

Item No.	Application No. and Parish	Statutory Target Date	Proposal, Location, Applicant
(1)	25/01035/FUL Midgham	11 th July 2025 ¹	Change of Use to allow Retention of Four and Proposed Siting of 20 Additional Storage Containers for Self-Storage. The Nurseries, Bath Road, Midgham, Reading, RG7 5XB Mr Nathan Harley
¹ Extension of time agreed with applicant until 8 th August 2025			

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

<https://publicaccess.westberks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=SVU50NRD04Z00>

Recommendation Summary: Approval subject to conditions

Ward Member(s): Councillor Read

Reason for Committee Determination: More than 10 letters of objection have been received during the consultation period.

Committee Site Visit: 30th July 2025

Contact Officer Details

Name: Emma Nutchey
Job Title: Principal Planning Officer
Tel No: 01635 519111
Email: Emma.Nutchey@westberks.gov.uk

Introduction

The purpose of this report is for the Committee to consider the proposed development against the policies of the development plan and the relevant material considerations, and to make a decision as to whether to approve or refuse the application.

This application seeks planning permission for the retention of four shipping containers and the siting of an additional twenty containers to be used for self storage. The proposed containers will match the appearance of the existing measuring approximately 6m x 2.4m and 2.6m high. The containers will be sited on an existing area of hard standing.

The Nurseries comprises of approximately 1.3ha of commercial land. The site was originally occupied by a horticultural landscaping business but since this ceased trading the site has been subject to a number of planning applications which have seen the use of the land change to one of mixed general industrial alongside storage and distribution. Most recently retrospective permission was granted to allow for the retention of six storage containers for self storage. These are rented to individuals and small businesses.

The site is accessed from a road linking the site entrance to the A4 and is enclosed by 2m high palisade fencing. Views from the A4 are largely screened by established vegetation.

Planning History

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

Application	Proposal	Decision / Date
20/00286/FUL	Change of use of the existing agricultural building on site to B8 storage and distribution use.	Approved 28 th May 2020
21/00661/FUL	Demolition of existing portacabin office buildings and erection of two buildings to provide mixed B2 General Industrial and B8 Storage and Distribution use.	Approved 21 st June 2021
23/00461/FUL	Retrospective: retention of 2m high boundary fencing and gates	Approved 31 st August 2023
23/00462/FUL	Retrospective: retention of cabins for Class E G(i) Office Use	Approved 23 rd June 2023
23/00463/FUL	Retrospective: Change of Use to allow retention of six storage containers for self storage	Approved 23 rd June 2023

Legal and Procedural Matters

Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA): Given the nature, scale and location 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.

Publicity: Publicity has been undertaken in accordance with Article 15 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. A site notice was displayed on 1st July 2025 on the signage at the entrance to the site adjacent to the A4, with a deadline for representations of 22nd July 2025.

Local Financial Considerations: Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) provides that a local planning authority must have regard to a local finance consideration as far as it is material. Whether or not a 'local finance consideration' is material to a particular decision will depend on whether it could help to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It would not be appropriate to make a decision based on the potential for the development to raise money for a local authority or other government body. The table below identified the relevant local financial considerations for this proposal.

Consideration	Applicable to proposal	Material to decision	Refer to paragraph(s)
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	No	No	
New Homes Bonus	No	No	
Affordable Housing	No	No	
Public Open Space or Play Areas	No	No	
Developer Contributions (S106)	No	No	
Job Creation	Yes	Not directly but supports local businesses	

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy charged on most new development within an authority area. The money is used to pay for new infrastructure, supporting the development of an area by funding the provision, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure. CIL will be used to fund roads and other transport facilities, schools and other educational facilities, flood defences, medical facilities, open spaces, and sports and recreational areas. Subject to the application of any applicable exemptions, CIL will be charged on residential (Use Classes C3 and C4) and retail (former Use Classes A1 – A5) development at a rate per square metre (based on Gross Internal Area) on new development of more than 100 square metres of gross internal area (including extensions) or when a new dwelling is created (even if it is less than 100 square metres). CIL liability, and the application of any exemptions, will be formally confirmed by the CIL Charging Authority under separate cover following any grant of planning permission. More information is available at <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/community-infrastructure-levy>

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED): In determining this application the Council is required

to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Council must have due regard to the need to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to —

- (a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- (b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- (c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage, the duty is to have regard to and remove or minimise disadvantage. In considering the merits of this planning application, due regard has been given to these objectives.

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.

Human Rights Act: The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, including Article 1 of the First Protocol (Protection of property), Article 6 (Right to a fair trial) and Article 8 (Right to respect for private and family life and home) of the Act itself. The consideration of the application in accordance with the Council procedures will ensure that views of all those interested are taken into account. All comments from interested parties have been considered and reported in summary in this report, with full text available via the Council's website.

The key issues associated with this application relate to the impact on the amenity of neighbours by virtue of noise related disturbances and the impact of external lighting.

Any interference with property rights is in the public interest and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 regime for controlling the development of land. This recommendation is based on the consideration of the proposal against adopted Development Plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the Human Rights of the applicant or any third party.

Consultation

Statutory and non-statutory consultation

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.

Midgham Parish Council:	Strongly object on the grounds that the site is overdeveloped and not in keeping with the rural setting. Noise disturbances are frequent for neighbouring properties.
Highways:	No objection subject to a condition to restrict the use to storage only.
Environmental Health:	No objection subject to conditions regarding self storage use only, hours of operation and a lighting condition.
Archaeology:	No objection
Drainage:	No objection
Pipelines:	Exolum apparatus are affected by the proposals and applicant advised to contact Fisher German.

Public representations

Representations have been received from 16 contributors, 0 of which support, and 16 of which object to the proposal.

The full responses may be viewed with the application documents on the Council's website, using the link at the start of this report. Only those matters which are material planning considerations for this application are reported. In summary, the following issues/points have been raised:

- Impact on neighbouring amenity: noise from storage containers being accessed both late at night and early in the morning. Concern machining taking place from the containers, impact of additional traffic on the access road as vehicles unable to pass.
- Road safety concerns at the site entrance from the A4 and inability of vehicles to pass each other on the access road.
- Removal of trees from the site
- Impact on character of the area – increase in hardstanding,
- Construction near to the oil pipeline
- Excessive lighting in the countryside
- Impact on wildlife
- Concerns for rural crime

Planning Policy

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.

Development Plan Document	Relevant Policies
West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 (WBLPR)	SP1, SP3, SP5, SP6, SP7, SP8, SP11, SP19, DM5, DM35, DM44

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

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Planning Obligations SPD (2014)
- Sustainable Drainage Systems SPD (2018)

Appraisal

Principle of development

Policy SP1 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 sets the overarching spatial strategy for West Berkshire dividing the district into three spatial areas. The Nurseries is located within the open countryside in the defined Eastern Area. This spatial policy seeks to direct employment development to sites allocated as employment land, to sites within settlement boundaries, to Designated Employment Areas and to existing suitably located employment sites to help promote sustainable patterns of development, prioritising the use of previously developed land. While development in the open countryside is more restricted compared to in settlement, policy SP1 recognises the need to support proposals which strengthen and diversify the rural economy and goes on to state that existing small and medium sized enterprises within the countryside will be supported in order to provide local job opportunities. The application site is currently occupied by a mix of general industrial and storage uses and as such is already in employment use. Its proximity to the A4 provides for a sustainable rural location. As such the site is deemed to be an existing suitably located employment site in accordance with Policy SP1. While the proposal will not directly provide local job opportunities it is understood that the containers will be hired by small local businesses and individuals for storage and as such the use will support the existing economy.

Policy SP17 'Strategic approach to employment land' of the WBLPR seeks to facilitate the growth of business development over the plan period. The policy provides a list of sites where proposals for business development will be directed. Criterion d) relates to previously developed land within existing suitably located employment sites while criterion e) relates to sites within the countryside provided the proposal is in accordance with other relevant policies particularly policy DM35. The proposal meets with both of these criteria.

Policy DM35 'Sustaining a Prosperous Rural Economy' states that proposals that contribute to sustaining a prosperous rural economy will be encouraged. To support the rural economy proposals for economic development will only be permitted where they satisfy the following criteria:

- a) The proposals demonstrate the business can make a positive contribution to the rural area – the containers will support existing local businesses by providing storage.
- b) The use/development is suitable for a rural location – The site is in close proximity to the A4 and deemed to be sustainable.
- c) The proposals are compatible with uses in the surrounding area – the proposed containers compliment the existing uses on the site and as such are considered appropriate in this location. There is a dwelling in close proximity to the site and the impact on this property is considered later in this report.
- d) Where new buildings are proposed the landowner has not disposed of, or converted, any buildings to a residential use in the previous 3 years – no.
- e) Considered in detail in the character and appearance section of this report.
- f) Considered in detail in the character and appearance section of this report.
- g) It would not generate traffic or a type or amount inappropriate for the rural roads – no objections have been raised by Highways
- h) It would not impact on buildings of historic value – no.
- i) Appropriate proposals which make more efficient use of previously developed land will be encouraged – the proposal does make more efficient use of previously developed land.

In conclusion the principle of development is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policies SP1, SP17 and DM35 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Character and appearance

The Nurseries comprises of approximately 1.3ha of commercial land. The site was originally occupied by a horticultural landscaping business but since this ceased trading the site has been subject to a number of planning applications which have seen the use of the land change to one of mixed general industrial alongside storage and distribution. The redline for the application site has been drawn tightly around the area within which the proposed containers are to be sited. The site itself sits within The Nurseries, the boundaries of which are clearly marked by 2m high palisade fencing which enclose the site. The boundary with the A4 to the south is heavily screened by established trees.

The site is accessed by a track which runs from the A4 into the site and extends northwards to a private property known as Church View Farm. The garden of this property adjoins The Nurseries.

Policy SP7 'Quality Design' of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 states that new development will be required to strengthen a sense of place through high quality design and must conserve and enhance the character of the area. Criterion e) of Policy DM35 similarly requires new development to be of a high quality and appropriate in its scale, form, massing, character and appearance having regard to the surrounding rural area and its setting in the wider rural landscape.

The site currently has a commercial appearance set within an open rural context with surrounding fields. The undeveloped nature of the surrounding land means that both The Nurseries and Church View Farm are prominent when you leave the A4 and travel along the access road. From the A4 itself there are very limited views of the site. The proposed containers are themselves small with a footprint of 6m x 2.4m and height of 2.6m. This application seeks retrospective permission for four containers which sit immediately north of six existing containers. Read alongside the authorised containers these 4 proposed units are in keeping in scale and read in front of a backdrop of other structures.

The proposed 20 containers are sited further within the site with a large industrial unit to the west, portacabin to the north and the 6 containers to the east which effectively enclose the site and views from the access road. As such the proposed containers are of an appropriate scale and form in accordance with criterion e) of Policy DM35. Criterion f) seeks to ensure that any new buildings are located within an existing group of buildings and to avoid further expansion into the countryside which the proposed siting achieves. As such the proposal is not considered to have a harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Concern has been raised for the presence of lighting within the site and the impact of this on the rural character of the area. A condition has been added such that in the event new external lighting is required details shall be first submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to ensure any lighting scheme is appropriate to the rural location and will not impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers. Concern has also been raised for the loss of trees however it is understood that this is a historic matter as trees have been removed front the site over the years changing the character of the area. No trees are proposed to be removed as part of this application.

In conclusion the proposed containers are not considered to have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and as such the proposal accords with Policies SP7, SP8 and DM35 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041.

Impact on neighbours

Policy SP7 'Design Quality' of the Local Plan Review 2023-2041 seeks to promote high quality locally distinctive design to create places that are better for people. The supporting text states paragraph 5.34 criterion h) that new development should provide a high-quality level of amenity for neighbouring properties. This is reinforced within Policy DM30 Residential Amenity which sets out a number of criteria against which new development should be assessed. Criterion d) relates to noise, dust, fumes and odours.

Policy DM5 'Environmental Nuisance and Pollution Control' states that development will be supported where it does not lead to adverse effects on pollution of the environment. Criterion a) requires that there is no harm to the amenity of occupants of neighbouring land and buildings through an increase in pollution including from light, noise, dust, vibration and odour.

Church View Farm lies immediately to the north of the application site while other properties such as Spire Ridge Bungalow and Ridge House lie to the east. Strong concerns have been raised by residents for noise impacts associated with the existing uses with the existing containers being accessed late at night and in the early hours of the morning. During the application the applicant has confirmed that they will agree to an hours of operation condition limiting access only between the hours of 7am – 7pm Monday to Saturday and 8am – 12pm on Sundays and bank holidays. It is advised by the applicant that the access key code entry point can be managed so that it will not allow for entry outside of these hours. It is considered that if the containers are used during these hours only there should not be a significantly adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Concerns have also been raised for some of the containers being used as work shops with machinery being used. A condition has been added and agreed with the applicant to ensure that the containers are used for storage purposes only as it is recognised that other uses could cause a nuisance due to the proximity to a nearby residential property.

In conclusion, it is recognised that the relationship between the application site and Church View Farm is particularly sensitive however it is considered that subject to the proposed conditions the proposal will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers to a harmful degree that would warrant refusal of the application. As such the proposal complies with policies DM30 and DM5 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highways

Policy SP19 of the Local Plan Review 2023 - 2041 requires new development to minimise the impacts of all forms of travel and to mitigate any adverse impacts on local transport routes. The site is located approximately 4km to the east of Thatcham. The site is accessed via an existing priority junction from the A4 Bath Road. The proposals include retaining the existing 4 storage containers and siting an additional 20 storage containers with B8 storage use for rental to individuals and businesses. The 4 containers have been on site since June 2024 and these measure 2.4m by 6.0m. The proposed 20 containers will have the same dimensions and provide an additional 345.6sq.m of B8 use.

It is considered that the site is within a sustainable location with bus stops within 400m and a footway on the northern side of Bath Road linking the site to these stops.

It is proposed that the existing access to the site via the A4 Bath Road will be retained. This is considered acceptable. Due to the use of the proposed containers for rental to individuals and businesses the Local Highways Authority consider that vehicles will include private cars and transit vans. The layout is considered acceptable to accommodate these vehicles.

There are no formal parking bays proposed however it is reasonable to assume that vehicles will drive up to their allocated unit, load and unload before departing. This is therefore acceptable.

No details have been provided with regards to trip generation. However due to the size of the proposals the Local Highways Authority consider that the impact on the surrounding highway network would be negligible.

In conclusion no objections have been raised and the proposals are considered to comply with Policies SP19 and DM44 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2024-2041 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Drainage

Policy SP6 relates to flood risk and in line with the NPPF seeks to locate new development within areas at lowest risk of flooding. The site is within Flood Zone 1 and is not within a critical drainage area. No objections have been raised by the drainage engineer. The proposal is considered to comply with Policy SP6 and no objections have been raised.

Ecology

Policy SP11 requires new development to conserve and enhance biodiversity and sets out the

Council's requirements with respect to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). With regards to Biodiversity Net Gain the application is subject to the de minimis exemption as the proposal is Contained within an area of existing hardstanding and therefore will not remove any habitat. Therefore the development affects less than 25 sqm of habitat and is exempt from BNG.

Given the absence of any trees, planting or existing buildings being affected by the proposals it is further considered that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is not required in this instance. As such the proposal complies with Policy SP11 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

The Nurseries comprises an existing rural commercial site within a sustainable location. The proposal seeks to intensify the existing use of the site by seeking retrospective approval for four self storage containers and an additional twenty containers. The containers are sited within the existing built envelope and are sensitively located so as not to spread development into the open countryside. While it is recognised from the comments from third parties that the site has changed significantly over the last 20 years through the loss of trees and an intensification of the commercial uses taking place the proposed containers are of a scale and form which themselves are not considered to be harmful to the wider rural landscape.

The site is located in close proximity to Church View Farm a neighbouring residential property. The impact of the proposals on the amenity of this property is a key material planning consideration. It is recognised that a number of concerns have been raised by residents and the parish council in this regard. Due consideration has been given to these impacts and it is considered that subject to conditions the impacts can be mitigated to an acceptable degree.

The impact on highways has also raised a number of concerns locally however the proposal has been fully assessed by the Highways Officer and no technical objections have been raised.

In conclusion the proposals are considered to comply with the policies in the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and the guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework and as such the scheme is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

Full Recommendation

To delegate to the Development Manager to GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the conditions listed below.

Conditions

1.	Commencement of development The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission. Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
2.	Approved plans

	<p>The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans and documents listed below:</p> <p>Location Plan and Block Plan drawing number CDF.SP900 Rev.A</p> <p>Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interest of proper planning.</p>
3.	<p>Use restriction</p> <p>The containers hereby approved shall be used for the purposes of storage only and shall not be used for any other purpose including but not limited to workshops.</p> <p>Reason: To protect the amenity of nearby residents from adverse impacts associated with noise in accordance with Policies DM5 and DM30 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>
4.	<p>Hours of use</p> <p>The containers hereby approved shall be accessed between the hours of 7am – 7pm Monday to Saturday and 8am – 12pm on Sundays and Bank holidays only.</p> <p>Reason: To protect the amenity of nearby residents from adverse impacts associated with noise in accordance with Policies DM5 and DM30 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>
5.	<p>External lighting</p> <p>The containers hereby approved shall not be brought into use until details of any external lighting have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The lighting shall thereafter be installed in accordance with the approved details and no other external lighting shall be installed.</p> <p>Reason: To protect the amenity of nearby residents from adverse impacts associated with noise in accordance with Policies DM5 and DM30 of the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2023-2041 and in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.</p>

Informatives

1.	<p>This decision has been made in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development having regard to Development Plan policies and available guidance to secure high quality appropriate development which improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.</p>
2.	<p>BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN - exemption</p> <p>The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:</p> <p>(a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and</p> <p>(b) the planning authority has approved the plan.</p>

	<p>The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be West Berkshire District Council.</p> <p>There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. These are listed below.</p> <p>Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption applies:</p> <p>4.2 Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and ii) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).
--	--