

Application Number:	P/FUL/2024/06189
Webpage:	Planning application: P/FUL/2024/06189 - dorsetforyou.com
Site address:	Hope Farm Mill Street Corfe Mullen BH21 3RQ
Proposal:	Retention of a stable/rural building. Siting of a mobile home to be used as a temporary rural worker's dwelling with sheds for ancillary residential storage. Change of use of land to a mixed agricultural and alpaca trekking enterprise
Applicant name:	Mr Kevin & Mrs Vivienne Cooper
Case Officer:	James Brightman
Ward Member(s):	Cllr Florek and Cllr Sowry-House

1. Reason application is going to committee:

At the request of the Chair of the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

The application was deferred from the Eastern Area Planning Committee meeting on 30 April to secure additional details about the Alpaca trekking element of the business and to review materials proposed for the external face of the caravan. The application returns to Committee with updates to the report identified in bold italic text.

2. Summary of recommendation:

Grant Planning Permission subject to conditions

3. Key planning issues

Issue	Conclusion
Principle of development	Acceptable - the dwelling is functionally required to be in a rural area.
Impact on the Green Belt	Acceptable – although the dwelling is inappropriate development in the Green Belt, its agricultural functional need represents a very special circumstance to permit it. The stables/rural building is appropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposed mixed use as agriculture and alpaca trekking would preserve openness.
Impact on highway safety	Acceptable, subject to conditions advised by National Highways
Impact on the landscape	Acceptable – no adverse impact on the landscape

Issue	Conclusion
Flood risk	Acceptable – no risk to the development from flooding
Impact on Heritage Assets (HAs)	Acceptable – development adequately screened by existing vegetation so as not to have an adverse effect on HAs
Biodiversity	Acceptable – biodiversity enhancements to be secured by condition

4. Description of site

- 4.1 The application site is situated approximately 3.5km southwest of Wimborne Minster and 1.5m northwest of Corfe Mullen. The site lies adjacent to the south side of the A31, at the junction with, Blandford Road (B3074). There is an existing field access close to the northwestern corner of the site directly onto the A31.
- 4.2 A hedgerow runs along the highway boundary with the A31 and wraps around the northwest boundary of the site and along the highway verge boundary with Blandford Road.
- 4.3 To the south-west of the site, and on the other side of the Blandford Road, is St Huberts church which is a Grade II listed building.
- 4.4 The dismantled railway line in Corfe Mullen runs along the southern boundary of the site. This is not a public right of way and is owned by the Council and the public is permitted to use it for open access. ***The applicants are in the process of securing permission from the Council to use this route for a business purpose.***
- 4.5 ***The Council's Senior Rural Estates Surveyor has confirmed that it is the Council's intention to grant permission to Mr & Mrs Cooper to use the old railway line for alpaca trekking. This will require terms to be agreed with Mr & Mrs Cooper to grant a licence for the permitted use.***
- 4.6 The total parcel of land amounts to approx. 1.6 hectares. The majority of the site is divided into paddocks. The perimeter of the site is approximately 540m.
- 4.7 The site lies within the Southeast Dorset Green Belt and open countryside.
- 4.8 There are a number of structures/outbuildings on the northwest corner of the site including a large barn, mobile home, 2 x stable/rural buildings (the most northerly of which is lawful), two small sheds to the north of the stables and hardstanding.

24 September 2025

- 4.9 The boundaries of the larger red site area are mainly hedging with the hard surfaced yard enclosed by fencing. Only the large barn benefits from planning permission and the nearest building to it to the south has been recently granted a Certificate of Lawful Development as a rural building. Aerial photos from 2017/18 do not show any structures on the agricultural land. It is understood the applicants purchased the land in 2019.

5. Description of development

5.1 It is proposed to:

- retain the existing stable/rural building to the southeast of the building recently granted a lawful development certificate under application P/CLE/2024/05884 (for the erection of a rural building along the western boundary of the site). The agent advises that this building does not play any significant role in the alpaca trekking enterprise and will be used for general agricultural storage and to provide shelter for quarantined animals, away from the main herd. Occasionally, it may be used to accommodate livestock requiring veterinary care and attention and birthing.
- retain the mobile home on site to be used as a temporary rural worker's dwelling
- retain 2 small sheds for ancillary residential storage. These are sited between the lawful rural building and the existing stable/rural building it is proposed to retain
- change the use of the land to a mixed agricultural and alpaca trekking enterprise. Alpaca treks to take place at weekends and Public Holidays only and uses the old railway line to the south. 3 treks per day.

6. Background and relevant planning history

- 6.1 Planning permission was refused on 28/6/24 (ref: P/FUL/2023/07347) for the retention of the stables and conversion of the stables into a temporary rural worker's dwelling with retention of sheds for ancillary residential storage and change of use of land to a mixed agricultural and alpaca trekking enterprise.
- 6.2 This differed from the current proposal as it proposed the conversion of the existing stables into a temporary rural worker's dwelling, whereas the current proposal is to retain an existing mobile home as the temporary rural worker's dwelling.

The reasons for refusal for application P/FUL/2023/07347 were:

'1. The site lies within the Green Belt where development is inappropriate unless it meets on of the exceptions at paragraphs 154 and 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The proposed use of a permanent structure as a temporary dwelling,

24 September 2025

and the alpaca business use which will require additional structures to those currently authorised on the site, represent inappropriate development which would be harmful by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated or identified that would outweigh the harm arising. The proposal is contrary to paragraphs 142-143 and 152-155 of the NPPF.

2. Insufficient information has been provided in relation to associated trip generation, parking provision and turning space, and access arrangements to determine the impact of the proposal on highway safety. The proposal is contrary to policies KS11 and KS12 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan and paragraphs 108,111 and 114 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The site is susceptible to high groundwater levels and associated flooding. No site-specific information has been provided to demonstrate that the dwelling would not result in increased risk from flooding and the application fails the sequential test so the proposal is contrary to policy ME6 of the Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan and paragraphs 165, 168 and 173 of the NPPF’.

The rural business at the site involves the breeding and sale of alpaca and to operate alpaca treks and is a mixed use.

The alpaca offspring are sold for breeding stock and purchased stock is also sold. Sale is mainly to smallholders and individuals for pets and to guard livestock.

The alpaca breeding requires an on-site presence to supervise mating and birthing of the alpacas and the temporary dwelling and buildings at the site are required in association with this rural business.

Previous applications

3/19/0758/FUL - Decision: GRA - Decision Date: 01/08/2019: Erect Agricultural building for livestock and machinery. This is the largest building on the site nearest the site's entrance onto the A31 and at the time was required for the housing of goats, storage of machinery, hay and straw (an agricultural use).

3/20/1992/NMA - Decision: GRANTED - Decision Date: 10/06/2021: Non-material amendment to approved P/A 3/19/0758/FUL Erect agricultural barn to change the pitch of the barn roof

P/CLE/2024/05884 - Decision: GRANTED - Decision Date: 03/03/2025: Certificate of Lawfulness for the erection of a rural building along the western boundary of the site at Hope Farm, Mill Street, Corfe Mullen, Dorset, BH21 3RQ. This is sited between the stable/rural building it is proposed to retain and the building approved under 3/19/0758/FUL.

7. List of constraints

24 September 2025

St Huberts Church (Grade II Listed)

Bournemouth Greenbelt;

Dorset Heathlands (5km buffer)

Groundwater – Susceptibility to flooding – covers majority of site and includes the areas which have been developed and Groundwater Source Protection Zone

Higher Potential ecological network

Natural England Designation - RAMSAR: Dorset Heathlands (UK11021); - Distance: 4340.69 and Site of nature conservation interests (SNCIS): SY99/039 - Russell's Copse; - Distance: 30.79

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) impact risk zone (Natural England consultation required)

Risk of Surface Water Flooding Extent 1 in 30, 1 in 100 and 1 in 1000- N.B: None of the buildings on the site or mobile home lie in these higher risk areas.

Minerals and Waste Safeguarding Area - Sand and Gravel

Radon: Class: Class 1: Less than 1%

8. Consultations

All consultee responses can be viewed in full on the website.

Consultees

National Highways

- Concerned at the potential increased road safety risk associated with any significant intensification of use of the site access onto the A31. However, subject to planning conditions being applied to any permission, National Highways would be unlikely to sustain an objection to the proposals on highway safety grounds were the proposals to be subject to a planning appeal.
- Consider the additional trips generated by the proposals as presented may not be significantly greater than those that could be generated by the existing permitted uses on site, and that the potential adverse impact could be managed by planning conditions.
- Unauthorised signage in the verge affects visibility splays and should be removed.

Natural England

24 September 2025

No objection - concur with the Council's (draft) Appropriate Assessment dated 11th November

Reading Agricultural Consultancy Ltd

The business is viable and there is an essential need for a rural worker to reside on the holding.

Dorset Council Highways

No objection - the proposal does not present a material harm to the transport network or to highway safety.

Dorset Council - Environmental Services – Protection

Comment - The site lies within 250 metres of land previously used for factory works, not specified. If there is to be any breaking of ground, the unexpected contamination land condition should be imposed if planning permission is granted.

Dorset Council - Conservation Officers

The closest designated heritage assets are the Grade II* listed Church of St Hubert and the separately listed Grade II churchyard cross (20m north of the church) located to the west of the application site. In view of the position of the proposed structures and the intervening road and hedgerow there are no comments from a heritage perspective.

Corfe Mullen Town Council

Objection- Contrary to the following Core Strategy Policies:

ME1 – Safeguarding Biodiversity and Geodiversity: Potential harm to internationally designated sites, sites of special scientific interest, and the Dorset landscape character area.

ME2 – Protection of the Dorset Heathlands: The development is within 400m to 5km of protected Dorset Heathlands.

HE1 – Valuing and Conserving our Historic Environment: Proximity to the 13th Century St Huberts Church.

HE3 – Landscape Quality: Negative impact on visual amenity, wildlife corridors, and increased noise and light pollution.

KS3 – Green Belt: Located within the Green Belt, failing to protect the physical identity of individual settlements.

24 September 2025

KS11 – Transport & Development: Poor connectivity to existing communities due to its rural setting.

Contrary to the following National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs (NPPF):

Paragraph 108: Environmental impacts of increased traffic and transport infrastructure are not mitigated.

Paragraph 128d: The area's prevailing character and setting is not maintained.

Paragraphs 142-143: The countryside is not safeguarded from encroachment.

Paragraphs 144-145: Harmful to the Green Belt, with no exceptional circumstances to justify the development.

Paragraphs 152-155: Does not demonstrate very special circumstances for approval within the Green Belt.

Paragraph 180a: Fails to protect or enhance valued landscapes and biodiversity.

Corfe Mullen Ward Members No comments received

Representations received

No representations from members of the public or any other bodies

9. Duties

s38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that the determination of planning applications must be in accordance with the development plan unless material circumstances indicate otherwise.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 - Section 66 requires that when considering whether to grant planning permission for a development which affects a listed building or its setting, there is a general duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses.

10. Relevant policies

Development plan

Adopted Christchurch and East Dorset Local Plan:

The following policies are considered to be relevant to this proposal:

KS1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

KS2: Settlement hierarchy

KS3: Green Belt

24 September 2025

KS11: Transport and development

KS12: Parking provision

HE1: Valuing and conserving our historic environment

HE2: Design of new development

HE3: Landscape quality

ME1: Safeguarding biodiversity and geodiversity

ME2: Dorset heathlands

ME6: Flood management, mitigation and defence

Made Neighbourhood Plans

None applicable.

Material considerations

Emerging local plans:

Paragraph 48 of the NPPF provides that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant plan policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan are to the policies of the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

The Dorset Council Local Plan

The Dorset Council Local Plan Options consultation took place between January and March 2021. Being at a very early stage of preparation, the relevant policies in the draft plan should be accorded very limited weight in decision making.

Emerging neighbourhood plans

Corfe Mullen Neighbourhood Plan- In preparation – limited weight applied to decision making

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended 2025)

24 September 2025

Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date then permission should be granted unless specific NPPF policies protecting areas or assets provide a strong reason for refusal and/or any adverse impacts of approval would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF as a whole, with particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well designed places and providing affordable homes.

Other relevant NPPF sections include:

- Section 4 'Decision making': Para 39 - Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available...and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- Section 5 'Delivering a sufficient supply of homes' This outlines the government's objective in respect of land supply with subsection 'Rural housing' at paragraphs 82-84 reflecting the requirement for development in rural areas.
- Section 6 'Building a strong, competitive economy', paragraphs 88 and 89 'Supporting a prosperous rural economy' promotes the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, through conversion of existing buildings, the erection of well-designed new buildings, and supports sustainable tourism and leisure developments where identified needs are not met by existing rural service centres.
- Section 11 'Making effective use of land'
- Section 12 'Achieving well designed places' This indicates that all development to be of a high quality in design, and the relationship and visual impact of it to be compatible with the surroundings. In particular, and amongst other things, Paragraphs 131 – 141 advise that:

The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

- Section 13 'Protecting Green Belt Land'
- Section 14 'Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change'
- Section 15 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment'- In National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), paragraph

24 September 2025

189 requires great weight to be given to conserving and enhancing the landscape and scenic beauty. Decisions in Heritage Coast areas should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation (para 191). Paragraphs 192-195 set out how biodiversity is to be protected and encourage net gains for biodiversity.

- Section 16 'Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment'- Paragraph 212 says that when considering designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. The effect of an application on the significance of non-designated heritage assets should also be taken into account (para 216).

Other material considerations

National Planning Practice Guidance

Supplementary Planning Document/Guidance

Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework 2020-2025 Supplementary Planning Document

Dorset Council Interim Guidance and Position Statement Appendix B: Adopted Local Plan policies and objectives relating to climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable design and construction. December 2023.

Housing land supply

On the 26 September 2024, The Planning Inspectorate issued the Inspector's report confirming the Council's Annual Position Statement (APS). The APS confirms that the whole of the Dorset Council area can demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing of 5.02 years, and that this figure is fixed until 31 October 2025 in accordance with paragraph 233 of the NPPF. An updated APS that reflects the Inspector's findings is available on the Council's website.

Housing Delivery Test (HDT)

The latest HDT results (2023 measurement) show that enough homes have been delivered within the local plan area to demonstrate 106% of the target.

11. Human rights

Article 6 - right to a fair trial.

Article 8 - right to respect for private and family life and home.

The first protocol of Article 1 protection of property.

This recommendation is based on adopted development plan policies, the application of which does not prejudice the human rights of the applicant or any third party.

12. Public Sector Equalities Duty

As set out in the Equalities Act 2010, all public bodies, in discharging their functions must have “due regard” to this duty. There are 3 main aims: -

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where participation is disproportionately low.

Whilst there is no absolute requirement to fully remove any disadvantage the Duty is to have “regard to” and remove or minimise disadvantage and in considering the merits of this planning application the planning authority has taken into consideration the requirements of the Public Sector Equalities Duty. It is considered that the proposal would not affect anyone with a protected characteristic.

13. Planning Assessment

Principle of development

- 13.1 The site is outside any settlement set out in Core Strategy Policy KS2: Settlement hierarchy where only development that is functionally required to be in the rural area is acceptable. It has been concluded that the dwelling is functionally required to be in a rural area and this assessment is set out below. On this basis, the principle of development is acceptable, and the proposal complies with Policy KS2 and paragraph 84 of the NPPF which states that:

Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of the following circumstances apply:

a) there is an essential need for a rural worker... to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside;”

Is there a functional requirement for the dwelling?

- 13.2 Planning Policy Guidance on ‘Housing needs of different groups’ identifies considerations that may be relevant when applying paragraph 84 (formerly para79a) of the NPPF could include:

- evidence of the necessity for a rural worker to live at, or in close proximity to, their place of work to ensure the effective operation of an agricultural, forestry or similar land-based

24 September 2025

rural enterprise (for instance, where farm animals or agricultural processes require on-site attention 24-hours a day and where otherwise there would be a risk to human or animal health or from crime, or to deal quickly with emergencies that could cause serious loss of crops or products);

- the degree to which there is confidence that the enterprise will remain viable for the foreseeable future;
- whether the provision of an additional dwelling on site is essential for the continued viability of a farming business through the farm succession process;
- whether the need could be met through improvements to existing accommodation on the site, providing such improvements are appropriate taking into account their scale, appearance and the local context; and
- in the case of new enterprises, whether it is appropriate to consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a trial period.

13.3 On behalf of Dorset Council, Reading Agricultural Consultants (RAC) have assessed whether there is sufficient justification for the temporary agricultural worker's dwelling on the site in accordance with national and local planning policy, including Core Strategy Policy PC4.

13.4 Regarding the need for on-site accommodation and farm viability, RAC's previous appraisal of 27th March 2024 concluded:

1. The business proposal appears sound, although it is considered that additional buildings and land might be required as the business reaches its proposed output. The budget proposals would support a full-time worker, although the Council should seek to have the budget accounts updated to reflect a more realistic fodder usage and cost.
2. The conversion of the timber stables would meet any essential need, but such works would not be deemed as temporary. For a temporary rural worker's dwelling, it would be more normal for the key worker to remain living in the mobile home until the business was able to demonstrate a permanent dwelling was justified.

13.5 In relation to the current application, RAC have confirmed that no changes have been presented to alter the number of alpaca to be sold or the business's management arrangements since the refused application and the only material difference between the two applications, from an agricultural point of view, is that the applicant now seeks to continue to use the on-site mobile home as the proposed temporary dwelling rather than convert the stable block to temporary residential use. The stable block would then, if it receives planning permission, be available for farm use.

13.6 RAC advise that as there has been no change in the budget projections, these remain as originally presented and demonstrate the business will be viable and the retention of the

24 September 2025

stables for agricultural use go some way towards their concern about lack of future buildings.

- 13.7 RAC conclude that based on the number of alpacas to be sold and reared at the site, there is an essential need for a rural worker to reside on the holding.

13.8 *Part of the rural business relies on access to the old railway line to undertake the alpaca treks. The Council owns the old railway line and the business use requires a licence. A licence is currently being prepared which will require agreement by the applicants and this is expected to be in place by the date of the committee meeting. The Council's Senior Rural Surveyor has confirmed that a licence would be granted provided the applicant agrees to its terms. The applicant has advised that the alpaca trekking part of the business would still be viable should access to the old railway line not be possible as they could still offer field walks with the alpacas. The perimeter of the site is approximately 540m.*

- 13.9 The dwelling represents an isolated home in the countryside in respect of paragraph 84 of the NPPF but the essential need for the dwelling satisfies part a) of this policy and policy KS2.

Policy PC4 states that '*applications for economic development will be encouraged where the development is located in or on the edge of existing settlements...Such proposals should be small scale to reflect the rural character.*' This aligns with NPPF paragraph 88; '*Planning policies and decisions should enable: a) the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses;... c) sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments which respect the character of the countryside*'. The proposal for a mixed use of land is judged to accord with these policy requirements and aims.

Impact on the Green Belt

- 13.10 NPPF paragraph 153 states that '*when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*

'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations''.

- 13.11 Exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt are set out at paragraphs 154 and 155 of the NPPF. Para 155 refers to Grey Belt.

24 September 2025

The definition of Grey Belt is:

For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

The 5 Green Belt purposes are:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

13.12 The application site lies within land parcel CM12 of the 2020 LUC Strategic Green Belt Assessment for Dorset Council and Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council [Strategic Green Belt Review - Dorset Council](#). This assessment was undertaken prior to changes to the NPPF and PPG so it does not seek to define grey belt and ratings are different, nevertheless the identification of the contribution made by this land to Green Belt purposes 1 & 3 (equivalent of a and c set out below) as 'strong' is a helpful starting point in assessing the site.

Settlement	Parcel ID	Area (Ha)	Purpose 1 Rating	Purpose 2 Rating	Purpose 3 Rating	Purpose 4 Rating	Purpose 5 Rating
Corfe Mullen	CM11	2.57	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution
Corfe Mullen	CM12	45.98	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak/No	Equal Contribution

13.13 The application site is only a small part of parcel CM12 and on the edge of the parcel, its contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of the Corfe Mullen built area is less critical than land further southeast. Nevertheless, even if the grey belt definition was met, the site is not judged to be a sustainable location so as to benefit from the exception to inappropriate development.

13.14 *The retention of the caravan as a temporary dwelling:* The proposed retention of the mobile home for use as a temporary rural worker's dwelling does not meet any of the exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt set out in NPPF paragraphs 154 & 155 and is therefore inappropriate in the Green Belt. The presence of the caravan has a harmful effect on openness.

13.15 *The stable/rural building:* The supporting statement advises that the stable/rural building is to be used for general storage of items, equipment and machinery that are used on the enterprise but will also be retained for a quarantine area for the alpaca and for shelter

24 September 2025

during specific times, for example poor weather, birthing and illness of the alpaca. The building will be used in conjunction with the larger barn on the site (that benefits from planning permission 3/19/0758/FUL).

- 13.16 The Council's Agricultural Consultant has advised that the retention of the stable/rural building will assist in addressing his concern about lack of future buildings for the business. As a mixed use is proposed and the stable/rural building will not be solely for agricultural purposes, it cannot benefit from the exception to inappropriate development for agricultural buildings at NPPF paragraph 154 a).
- 13.17 Paragraph 154(b) of the Framework allows new buildings for the provision of appropriate facilities (to include buildings) in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use providing that the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 13.18 The stable/rural building is to be used in connection with the change of use of the land. It has a modest footprint and volume (footprint 3.6m x 13.8m with a max. height of 3.1m) which has some effect on the spatial openness of the Green Belt, as would most buildings. However, it is judged that this would only be to a modest degree and not to an extent that it would threaten the overall openness of the Green Belt or be significant in the context of paragraph 154, particularly having regard to the siting of the proposed stable/rural building in proximity to the other lawful development at the site. The building would not unduly impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt or harm rural character due to its modest size and location behind a field hedge and adjacent to existing lawful buildings. On this basis, the building is appropriate development in the Green Belt under NPPF paragraph 154 b).
- 13.19 The 2 sheds are proposed for ancillary residential storage for the mobile home so do not meet any of the exceptions set out in NPPF paragraphs 154 and 155. Due to their modest size, they have a limited impact on openness.
- 13.20 *Change of use of land to a mixed agriculture and alpaca trekking enterprise:* Some material changes in the use of land, including for outdoor recreation, are appropriate development in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 13.21 The breeding of alpacas (for sale) falls within the lawful agricultural use of the site, but the trekking business falls outside of the definition of agricultural use and the site is in a mixed use accordingly as agricultural and for outdoor recreation. As agricultural use itself is not development, officers consider that this particular mixed use may be considered under NPPF paragraph 154 h) v.
- 13.22 The proposed outdoor recreational use for alpaca trekking will have a modest impact on Green Belt openness arising from customers' parked vehicles on the site. However, the proposed parking plan shows agricultural vehicles are parked in the barn which limits

24 September 2025

their likely impact on Green Belt openness. The proposed use would not result in encroachment into the countryside as it would be contained by the existing hedged boundary to the south and west and fencing around the hard surfaced yard area.

13.23 Given the anticipated low number of vehicles parked in the open associated with the trekking use (2-4 vehicles be contained within the yard area adjacent to the lawful buildings), the proposal would not result in a greater overall impact on spatial and visual openness than the current agricultural use and on this basis, the alpaca trekking use is considered to be appropriate development under paragraph 154 h) v.

13.24 The agent's supporting letter (para 15) advises that the retained stable/rural building would be used in conjunction with the permitted (currently agricultural) barn at the site and these buildings will allow enough space for the enterprise whilst also providing separate quarantine areas for the alpaca.

13.25 Only the caravan and associated ancillary storage sheds have been identified as inappropriate in the Green Belt. These have a limited impact on Green Belt openness given their small size. Whether there are very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Green Belt from inappropriateness and any other harm is considered later in the report.

Impact on highway safety

13.26 The site is accessed from the A31 with a gated access. This is set back from the carriageway by a wide grassed verge which is outside the ownership of the applicant and would provide space to temporarily park vehicles whilst the gates were opened.

13.27 The proposed parking layout plan in the submitted Transport Statement advises that marked parking is to be provided at the site for 5 cars and 1 minibus which exceeds the anticipated visitor numbers noted in the traffic assessment. There is additional space to park in the yard whilst still allowing for on-site turning. Agricultural vehicles park in the barn.

13.28 The Transport Statement advises that the proposed alpaca trekking is intended to operate for 2 days per week at the weekend and the alpaca treks would access the route of the old railway line to the north of the site.

13.29 The supporting documentation explains that there is an average of 3-5 treks each day over the weekend with an average of 2-4 cars per day (8 daily trips). No use of the A31 access by treks occurs.

13.30 The applicant states there will be 3 treks per day with the first trek at 10am, the second at 12pm and the last at 2pm. The last trek will finish at 3:30pm. This will allow 30 minutes between each trek as the whole experience lasts an hour and a half.

24 September 2025

The Council's Highways Officer has raised no objection.

13.31 National Highways advise that the potential adverse impact of the proposal on the A31 could be managed by planning conditions to:

- require the stable/rural building to be used for agricultural use only (condition 7) ;
- require alpaca treks to take place on weekends and Bank Holidays only and no treks shall use the site access onto the A31 (condition 4);
- require treks to be timed to ensure sufficient time is allowed between arriving and departing vehicles to minimise potential for conflicting vehicle movements at the site's access onto the A31 (condition 8);
- to prohibit parking of development-related vehicles or placing of signs in the A31 road verge which shall remain as a visibility splay and free from obstruction at all times.

13.32 Given the nature and level of use of the site, the amount of on-site parking proposed is considered acceptable and is shown on the submitted parking plan contained in the Transport Assessment.

13.33 The proposal is considered to have overcome Reason for refusal 2 of the previous application and is acceptable in respect of its impact on highway safety subject to the conditions advised by National Highways and complies with Policies KS11 & KS12 of the Core Strategy.

Impact on the landscape

13.34 The site is not in a protected landscape and the Area of Great Landscape Value lies to the north on the opposite side of the A31. The site is in the Historic Character Area on Dorset Explorer and the Council's Senior Archaeologist has advised that this is a high-level analysis of the shape, size and boundary style of current land parcels to draw conclusions about the historic activities which formed them and the area was enclosed in a fairly regular way, suggesting organised rather than piecemeal enclosure. There is no policy in the Core Strategy to specifically consider this character area. As the proposal involves no ground intrusions, no adverse impact on archaeology would occur from the proposals and no adverse impact on the HCA.

13.35 The buildings on the site are grouped together and are of a rural appearance when seen from outside the site and the site is well-screened from the southeast and southwest by established field boundary hedges.

13.36 There is less screening when approaching the site from the east, but views are fleeting given the general speed of traffic on the A31 and once the mobile home has been clad in an appropriate dark cladding (condition 9), the buildings are not overly apparent and are appropriate for their context and no adverse impact on the landscape would result.

Although the cladding might make the mobile home appear more permanent, the structure would need to continue to comply with the definition of a caravan and the proposal is recommended for approval subject to a condition to require the

24 September 2025

removal of the caravan/mobile home after 3 years. The intention of the cladding is to make the mobile home visually acceptable for this temporary period. Any future application to extend the period of occupation or for a permanent permission would be assessed on its merits in the light of any accompanying business case.

The proposal accords with Core Strategy Policy HE3 on this basis.

Flood risk

- 13.37 Parts of the application site lie within an area identified by the Council's Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) as being at risk of surface water flooding extent 1 in 30 years, but these are sufficiently distant from the buildings to not pose a constraint.
- 13.38 The SFRA also identifies that the land on which the stable building is sited is likely to be susceptible to high groundwater levels so could be subject to flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted by Godsell Arnold Partnership Ltd dated October 2024.
- 13.39 The Groundwater flooding shaded area relates to the potential for groundwater flooding and does not necessarily mean there is an actual risk. There is an Environment Agency (EA) groundwater monitoring well immediately to the north of the site in the highway verge between the site and the A31.
- 13.40 The FRA states that the data from this monitoring well shows that groundwater levels fluctuated between 4.24m below ground level to 1.68m below ground level.
- 13.41 The cover level for the monitoring well, taken from the topographical survey, is 22.89m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD).
- 13.42 The shallowest recorded groundwater level is 1.68m AOD, recorded in February 2024; this equates to a groundwater level of 21.21m AOD.
- 13.43 The topographical survey shows that at no point within the site do ground levels drop below 21.21m AOD. The lowest point on the site, in the localised low point mid-way along the northern boundary, is at 21.39m AOD, 0.18m above the shallowest recorded groundwater level.
- 31.44 In the area which is the focus of the development, in the north west corner of the site, ground levels are between 22.41m AOD and 22.50m AOD, over 1.2m above the shallowest recorded groundwater level.
- 13.45 For the above reasons, it is considered the site is not at high risk from groundwater or any other type of flooding and a Sequential Test to require consideration of sites with lesser flood risk is not required.
- 13.46 Reason for refusal 3 of the previous application is overcome as it has been demonstrated that there is no high risk to the development from either groundwater emergence or

24 September 2025

groundwater flooding and the proposal accords with Core Strategy Policy ME6 and the policy set out in NPPF paragraphs 170 to 182.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 13.47 St Huberts Church, on the opposite side of Blandford Road from the site is a Grade II listed building.
- 13.48 The Council's Conservation Officer has advised that given the position of the proposed structures and the intervening road and hedgerow there are no comments from a heritage perspective.
- 13.49 The stable building proposed for retention is well screened by existing vegetation along this part of the boundary, and at a lower level than the site boundary, and so the proposal is considered not to have any impact upon the setting of the listed building.
- 13.50 The proposal therefore accords with paragraph 205 of the NPPF in that it will represent no harm to the significance of the heritage asset.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 13.51 The proposal is exempt from BNG as it is a retrospective application.

Ecology

- 13.52 The proposal is for the retention of an existing building and it, and the mobile home are sited on an area of hardstanding with no ecological or biodiversity features.
- 13.53 No works are proposed to the buildings other than the cladding of the mobile home and the submitted Biodiversity Checklist does not identify a need for an ecological assessment of the site.
- 13.54 A Preliminary Roost Appraisal dated 21/02/24 was submitted for the previous application where it was proposed to convert a timber building into a dwelling for an agricultural worker and found no evidence of bats within or outside any of the buildings on the site. This recommended that bat boxes and bird nest boxes were installed on buildings at the site to enhance biodiversity.
- 13.55 Subject to a condition (no. 11), there is no conflict with Policy ME1 of the Core Strategy.

Consideration of Town Council's (TC) objections

- 13.56 The TC has objected on the following grounds and the officer comment in respect of these is set out in italic text below each objection:
- 13.57 The following policies are from the Christchurch & East Dorset Core Strategy 2014:

- 13.58 Contrary to Policy ME1 – Safeguarding Biodiversity and Geodiversity: The proposed development could potentially have a harmful effect on internationally designated sites, sites of special scientific interest, the Dorset landscape character area and regionally important geological and geomorphological sites.

The TC do not explain how the proposal could have harmful effects and the nearest internationally protected site to the application site is Corfe & Barrow Hills some 1.74 km to the southeast. This is accessed via trafficked roads and the alpacas are to be walked on the applicant's land and disused railway line railway and would not reach this area to be able to have any adverse impact on it.

The application site is in the 'river terrace' area of the Dorset Landscape Character Area and as explained in the landscape assessment in the main report, no adverse impact on the landscape would result from the proposal.

- 13.59 Contrary to Policy **ME2 – Protection of the Dorset Heathlands**: The proposed development is between 400m and 5km of protected Dorset Heathlands.

The proposal is liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and this would provide the necessary financial contribution for mitigation for the proposed dwelling's likely impact on the Dorset Heathlands. The Dorset Heathlands Planning Framework provides the rationale for this mitigation and the proposal accords with Core Strategy Policy ME2 on this basis.

- 13.60 Contrary to Policy **HE1 – Valuing and Conserving our Historic Environment**: The proposed development is within the vicinity of the 13th Century St Huberts Church.

Although the proposed development is in the setting of Saint Hubert's Church, it is considered there would be no adverse impact on this setting for the reasons set out in the impact on heritage assets section in the report above.

- 13.61 Contrary to Policy **HE3 – Landscape Quality**: The proposed development does not protect the visual amenity and wildlife corridors, along with noise, light pollution and motion from the dwelling and traffic generated.

The impact on the landscape has been considered in the report above and a condition to restrict lighting is imposed to prevent excessive external lighting.

- 13.62 Contrary to Policy **KS3 – Green Belt**: The proposed development is within the Green Belt and fails to protect the separate physical identity of individual settlements in the area.

24 September 2025

Although the proposal is within the Green Belt, it would protect the separate physical identity of the individual settlements that are nearest to the site and there is no conflict with Policy KS3 accordingly.

- 13.63 Contrary to Policy **KS11 – Transport & Development**: The proposed development is not linked to existing communities by walking, cycling and public transport routes due to the rural setting on Blandford Road and adjacent to the A31.

It is accepted that the development site is not easily reached by walking, cycling and public transport, but it lies near the edge of the settlement of Corfe Mullen and represents an economic use in a rural area that is beyond an existing settlement which is sensitive to its surroundings and does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and is generally compliant with paragraph 89 of the NPPF on this basis.

NPPF paragraph 88 a) also states that planning decisions should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of businesses in rural areas.

Core strategy policy KS 11 states that development should be in accessible locations, but this does not prohibit development that isn't, and the proposal is considered to be generally compliant with this policy.

- 13.64 **In respect of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** – the Town Council considers that the proposal is contrary to the following paragraphs:

- 13.65 **Para 108**: The proposed development does not protect the environmental impacts of increased traffic and transport infrastructure patterns of movement and parking.

This paragraph has been re-numbered as 109 in the December 2024 NPPF revision. The increase in traffic from the proposal would not be significant given the detail set out in the supporting documentation and all parking can be accommodated on the site with the site located in relative close proximity to the urban area of Corfe Mullen and readily accessed from the A31 trunk Rd.

- 13.66 **Para 128d**: The proposed development does not maintain the areas prevailing character and setting.

This issue has been covered in the impact on the landscape section above.

- 13.67 **Para 142-143**: The proposed development does not safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

There are already 2 lawful buildings at the site and the proposed retention of another building and the mobile home which are physically closely related to the lawful buildings is not considered to result in encroachment into the countryside.

- 13.68 **Para 144-145:** The proposed development is within the Green Belt. Dorset Council strategic policies would need to set out any new Green Belts to be established in the exceptional circumstances listed in para 144 a-e.

This paragraph relates solely to policy making and not development management. The relevant policies to be considered are set out at paragraphs 142, 143 153, 154 and 155.

- 13.69 **Para 152-155:** The proposed development would be harmful to the Green Belt and does not demonstrate very special circumstances to be approved.

The impact on the Green Belt is considered in the report and it has been concluded that there are very special circumstances to permit the mobile home agricultural worker's dwelling (see below)

- 13.70 **Para 180a:** The proposed development does not protect and/or enhance valued landscapes and biodiversity of the area.

The site is not in a valued landscape and the impact on the landscape has been considered in the report above. A condition will require biodiversity enhancement of the site in the form of bat and bird nest boxes on buildings as recommended by the applicant's ecologist.

Benefits

- 13.71 The proposals would provide a number of financial and non-financial benefits, including public benefits. These are summarised in the table below:

What	Amount / value
Material considerations	
Retention of 1 full-time job and several other part-time jobs (farm and alpaca trek labour) – numbers unspecified in the submitted information	N/A
Non-material considerations	
Business rates	Unknown

Environmental implications

- 13.72 The proposal generates vehicle trips and these produce pollutants to the environment, although the scale of the operation would not generate significant vehicle trips.

14 Summary of issues, very special circumstances and the planning balance

- 14.1 The principle of development is acceptable as the temporary dwelling provided by the mobile home is functionally required to be in a rural area. The stables/rural building is appropriate development in the Green Belt given it is an appropriate facility in connection with the change of use of the land that preserves Green Belt openness and does not conflict with Green Belt purposes. The proposed mixed-use as agriculture and alpaca trekking would preserve Green Belt openness, resulting in no additional harm over the agricultural use of the site. No harm to highway safety, landscape quality, the setting of heritage assets or flooding has been identified, and biodiversity enhancements can be secured by condition.
- 14.2 The temporary siting of a caravan for use as a dwelling is inappropriate development in the Green Belt as is the retention of two associated storage sheds which are required for domestic storage and cumulatively these structures result in some moderate harm to Green Belt spatial and visual openness. However the applicant has demonstrated an essential functional need for a rural worker to live on the site which represents a very special circumstance for the mobile home and 2 ancillary storage sheds that, in this case, does clearly outweigh the identified harm to the green belt, (with no other harm identified) so accords with Green Belt policy set out in paragraph 153 of Section 13 of the NPPF.

15 Conclusion

The proposal, subject to conditions, has overcome the reasons for refusal relating to the previous application so temporary permission can be granted for the use and rural worker's dwelling. This will allow the Council to assess the business credentials again if a further application is submitted. The rural building is of permanent construction so a temporary permission would not meet the tests of reasonableness and necessity.

16 Recommendation

Grant, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Wills & Co. Drawings KC-JH-01; 02; 03; 04 & 0300

Godsell Arnold Partnership Ltd Project 24642-GAP-XX-XX-DR-C-9100 P01: Proposed parking layout

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2. This permission, in so far as it relates to the siting of a mobile home to be used as a temporary rural worker's dwelling with sheds for ancillary residential storage and the change of use of land to a mixed use for agriculture and an alpaca trekking enterprise shall be limited to the period ending 3 years from the date of this decision. At the expiration of this time, the use of the mobile home as a dwelling shall cease and the

24 September 2025

mobile home, together with any associated structures/works including the ancillary shed, shall be removed from the site and the land reinstated in accordance with a scheme of works and timescale which shall first have been submitted to and approved in writing by Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the lawful land use shall be agricultural only.

Reason: In the interests of the Green Belt and because this permission is granted as it has been accepted that there is an essential requirement for a temporary agricultural worker's dwelling having regard to the husbandry needs of the agricultural holding whilst the business is established.

3. The occupation of the mobile home hereby approved shall be limited to a person who is solely, or mainly, employed, or last employed, in the rural business of agriculture and alpaca trekking operated at the site, or a widow or widower or surviving civil partner of such a person, and to any resident dependants

Reason: The site is in an area where new dwellings would be contrary to the provisions of the approved Local Plan and normally would not be permitted except where there is an overriding need in the interests of accommodating a rural worker.

4. Alpaca treks shall take place on weekends and Bank Holidays only, and no treks shall utilise the site access onto the A31 trunk road.

Reason: In the interest of the safe and efficient operation of the A31 trunk road in accordance with DfT Circular 01/2022, and to ensure the traffic impact of the development remains in line with that for which information has been provided.

5. Within 3 months of this decision, the turning and parking shown on Godsell Arnold Partnership Ltd Drawing 24642-GAP-XX-XX-DR-C 9100 P01: Proposed parking layout shall be constructed. Thereafter, these areas must be permanently maintained, kept free from obstruction and available for the purposes specified.

Reason: To ensure the proper and appropriate development of the site in the interest of highway safety.

6. Within one month of the date of this planning permission being granted, any signage or vehicles/items associated with the proposed development on the A31 trunk road verge between the site's north boundary and the A31 carriageway must be removed. Thereafter there shall be no parking signage or siting of items on the verge.

Reason: To ensure the verge functions as a visibility splay in the interests of the safe and efficient operation of the A31 trunk road.

7. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), the building marked as 'Rural General Purpose Building' on the approved site plan shall be used for agricultural purposes only and for no other purpose.

24 September 2025

Reason: In the interest of the safe and efficient operation of the A31 trunk road in accordance with DfT Circular 01/2022, and to ensure the traffic impact of the development remains in line with that for which information has been provided.

8. There shall be a minimum of 30 minutes between the end of one trek and the start of another.

Reason: To ensure that sufficient time is allowed between arriving and departing vehicles, to minimise the potential for conflicting vehicle movements at the development site access onto the A31 trunk road, and to ensure that on-site parking and turning provision remains sufficient to accommodate predicted demand.

9. Within 2 months of the date of this decision, details of proposed cladding for the mobile home shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) for approval in writing. The approved cladding shall be installed on the mobile home within 3 months of receipt of written agreement by the LPA.

Reason: To ensure the development uses external materials appropriate for its rural context.

10. No external lighting shall be installed at the site without details first having been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The lighting shall be designed to direct light downwards and be motion sensitive and shall be installed in accordance with the approved details and maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: to prevent harm to commuting bats from external lighting.

11. Within 2 months of the date of this permission bat boxes and bird nest boxes shall be installed on appropriate buildings on the site in accordance with the applicants' ecologist's recommendations set out in Section 6 of the Wessex Ecology Preliminary Roost Assessment February 2024. Photographs of the installations together with a site plan to show their locations with ecologist approval shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and the features shall thereafter be retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To enhance biodiversity at the site.

Informative Notes:

1. In the interest of the safe and efficient operation of the A31 trunk road in accordance with DfT Circular 01/2022, the applicant/operator is advised that National Highways require there to be no parking of development-related vehicles or placing of signs within the A31 trunk road verge, which shall be maintained as a visibility splay and free from obstruction at all times.
2. Informative: This development constitutes Community Infrastructure Levy 'CIL' liable development. CIL is a mandatory financial charge on development, and you will be notified of the amount of CIL being charged on this development in a CIL Liability Notice. To avoid additional financial penalties, it is important that you notify us of the date you plan to commence development before any work takes place and follow the correct CIL payment procedure.

3. Informative: National Planning Policy Framework Statement

In accordance with paragraph 39 of the NPPF the council, as local planning authority, takes a positive approach to development proposals and is focused on providing sustainable development.

The council works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- offering a pre-application advice service, and
- as appropriate updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application and where possible suggesting solutions.

In this case:

- The applicant/agent was updated of any issues and provided with the opportunity to address issues identified by the case officer.

4. The applicant is advised that the site lies within 250 metres of land previously used for factory works not specified and any breaking into the ground may encounter contamination.