'indoor sports, recreation and fitness' and E(e) is the provision of 'medical/health services'. The centre will be used for complementary and alternative medicines (CAM) including in-house treatments and rooms to hire to wellness practitioners for classes or treatments (e.g. yoga, pilates, dancing, sign language, cooking etc.). The buildings will provide 2 treatment rooms along with 2 studio spaces as well as service facilities (toilets/changing areas, reception and kitchenettes). It was advised that the centre would not be open for general community uses (Use Class F).
- 1.4 It is intended that the 'Wellness Centre' will operate on 07:00-21:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00-18:00 Saturday and 10:00-16:00 on Sunday. The smaller studio is proposed to accommodate a maximum of 8 people, the larger studio a maximum of 24 people and 2 treatment rooms that could have a new client in every hour.
- 1.5 To create the 'Wellness Centre' it is proposed to convert and refurbish an existing timber cart-shed (immediately adjacent to Nightingale Lane). To create the space required the steel barn to the south of the cart-shed will be demolished and replaced with a building that is designed to reflect the existing timber cart-shed. These buildings will be linked by a curved extension that acts as a reception.
- 1.6 The 'Wellness Centre' will use the existing farm entrance and visitors will drive up the track and around the existing farm buildings (to the north-east of the cart-shed) to the parking area to be provided between the proposal and an existing modern agricultural building. This parking area was extended during the course of the application to include an area of grass to the south-east of the new building. Landscaping is also indicated on the plans including retention of the existing hedge which will be supplemented with mixed native hedges.

2. Planning History

- 2.1 The table below outlines the relevant planning history of the application site.

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
21/02415/CLASSR	Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed change of use under 150 Sq Mts from Agriculture to Flexible Use falling within Classes A1, A2, A3, B1, B8, C1 or D2, pursuant to Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of	Not required. 17.11.2021.

	the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.	
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- 2.2 Both the Design, Access and Planning Statement and the applicant's Highway Consultant refer to a suggested fall-back position provided by 21/02415/CLASSR (in which the conversion is underway).
- 2.3 Under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class R of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (now referred to as GPDO) it is permitted development to change the use of agricultural buildings to Use Class B8 (storage or distribution), Class C1 (hotels) and Class E (commercial, business or service). Where the floor space is under 150 square metres the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority is not required, but notice must be given. 21/02415/CLASSR is the giving of this notice.
- 2.4 Whilst these permitted development rights exist, it is considered that for this application limited weight can be given to this fall-back position. Firstly, the operational development (demolition and re-building of the steel barn) proposed as part of this application could not be carried out under permitted development. Furthermore, there are reservations as to whether the existing steel barn would be able to provide the facilities listed in this application without carrying out building operations (re-building, external structural alterations or additions). Therefore, it is considered there would be a material difference in the intensity of use between the conversion under permitted development rights and that proposed by this application.
- 2.5 It is also noted the floor space proposed by this application would be over 150sqm under Class R in the GPDO this would have required the local planning authority to determine if prior approval was required for: (i) transport and highways impacts of the development, (ii) noise impacts of the development, (iii) contamination risks on the site; and (iv) flooding risks on the site.

Procedural Matters

- 2.6 **EIA:** Given the nature and scale of this development, it is not considered to fall within the description of any development listed in Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. As such, EIA screening is not required.
- 2.7 **Publicity:** As site notice was displayed on 27th May 2022 at the entrance to Manns Farm; the deadline for representations expired on 19th June 2022.
- 2.8 **CIL:** Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development to pay for new infrastructure required as a result of the new development. CIL will be charged on residential (C3 and C4) and retail (A1 - A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of net floorspace (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). Based on the CIL PAAIR form, it appears that the development would not be CIL liable. However, CIL liability will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following the grant of any permission. More information is available at www.westberks.gov.uk/cil.
- 2.9 **Amendments:** An amended plan PL-05 A (Proposed Block Plan) was received during the course of the application to demonstrate that the existing hedge at Manns Farm was not to be removed by the proposal and additional parking could be accommodated at

the site. During the course of the application further details on the intended use and responses to the Highway Officer's objections were submitted. A phase 2 protected species survey was also submitted. Further information on the intended visitors to the 'Wellness Centre' was also received on 14th September.

3. Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

- 3.1 The table below summarises the consultation responses received during the consideration of the application. The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report.

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the proposed development under its NDP (policy 11.2.4 Use of Farm Buildings) on the assumption the barn is not listed. • Concerns that there is sufficient parking spaces when at full capacity. • Parish Council not aware of pre-submission consultation.
Highways Authority:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objection on the grounds of sustainable location (comments expanded upon in report).
Environmental Health:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objections.
Archaeological Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mann's Farm is a historic farmstead (18th century origins). Cart-shed might be a non-designated heritage asset. • Welcome the retention and conversion of the cart-shed. The steel framed Dutch barn appears to be of a less historic interest. • Internal photos sufficient for records.
Conservation Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cart shed is a non-designated heritage asset due to local historic and architectural interest. • No objections: proposal consistent with paragraphs 203 and 197 of the NPPF.
Ecology Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objection due to the loss of hedge was withdrawn following the submission of Drawing PL-05 A. • Conditions recommended including securing protection measures identified in the ecology reports submitted.
Tree Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objection: the hedge along Nightingale Lane does not look especially species rich, so any enhancement (e.g. new planting) is welcome.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended native, mixed species hedge (majority Hawthorn) is planted as whips in two staggered roads with 5/6 plants per metre.
Lead Local Flood Authority:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comments received at time of writing the report.
Public Rights of Way Officer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comments received at time of writing the report.
Public Health & Wellbeing:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queries need for the CAM space (any clear evidence), active travel and whether Environmental Health have been consulted. Make applicants aware that consideration required for operations with regard to risks of running a business on a working farm. Wouldn't have an issue with the application in theory.
Economic Development:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support: compliance with Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy by supporting the long-term viability of the agricultural enterprise by creating a new stream of revenue. A priority for the Council's Economic Development Strategy. Provides a modest benefit to Mortimer village by drawing people to the rural service centre for purpose of visiting the Wellness Centre. Consider that the support to the rural diversification should outweigh the concerns relating to creating additional vehicle movements on rural roads- where there is no alternative for reaching locations where more sustainable infrastructure has not yet been built.
Emergency Planning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low density area within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone, low number of staff and visitors no adverse comments. Conditions requested for comprehensive emergency plan during the construction phase, an outline emergency plan for the wellness centre and a comprehensive emergency plan for the wellness centre.
Office for Nuclear Regulation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objections due to adequate assurance from WBC Emergency Planners that this can be accommodated within their off-site emergency plan arrangements. Supports recommended conditions. Does not present a significant external hazard for the safety of the nuclear site.
AWE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comments received at time of writing the report.

NatureSpace Partnership (Newt Officer, Berkshire):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objection due to the loss of hedge was withdrawn following the submission of Drawing PL-05 A.
Ramblers Association:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No comments received at time of writing the report.

Public representations

- No public representations were received during the course of the application.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following policies of the statutory development plan are relevant to the consideration of this application.

- Policies ADPP1 (Spatial Strategy), ADPP6 (East Kennet Valley), CS8 (Nuclear Installations- AWE Aldermaston and Burghfield), CS10 (Rural Economy), CS11 (Hierarchy of Centres), CS13 (Transport), CS14 (Design Principles), CS15 (Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency), CS16 (Flooding), CS17 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity), CS18 (Green Infrastructure), CS19 (Historic Environment and Landscape Character) of the West Berkshire Core Strategy 2006-2026 (WBCS).
- Policies OVS.5 (Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control), OVS.6 (Noise Pollution), ENV.16 (Farm Diversification), ENV.19 (The Re-use and Adaptation of Rural Buildings), TRANS.1 (Meeting the Transport Needs of New Development) of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (WBDLP) 1991-2006 (Saved Policies 2007).
- Policies C1, C2, C6 and C7 (Commercial), B1-3 (Biodiversity and Environmental Gains), GD1-6 (General Design) of the Stratfield Mortimer Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) (2017).

4.2 The following material considerations are relevant to the consideration of this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- WBC Quality Design SPD (2006)
- Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire (2011-2026)
- Stratfield Mortimer Village Design Statement (2007)

5. Appraisal

5.1 The main issues for consideration in this application are:

- Principle of development
- Sustainable location
- Character and appearance
- Neighbouring amenity

- Highway safety
- Ecology and trees
- Other matters

Principle of development

- 5.2 Manns Farm is located outside of a defined settlement boundary and therefore within the open countryside. According to Policy ADPP1 of the Core Strategy, only appropriate limited development in the countryside will be allowed focused on addressing identified needs and maintaining a strong rural economy. This is re-enforced by Policy ADPP6, the spatial strategy for the East Kennet Valley, where development will be strictly controlled in the open countryside.
- 5.3 The proposed change of use and operational development seeks to create a secondary business at the existing arable farm. Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy advises that proposals to diversify the rural economy will be encouraged, particularly where they are located in or adjacent to Rural Service Centres and Service Villages. The Economic Development Officer offers their opinion that the proposal would fall within the scope of Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy.
- 5.4 The Design, Access and Planning Statement applies Saved Policy ENV.19 of the WBDLP. However, the proposal seeks an extension to the cart-shed and replacement building and therefore this policy would not apply as criteria (b) requires no extensive alteration, rebuilding or enlargement of existing buildings. Officer's also considered the relevance of Saved Policy ENV.16 of the WBDLP. The Economic Development Officer advises the proposal would bring modest benefits to the economy of the rural area and therefore the policy would be relevant. The criteria in this policy to permit farm diversification schemes include: buildings are appropriate and where possible replacement buildings should be located within an existing group; the proposal should maintain or enhance the landscape character and rural surroundings; it does not generate traffic of a type or amount inappropriate for rural roads affected by the proposal; it would not cause an unacceptable level of disturbance, nuisance or environmental harm; and would not cause demonstrable harm to existing nature conservation sites or important habitat areas.
- 5.5 The NPPF is also relevant for the principle in which paragraphs 84 provides guidance of determining applications supporting a prosperous rural economy. Paragraph 84 states that decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. The proposal would help the applicant's develop their existing freelance CAM business.
- 5.6 The Stratfield Mortimer NDP also informs the principle of development. It is noted the Parish Council refer to policy C6 for the use of farm buildings. Similarly to Saved Policy ENV.16 this policy would not fully apply because of the demolition and re-building of the steel barn. However, it is considered that policy C7 in the NDP is relevant. This policy advises that new, renovated or extended buildings for employment and commercial activity will be supported providing they meet a range of criteria including adding high value sustainable employment, prevent creeping urbanisation, retain and respect any architectural and historic features of the buildings, are sustainably located and of appropriate scale, form and high quality design so they do not adversely affect the setting of the village of Mortimer, the character of the area, views within the village and the amenities of residents and other countryside users. In addition, to the location outside of the settlement boundary the developments should make a long-term contribution to sustaining the agricultural enterprise or other land-based activities and are accompanied with any appropriate surveys and mitigation for protected species.

- 5.7 There is a general principle of support in both national and local policies for the development of local rural businesses. However, at both national and local policy there are considerations that the development is required to meet for the proposal to be acceptable in principle this includes whether the location is sustainable.

Sustainable location

- 5.8 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning decisions “*should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural area may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that the development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport).*”
- 5.9 This is reflected in local policy in which Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy seeks town centre uses (including health and fitness centres) to be directed to town and district centres. Furthermore, Policy C7 of the Stratfield Mortimer NDP requires development to be located in a sustainable location. Saved Policy ENV.16 of WBDLP also requires a proposal not to generate traffic of a type or amount that would be inappropriate for the rural roads affected by the development.
- 5.10 The proposed use and scale is considered to be too intense for its location to be sustainable and in accordance with Paragraph 85 of the NPPF. The proposed treatment rooms and studios would significantly increase the traffic generation to the site. The Highway Officer estimates that overall could be 93 vehicle movements per day.
- 5.11 The Highway Officer advises that as a result of the specialised use that those visiting the ‘Wellness Centre’ would be deliberate trips (with very limited uses being by pass-by, diverted or transferred trips). Furthermore, due to the type of use and the smaller population it is highly likely that the trips would be drawn in from outside of Mortimer from the wider area, including for instance, Reading. The Highway Officer is not satisfied that the village of Mortimer on its own would sustain the prescribed use and to be viable and would need to cater to a wider area that would likely mean car travel.
- 5.12 The increase in traffic generation would be in a location that is unsustainable because there are no footways within the vicinity of the site. The map on the next page identifies the network of Public Right of Ways, including a footpath to the south (STRAT/17/3). However, this would be unlit and across fields which is considered to not encourage walking particularly during the winter months and evenings.
- 5.13 Due to the nature of Nightingale Lane it would not encourage cycling. The map on the next page demonstrates that there are no public transport services or bus stops within 1-1.2km of the site. The closest bus stop (marked on the map) is served by the Reading Buses 2/2a (Central Reading to Mortimer via Burghfield Common) and runs every half an hour on Monday-Saturday. It is considered that there would be little encouragement to walk from the nearest bus stop to the site for the reasons provided in paragraph 5.12. The Highway Officer advises that most journeys would be made by motorised vehicle.



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the local area. However, as per paragraphs 5.12 and 5.13 there are concerns that even those that live locally would choose to travel by car due to the rural nature of Nightingale Lane and Public Right of Way footpaths. Furthermore, it is likely that these trips to the 'Wellness Centre' would be deliberate.

- 5.15 The location for the proposed 'Wellness Centre' is not considered to comply with paragraph 85 in the NPPF in terms of sustainable location. Furthermore, the increase in motorised vehicles to the site would be contrary to Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy and chapter 9 in the NPPF which promote sustainable transport. It would also be at odds with the Council's Climate Change Emergency declaration.
- 5.16 The Transport Consultant for the applicant advises that consideration should be given to the fall-back position in which a 'Wellness Centre' could be implemented at the site. However, it is considered that the intensity achieved by this proposal would be significantly greater than that achieved under 21/02415/CLASSR. Therefore, it is considered that this does not alter the objection to the proposal under the sustainable location grounds.
- 5.17 It is noted in the further information submitted on 14th September that it is advised that there would be 18 or 19 persons per day visiting the site. However, the accepted traffic generation as per the Transport Note and Highway Officer's response is 93 vehicle movements per day. This is considered to be an intense use at Manns Farm.
- 5.18 Whilst, it is recognised that there is a need to support rural businesses it is considered that the intensity of the use in this location would be unsustainable which would be unacceptable and contrary to both national and local policy.

Character and appearance

- 5.19 Policy C7 in the NDP requires development to be of an appropriate scale, form and high quality design. Regard is given to the general design policies in the NDP.
- 5.20 Policy CS14 and CS19 of the Core Strategy also reflects this seeking development that respects and enhances the character of the area with particular regard given to the sensitivity of the area to change and ensuring new development is appropriate in terms of location, scale and design in the context of the existing settlement form, pattern and character.
- 5.21 The proposal will retain the existing cart-shed and construct a new link and extension that reflects the form and design of the existing car shed. The materials are intended to reflect the style of the existing cart shed. The extensions to the cart shed will be a small increase in scale from the steel-framed building to be demolished and therefore would not be inappropriate to the site.
- 5.22 The 'Wellness Centre' is positioned within the existing complex of built form and therefore would reduce the impact on the rural landscape and setting. It is acknowledged that as a result of the proposal there would be some light spill from the windows and external lighting that would likely be installed. It is considered that there would not be a significantly harmful impact on the landscape as the glazing would face into the existing complex and retain the blank elevations adjacent to the road. Furthermore, external lighting can be controlled by a condition for details to be submitted and agreed prior to installation including hours in which the lighting is used.
- 5.23 The existing timber cart-shed is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. The Conservation Officer and Archaeological Officer were pleased to see the retention of this building. It was considered that the proposal would be consistent with paragraph 197 of the NPPF which advises that local planning authorities take into account the

desirability of sustaining the significance of the heritage asset and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.

- 5.24 It is considered that the proposed use and associated development would be acceptable in terms of impact to the rural character of the area, the wider setting (including the setting of Mortimer) and the character of the site.

Neighbouring amenity

- 5.25 Policy C7 in the NDP requires that the amenities of local residents and other countryside users to not be adversely effected by the proposal. Saved Policies OVS.5 and OVS.6 in WBDLP require development not to give rise to unacceptable levels of pollution including noise with consideration given to sensitive locations.
- 5.26 The proposed building operations associated with the proposal will be contained within the existing complex of agricultural buildings. Therefore, the impact of the built form, including overbearing impact, daylight/sunlight impact and privacy would be minimal for the nearest residential dwellings.
- 5.27 It is noted that the farm access is close to 1 and 2 Mann's Farm Cottages. Therefore, the proposed use would result in some additional disturbance to these properties due to the proposed vehicle movements in and out of the site. There is approximately 13.6 metres separation distance between the access and the amenity space for the two neighbouring cottages and therefore on balance there would not be a significantly harmful impact to warrant refusal.
- 5.28 In addition, it is considered that, with conditions to restrict opening hours, that this would help to reduce the disturbance to the nearest neighbouring properties.

Highway safety

- 5.29 Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy states that road safety is a key consideration for all development.
- 5.30 The Highway Officer's comments from 28th July consider all highway matters and are summarised below:
- **Access:** Using the Automatic Traffic Counter data and the recorded traffic speeds it was determined visibility splays of 2.4 by 35.0 metres were required at the access. These can be achieved and therefore access arrangements are acceptable.
 - **Existing traffic generation:** The existing cart-shed and steel barn would generate on average 4 vehicle movements per day.
 - **Proposed traffic generation:** The Highway Officer notes there will be a significant increase in traffic generation at the site with the maximum of 93 vehicle movements per day (46/47 in, 46/47 out).
 - **Traffic impact:** Traffic levels and speeds on Nightingale Lane are very low. If approaching from the east there are very few passing places. However, it is expected most traffic would approach from the west which is shorter with more passing place opportunities. Therefore, on balance the Highway Officer raised no objection on traffic impact in terms of highway safety.
 - **Car parking:** Highway Officer originally raised concerns that the parking provided would not be sufficient and electric vehicle charging points should be provided.

- 5.31 On 19th August an amended Block Plan (PL-05 A) was received which indicated further parking could be provided to the south-east of the replacement barn. The Highway Officer considered this would be acceptable to address the concerns raised.
- 5.32 In terms of highway safety it is considered that the proposed development would on balance not result in demonstrable harm to warrant refusal.

Ecology and trees

- 5.33 Policy CS17 and CS18 of the Core Strategy seek the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and green infrastructure in the District. The application site is in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. The NDP supports biodiversity and environmental gains from proposals.
- 5.34 The application is accompanied by the preliminary ecological appraisal and phase 2 surveys for protected species.
- 5.35 It is identified by the Council's Ecologist that a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) is required to be obtained from Natural England before works commence due to one of the buildings supporting protected species. An EPSL can only be granted if the development proposal is able to meet the three tests:
- The consented operation must be for 'preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
 - There must be 'no satisfactory alternative'; and
 - The action authorised 'will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range'.
- 5.36 It is considered that there is an imperative economic reason in supporting a rural business, there are no satisfactory alternatives within Manns Farm, and that given the proposed mitigation measures there would not be a detrimental impact on the protected species.
- 5.37 It is considered that with conditions the protected species on the site could be protected and enhanced.
- 5.38 The Council's Ecologist and the Berkshire Newts Officer did have objections to the application as the original plans appeared to indicate the removal and replacement of the hedgerow adjacent to Nightingale Lane. However, this was clarified by Drawing PL-05 A, that landscaping would supplement the existing hedgerow. Therefore, the ecology objections were withdrawn. It is noted part of the proposed planting would be outside of the application site, it is understood the applicants as part of wider scheme are carrying out planting at the farm but this would not form part of the application.
- 5.39 With the use of appropriate conditions including: the submission of a Landscape Environmental Management Plan, adherence to protected species and tree protection measures, the submission of details for external lighting, details of SuDs if required, a condition requesting reports to be updated if they expire and request for evidence of the EPS licence it is considered that the impact on biodiversity and the existing hedgerow would be acceptable.

Other matters

- 5.40 **Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ):** The site is located within AWE Burghfield DEPZ. No objections were received from the Council's Emergency Planner or ONR subject to conditions that require an emergency plan to be secured during construction and operation of the business.
- 5.41 **Flooding and Drainage:** The application is located in Flood Zone 1 and therefore in accordance with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy. Some details of drainage have been submitted. However, it is considered a condition could secure a drainage scheme for the proposed development.
- 5.42 **Public Rights of Way:** STRA/17/3 is located to the south-west of the application site and the entrance is on the opposite side of Nightingale Lane to Manns Farm. It is considered that there would not be a harmful impact on the footpath.
- 5.43 **Operational Matters:** Comments were received from Public Health and Wellbeing referring to health and safety considerations for operating a business on a working farm. It is considered that these operational matters are covered under separate legislation and not a matter for planning. Environmental Health raised no objections to the development.
- 5.44 **Sustainable Construction and Energy Efficiency:** The Design, Access and Planning Statement advises that 'Excellent' BREEAM standards could not be achieved due to economic and technical viability. Due to the use of the existing cart-shed it is considered that this is a reasonable justification. However, to ensure that every effort is made to achieve a sustainable construction it is recommended a condition is applied for an energy statement to be provided which would demonstrate how the building would both mitigate and adapt to climate change.

6. Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 6.1 The proposed 'Wellness Centre' would provide economic and social benefits. These benefits include supporting an existing agricultural enterprise, providing some limited opportunities for local employment, supporting existing practitioners and draw visitors to Mortimer. In addition, it would also bring social benefits by providing a place for social interaction and health benefits. The proposed development would also deliver environmental benefits by restoring a non-designated heritage asset and demolishing an existing steel barn which is in a poor condition.
- 6.2 However, the intensity of the use would significantly increase the amount of motorised vehicles visiting the site and on Nightingale Lane. The proposal does not provide opportunities for sustainable modes of transport and due to the location and nature of Nightingale Lane would unlikely encourage customers to walk or cycle to the site. The permitted development rights under Class R of the GPDO are acknowledged but limited weight is applied to this as a fall-back position as the proposed development would have a greater intensity. The proposed development would be contrary to the advice in the NPPF at paragraph 85 (supporting a prosperous rural economy) and chapter 9. It would also conflict with local policies including ADPP1, ADPP6, CS10, CS11 and CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), Policy C7 of the Stratfield Mortimer NDP (2017), the Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire (2011-2026), Saved Policy ENV.16 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (2007) and the Council's declared Climate Change Emergency.
- 6.3 The recommendation is finely balanced with consideration given to the conflicting views of consultees. Greater weight has been attached to the unsustainable location due to

the intensity of the proposed 'Wellness Centre' use which is considered to be inappropriate in the rural location.

7. Full Recommendation

- 7.1 To delegate to the Service Director – Development & Regulation to REFUSE PLANNING PERMISSION for the reason listed below.

Refusal Reason

1. **Unsustainable location**

Manns Farm is located outside of a defined settlement boundary and therefore within the open countryside. Policies ADPP1 and ADPP6 in the Core Strategy advise only appropriate limited development will be allowed. Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy supports proposals to diversify the rural economy in appropriate locations and Policy CS11 directs main town centre uses to town and district centres. This is supported in the NPPF where proposals for local rural businesses are sensitive to the surrounding area, do not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits opportunities to make a location more sustainable.

The proposed 'Wellness Centre' will significantly increase traffic in a remote rural location that has no pedestrian or nearby bus routes and is accessible only by rural roads which are not conducive to cycling. Accordingly, by virtue of the nature, intensity and location of the development it would significantly increase traffic where the mode of travel can only reasonably be reached by the use of private car. The proposal is therefore in an unsustainable location.

The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies ADPP1, ADPP6, CS10, CS11 and CS13 of the West Berkshire Core Strategy (2006-2026), Policy C7 of the Stratfield Mortimer NDP (2017), Saved Policy ENV.16 of the West Berkshire District Local Plan (2007), the Local Transport Plan for West Berkshire (2011-2026), the NPPF and West Berkshire's Climate Change Emergency.

Informatives

1. **Proactive Statement**

In attempting to determine the application in a way that can foster the delivery of sustainable development, the local planning authority has approached this decision in a positive way having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to try to secure high quality appropriate development. In this application the local planning authority has attempted to work proactively with the applicant to find a solution to the problems with the development, however; an acceptable solution to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area could not be found.

2. **Plans considered**

The following plans/documents have been considered in the determination of this application:

- (i) Application Form received on 04.05.2022 (with amended page received on 09.05.2022);
- (ii) Drawing PL-04 (Ex Location and Block Plan) received on 04.05.2022;
- (iii) Drawing PL-05 A (Proposed Block Plan) received on 19.08.2022;
- (iv) Drawing PL-06 (Proposed Floor Plan) received on 04.05.2022;
- (v) Drawing PL-07 (Proposed Elevations) received on 04.05.2022;

- (vi) Drawing 1025-01 (Steel Barn: Existing Plan and Elevations) received on 04.05.2022;
- (vii) Drawing 1025-02 (Timber Barn: Existing Plan and Elevations) received on 04.05.2022;
- (viii) Drawing 1032-03 (Existing Plan and East Elevation) received on 04.05.2022;
- (ix) Photographs of Barns (Soul Barns) at Manns Farm) received on 04.05.2022;
- (x) Internal photographs inside of Cart Shed (Soul Barns) at Manns Farm received on 23.06.2022;
- (xi) Design, Access and Planning Statement (April 2022, 10041, BCM) received on 04.05.2022;
- (xii) Email from Agent: Use Classification received on 17.06.2022;
- (xiii) Email from Agent: ENV.16 Farm Diversification received on 15.06.2022;
- (xiv) Highway Technical Note (produced by Nick Culhane) received on 04.05.2022;
- (xv) Highway Technical Note (August 2020, produced by Nick Culhane) received on 04.08.2022;
- (xvi) Email from Nick Culhane re: Class R fall-back position received on 30.08.2022;
- (xvii) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (Enims, April 2022, EC1917) received on 04.05.2022;
- (xviii) Interim Bat Roost Survey Report (Enims, June 2022, EC1917-02) received on 20.06.2022;
- (xix) Bat Survey Report (Enims, June 2022, EC1917-02) received on 06.07.2022;
- (xx) Email from Agent: Context of location of customers received on 14.09.2022