

PRE-HEARING NOTE**Appeal Ref: 6005140****Thamby Gate, Curridge Green Riding School, Curridge Green, Thatcham, Berks,
United Kingdom, RG18 9EA****Appellant: Mrs Louise Houghton****Local Planning Authority: West Berkshire Council****Proposed Development: Retrospective Change of Use from riding school to dwelling.**Background

1. A one day hearing relating to the above appeal will take place, commencing at **10.00am** on **17 June 2026**.
2. It will be conducted by Beth Astley-Serougi Ba(hons) LL.M MSc MRTPI, who is the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to determine the appeal.
3. The purpose of this pre-hearing note is to explain how the event will operate in a fair, open and transparent way and what should be done to ensure it runs smoothly.

Hearing Arrangements

4. The Hearing will run as an in person physical event hosted by the Council in Shaw House, West Berkshire. The Council will need to provide virtual arrangements to be provided as a backup should any key participant be unable to attend the venue. Should this become necessary, the Inspector should be advised of this as soon as possible with details of these virtual arrangements.
5. It would assist the Inspector if both main parties could submit a list of those representing them at the Hearing. This should include full name, job title/role in the appeal and professional qualifications.
6. If available, a list of interested parties intending to appear at the event should be provided. This should be provided at **least two working days** in advance of the Hearing.
7. The Inspector requests that, if possible, a separate room be made available to her for the duration of the event. Please can you also provide details of car parking available to the Inspector.

Information Technology (IT)

8. It would be helpful for the Inspector to have access to the internet, and electrical sockets, during the Hearing in order to access electronic documentation and evidence in relation to the appeals. Therefore, please can the Authority ensure that a network connection (Wi-Fi) will be available at the venue for the Inspector and provide any associated security credentials/passwords to gain access.
9. A hard copy of all crucial documents should also be available for the Inspector should the IT not be working for any reason.

Format

10. The Hearing will commence promptly at 10:00am. The Inspector will start the event in the usual way by running through any preliminary matters. The Inspector will issue an agenda before the event and the content will be discussed at the Hearing.
11. The Hearing will be run as a structured discussion with the Inspector asking a series of questions in respect of the main issues. All parties who so wish, will be given an opportunity to speak. There is no need to repeat representations that have already been made in writing. The Inspector will take into consideration all written submissions that have been previously made by any party. There will be regular breaks.
12. From the evidence submitted so far, the Inspector considers that the main issues in this appeal could relate to:
 - **Whether the appeal site is a suitable location for the appeal scheme including whether the appeal building was suitable for conversion having regard to local policies;**
 - **The effect of the appeal scheme on the character and appearance of the surrounding area including whether it conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the North Wessex Downs National Landscape; and**
 - **The consequences of a refusal of permission for the appellant.**
13. There will also be opportunity to discuss issues relating to benefits of the scheme, relevant policies, conditions and the planning balance.
14. If the parties disagree with the above and consider that other matters should be considered or that the wording of the main issues does not appropriately capture the concerns, then please let the Inspector know **by Monday 18 May 2026**.
15. There will also be some time at the Hearing to consider any issues raised by interested parties that are not included above, as well as the effect of the proposal on the setting of 1-2 Curridge Green and Pens Cottage, both Grade II listed buildings as the Inspector undertakes her statutory duty. **Could the Council please provide a copy of the listings by Monday 18 May 2026.**

Statement of Common Ground

16. The Inspector notes the submission of the agreed Statement of Common Ground dated 16 April 2026 which is helpful for the efficient running of the Hearing.

Late Evidence/Drawings

17. It is not anticipated that there will be any need for additional documents to be provided during the Hearing. There will be very limited opportunities for the Inspector (or possibly the other parties) to read any late evidence submitted on the day of the Hearing. Therefore, the Inspector will not allow the introduction of new evidence by any of the parties and will only accept such evidence if there are exceptional circumstances.

Costs

18. If an application for costs is to be made, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) makes it clear that they should be made in writing to the Inspector before the Hearing. You are also reminded that in order to support an effective and timely planning system in which all parties are required to behave reasonably, the Inspector has the power to initiate an award of costs in line with the PPG.

Site Visit

19. The Inspector intends to undertake a site visit following the conclusion of the discussions at the Hearing. Currently it is the intention to close the Hearing at the venue with no further discussion taking place on site, but that may change depending on discussions at the Hearing. The visit to the appeal site is likely to be accompanied one and the main parties will need to be available on this basis, unless it is agreed otherwise that it can be carried out unaccompanied.

B Astley-Serougi

INSPECTOR

8 May 2026