

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250795
Site Address:	Autumn House, Milley Lane, Hare Hatch, Wokingham, RG10 9TH
Expiry Date:	24 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	13 May 2025
Proposal: Full application for proposed retention of existing office/staff welfare building for use as gardener's shed/store.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Heathrow Aerodrome Consultation Zone
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Areas of Special Character – **Hare Hatch, Wargrave**
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – **Green Belt**
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Ground Water Zones
Nuclear Consultation Zone – **Special Case Zone**
Radon Affected Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area – **Hare Hatch Farmed Chalk Slopes**
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
Ordinary Watercourses Consultation Zone
Local Plan Update Submitted Sites

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking

	CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB25 – Archaeology TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Wargrave Parish Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY (OLD HOUSE AND BIRD GARDENS)		
App No.	Description	Decision/Date
R/226/1962	New access to Milley Lane	Approved 7 November 1962
PD/692/1967	Garage	Approved 21 December 1967
09784/09785	Alterations and additions to building	Approved 15 February 1979
19188	New wall, store and two bedrooms	Approved 1 May 1982
19199	Demolition and extension to building	Approved 6 May 1982
20331/20332	Hallway link to old cottage and conservatory and extension to building	Approved 17 November 1983
35387/35492	Bay window and removal of chimney breast	Approved 9 May 1990
35388	Noise fence	Refused 13 June 1990
36374	Garden wall and greenhouse	Approved 17 November 1990
39152	CoU from agricultural land (including within The Bird Gardens) to domestic recreational with associated pens and aviaries, tennis court and pool	Approved 22 July 1992
40595	Extensions to aviary to form keeper's accommodation	Refused 22 July 1992
A/93/225595	Appeal against refusal of 40595	Dismissed 3 November 1993
F/2012/1098	CoU of outbuilding to staff accommodation	Refused 20 July 2012
191566	New vehicular access to Milley Lane for the existing and new access and associated fencing and gates	Approved 13 September 2019
202300	Relocation of existing first floor doorway, installation of new stud wall and new window at ground floor level	Approved 15 October 2020

212446	Full application for the proposed erection of a 4 no. bedroom detached dwelling with link-attached garage and workshop, plus associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing animal enclosures, aviaries and office/staff welfare building.	Refused 9 November 2021, Allowed at Appeal 23 October 2023
240108	Application to vary condition 2 of planning consent 212446 (allowed at appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/21/3289621 RD) for the proposed erection of 1 no. x 4 bedroom detached dwelling with link-attached garage and workshop, plus associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing animal enclosures, aviaries and office/staff welfare building. Condition 2 relates to the approved plans to allow changes to the site layout and elevational details of the dwelling.	Approved 18 April 2024
250506	Application to vary conditions 2, 5, 7 and 15 of planning consent 212446 (allowed at appeal ref: APP/X0360/W/21/3289621 RD and varied by 240108) for the proposed erection of 1 no. x 4 bedroom detached dwelling with link-attached garage and workshop, plus associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing animal enclosures, aviaries and office/staff welfare building. Condition 2 relates to the approved plans, 5 to landscaping, 7 to drainage details and 15 to boundary treatments, and the variation is to include an array of PV panels plus amended drainage details and details of boundary treatments.	Approved 01/05/2025

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objections
 WBC Highways – No objections
 WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections subject to condition(s)
 WBC Built Heritage Officer – No comments received
 WBC CIL – General CIL commentary
 WBC Ecology Newts – No objections
 WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objections
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One resident objecting on the following grounds: - Building does not have permission - Was initially proposed to be removed to construct the house - Impact on designated heritage assets, including the Hare Hatch Area of Special Character - Potential for building to be used as a separate dwelling

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The entire Old House site measures approximately 3.52 hectares and is located between Bath Road in the north and Milley Lane in the south. On the site is a Grade II listed building known as The Old House, which is concentrated towards the southwestern corner on Milley Lane, with the grounds immediately to the east set out as historical ornamental gardens/parkland.

A C20th change involved the inclusion of The Bird Gardens (subject site) within the site, the stopping up of the access from Bath Road and the introduction of the existing access on Milley Lane. The Bird Gardens comprises 1.52 hectares to the east of The Old House. The site is wooded, with overgrown and disused bird cages (in the form of a walled garden) concentrated in the southeastern corner near the intersection with Scarlett Lane but mostly removed as part of the establishment of a new access, approved under 191566. Planning application 39152 indicates that the site has a residential use although it would appear to fall outside of the curtilage of The Old House, due both to the physical distance and separation of the site from the house.

The surrounding area is Green Belt and comprises a mix of residential, office, retail and industrial uses interspersed amongst the mostly low-density settlement of Hare Hatch, an Area of Special Character as recognised by policy TB26 of the MDDLDP.

Site History:

The site's more recent planning history starts with application 212446, which sought to erect a 4no. bedroom detached dwelling with link-attached garage and workshop, plus associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing animal enclosures, aviaries and office/staff welfare building. This application was initially refused by the Council but was eventually allowed at appeal (APP/X0360/W/21/3289621 RD) on 23rd October 2023.

In April 2024, a s.73 variation of consent 212446 (240108) was approved to allow changes to the site layout and elevational details of the dwelling. This consent also discharged several pre-commencement conditions imposed on consent 212446, namely:

- Condition 3 (Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation)
- Condition 4 (materials for the dwelling and garage only)
- Condition 5 (landscaping)
- Condition 6 (Biodiversity enhancements)

Condition 4 originally required the submission of the boundary treatment details alongside the materials for the dwelling and garage. These were not submitted at the time of approving this application and therefore a new condition (15) was imposed requiring further details of the boundary treatments.

Application 250506 was approved on 1st May 2025 which varied the approved landscaping details (condition 5 of consent 212446) and drainage details (condition 7 of consent 212446). Further to this, condition 15 was discharged in relation to the boundary treatments and vehicle gates.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed retention of existing office/staff welfare building on site for use as a residential gardener's shed/store.

The building subject of this application was previously consented for demolition as part of consent 212446.

Principle of Development:

General:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within the Green Belt and Countryside and is therefore subject to policies CP11 and CP12 of the Core Strategy.

Green Belt:

Policy CP12 of the Core Strategy refers to national policy to enforce its aims, therefore attention turns to the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. National Green Belt policy has however substantially changed since the determination of application 212446, namely with the addition of the 'Grey Belt' definition with a primary focus on previously developed land.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF 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.

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF provides a list for exceptions for development that can be considered appropriate in the Green Belt. Of relevance to this application scheme is section g, which states:

"limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt."

Consent 212446's acceptability when allowed at appeal largely pertained to the demolition of many structures/buildings associated with the historic aviary use of the site; ultimately, the new proposed dwelling was considered less harmful to the openness of the Green Belt in comparison. As outlined above, the building subject of this application was part of this consented demolition.

Consideration is necessary for how the building's retention would impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The building is not increasing in scale; it is already modest in scale and is simply proposed to be repaired and timber cladded. It would be sited forward of the dwelling's principal elevation but would still be well set back from the roadside and almost invisible from any public viewpoints.

The threshold for whether this development is considered inappropriate development is whether it would cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt as per paragraph 154 of the NPPF. Whilst the building's demolition originally was partly influential in offsetting the harm of the dwelling, its retention would not cause substantial harm to the visual or spatial openness of the Green Belt by reason of its modest scale and minimal public visibility.

Overall, the development is not considered inappropriate development and would not cause adverse harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

Character of the Area:

Policy Context:

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 130 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging

appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Paragraph 180(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by 'recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'

Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a), and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributing to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Assessment:

As outlined above, the building is not increasing in scale, is already modest in scale and is simply proposed to be repaired and timber cladded which is appropriate for the site's rural setting. It would be sited forward of the dwelling's principal elevation but would still be well set back from the roadside and almost invisible from any public viewpoints.

Overall, the building would have a negligible impact on the character of the area and the Hare Hatch Area of Special Character and is acceptable. Due to the separation distance between the building and the dwelling, plus its proposed internal facilities, a condition will be imposed to ensure it is not sold or sub-let as a separate dwellinghouse.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The building is sited a generous distance from the western site boundary adjacent to a private access road. There are therefore no anticipated neighbouring amenity impacts.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

WBC Highways raise no objections to the proposals.

Amenity Space:

The retention of the building would not harm the usability of the site's external amenity space.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1. WBC Drainage have no objections to the retention of the building.

Landscape and Trees:

The building is located in between relatively dense vegetation, but the nature of the works would not harm its health/integrity. WBC Landscape and Trees have requested a Tree Protection condition, but this is not considered necessary given the scale of the works. An informative will be placed on the decision notice recommending that any construction materials are stored away from the vegetation to ensure no adverse harm.

Ecology:**Newts:**

The site is located within a Red Risk Zone for Great Crested Newts. The nature of the works is highly unlikely to have any adverse impact on this protected species due to no increases in development footprint.

Conclusion:

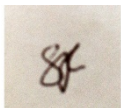
The scheme is therefore acceptable in principle and satisfies local plan policy, and the NPPF.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. 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.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	29 May 2025
Earliest date for decision:	24 May 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	3.6.25