

PLANNING REF : 251596
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Magnolia Cottage
: 4 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Berkshire
: RG4 6TA
SUBMITTED BY : Mr And Mrs Simon and Jackie Ruffle
DATE SUBMITTED : 22/07/2025

COMMENTS:

Summary

We provide comments based on Wokingham Borough Council Borough Design Guide (WBCDG) which we understand is an important document in the determining of planning applications. [CD13.03 Borough Design Guide Interactive SPD (1).pdf]

Our material considerations objections relate to daylight/sunlight impact and the overbearing nature of the much larger proposed replacement dwelling at No. 6. Parking provision is also of concern.

Our other comments focus on lack of appropriate information provision and confusion arising particularly but not exclusively, from reuse of documents from withdrawn application (ref no. 251237) and inconsistencies across application documentation.

The applicant has indicated in their Community Commitment note that 'have taken into consideration the views and concerns of the local community'. Unfortunately, we have not had any dialogue with the applicant or their agent, and our principal concerns raised within comments to the previous application have not been addressed.

The applicant is now wishing to demolish the existing property and thus we believe there is an opportunity to reposition and/or redesign the much bigger proposed dwelling within the plot with the aim of

addressing the material considerations of loss of light and overbearing nature we have identified as significant concerns. More detailed comments are set out below.

We would welcome a site visit from planning officer in consideration of our comments and potential solutions.

Material consideration 1. Daylight/Sunlight impact assessment

As with the previous application for redevelopment on this site, there is no light impact assessment provided and no adjustment of the plans to address this major concern have been made.

The WBCDG states 'Dwellings must be designed to provide appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight to new and existing properties.', such as 'to have no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.'

Our house is south facing and the applicant proposes with the east elevation a solid two-plus-storey wall of 9.3 m length and 8.3 m in height replacing the single storey garage to be positioned 1 m from our boundary line. This wall to extend a further 2 metres to the rear of the property, as a single storey portion to the dining area. The brick east elevation wall proposed would run approximately 6 metres forward of our front of property build line. Our front garden is our main leisure space and well used as such. By the nature of the trees and borders this also provides a rich habitat for birds and other wildlife. The much smaller rear garden backs onto the A4, is north facing and a wildlife garden, including wildlife pond, plus area for bins /storage and washing line.

Based on the information under section R.18 of the above adopted guidance the proposed two-plus-storey side development does not comply with the guidance in BRE 290 report. The 45 line would be well beyond the centre line of our living room and master bedroom fenestration. Indeed, it would extend beyond the whole of the

upstairs window and downstairs patio doors. As such it would have a very detrimental impact on our daylight/sunlight in key habitable rooms, as well as significantly diminishing the light in our garden.

Material consideration 2. Overbearing

The plans provided are not clear regarding the existing and proposed elevations. The existing main house is several metres away from our boundary line (approx. 6 m) with single storey only linked corridor and garage between the house and boundary line (garage wall approx. 50 cm from boundary fence).

The proposed plans do not clearly depict the extent of the increase in volume of the property. We understand this to be very significant as the current living quarters are contained within approximately two thirds of the new proposed footprint. In addition to full two storey expansion across the whole increased footprint, the additional storey/loft plan will raise the height of the roof ridge above that of the properties to either side.

In the 'Design & access statement' document the applicant notes 'the existing front building line is maintained.' The 'Location and Block Plan' submitted clearly indicates that the front door and balcony above it are forward of the existing front line. The existing front building line for the two-storey existing dwelling is well forward of the front building line of No. 4, however, as noted above it is also well away from the boundary line. As such there is a significant gap between the properties at that level, and view through as part of the street scene. This also helps to minimise overlooking by No 6 on No 4.

The significance of this current positioning is key with regard to potential loss of light and overbearing nature of the applicants' planning proposals put forward to date.

The WBCDG also note under section 4.2 that 'the arrangement and form of buildings, including the building line and gaps between buildings; 'are elements which should be considered in the design of residential development, so as to contribute positively.

Section 4.11 Alterations and extensions R.23 notes a number of key considerations, including 'where gaps between buildings allow views to a green backdrop that contributes to the established, positive, character of the area, alterations or extensions should not close off such views; 'The proposed alteration of space around No. 6, closure of gaps above single storey level between properties No. 6 and No. 4 and positioning significantly forward of No. 4 of a much bigger

property is not consistent with the local character and will also, we believe, have a negative impact on the street scene.

From the plans, which are minimally altered from those submitted under 251237, it would seem no attempt has been made to look at repositioning and/or designing the layout of the new dwelling to address the previously noted concerns on loss of light, nor the overbearing nature of such a construction right next to the boundary line. On this side of the Old Bath Road residents make considerably more use of their front gardens as outdoor living and activity space. The rear gardens back onto the A4 with significant traffic noise levels. Hence properties use their plots with the aim of maximising space in the front and blocking the A4 road noise, as far

as possible. A revision of plans, now that the existing house is to be demolished, would potentially improve the effective use of the plot, considering its location, for the new residents.

Material consideration 3: Parking

There is a loss of garage as noted on the Location and Block Plan (drawing no P1638-01 Apr 2025 New detached house) and proposed Plans and Elevations document (P1638-03 May 2025 New Detached house). Currently there is space for 2 cars in front of garage and potentially 1 in garage.

In the planning portal document PP-13979937 the section under 'Parking' indicates 'Yes' in response to the question '...will the proposed development add/remove any parking spaces? This indicates that there are currently 5 existing spaces and that these will all be lost (-5). The proposed 'Block plan' indicates 2 onsite parking spaces - so there is an inconsistency between these documents. We are very concerned that if there is no parking on-site that vehicles will have to be parked on the road. This is likely to cause considerable difficulty with access to neighbours' properties and obscure drivers views when entering and leaving their properties. The safety of pedestrians and road-users alike would be compromised - there are no footpaths on Old Bath Road.

Bat survey

We understand bat surveys are a requirement for proposals which include modification to the roof or demolition. A survey was not supplied with the previous planning application which included roof modification (251237 application registered 3.6.25). A preliminary ecological appraisal report of a daytime bat walkover (DBW) site survey conducted 20 May 2025 has been provided in 251596 application documentation.

The conclusions of the report indicate the 'property being classified as having a moderate potential to support roosting bats.' There is a recommendation in the report that two dusk emergence surveys be undertaken on the property and link building to establish the presence/absence of bats. We cannot see any further survey report in documentation submitted to date. We have seen bats recently in the immediate vicinity.

Great crested newt (GCN) statement requirement

We have a natural pond in our rear garden which provides habitat for a range of wildlife, including newts. The site is well within the specified 50 m of this pond and is within an amber risk zone area for GCN shown on the WBC planning policies and constraint map. Believe therefore risk needs to be assessed. This has not been included in the BNG report nor is it noted in the planning application form under Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. The question regarding protected and priority species has 'No' ticked, however we are of the understanding this should be ticked 'Yes, on land adjacent or near the proposed development' as above information was noted in our comments made under 251237. We would appreciate clarification in this regard. Inconsistencies in description of development, plans and application form content

Description of development is noted on the website and application form (PP-13979937) as 'Proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage.' The Arboricultural Report, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and BNG report, all refer to or have drawings related to planning

application for 2 storey extension (application 251237) and not to the demolition and replacement with new dwelling. Whilst the plans are not that different for the proposed resultant property the inconsistencies are confusing and may be misleading.

The notes on proposed elevations regarding roof lights and fenestration to match existing are irrelevant for a new build and presumably an oversight/error in not updating fully the earlier submitted plans.

Section of application form PP-13979937 on residential/Dwelling Units has 'Yes' ticked in response to 'Does your proposal include the gain, loss or change of use of residential units? The subsequent information would indicate that this should have been answered 'No'.

We are confused too by the householder/ownership situation. Our neighbours, who have been in the property for over 50 years are still in residence. On the CIL section 5 Exemption or Relief the first

question is answered 'Yes', indicating that '...the site is owned by a charity where development will be wholly or mainly for charitable purposes, and the development will be either occupied by or under the control of a charitable institution.' The applicant, Mr Kulasingam, who is unknown to us, has signed Certificate A declaration. No company (or charity) name is noted.

In the section 7b. Existing Buildings portion of CIL, the table seems to indicate that the property has not been occupied for 6 continuous months of the 36 previous months. The final column the box 'still in use' is unticked. We would have expected different boxes to be ticked given the situation described above (i.e. 'Yes' to being occupied as a residence and 'still in use' by long standing neighbours). This site backs onto Green Route Enhancement area. The Arboricultural report, BNG report and the Tree Protection Plan, included in the

submission indicates the removal of 5 trees, a section of hedging and a group of shrubs to facilitate proposals. However, this is inconsistent with the section 'Trees and Hedges' on the Householder Application form PP - 13979937 which answers 'No' with respect to the question 'Are there trees or hedges on the proposed development site?'.

Both the Arboricultural report and the BNG refer to proposed planning changes made under application number 251237 and not the current application 251596, which includes demolition of the existing

property. We find this confusing and as they do not reflect the submitted plans ask the council to consider if these may be misleading.

We would very much appreciate if these areas of confusion/inconsistency be investigated and appropriate documentation clarified/confirmed.

The apparent errors are of concern to us regarding the robustness of the planning submission documentation provided by the applicant/agent. In their 'Community Commitment' note the agent indicates 'Should any concerns arise during the planning or construction phases, the applicant remains committed to open and constructive communication with neighbours and the local planning authority. A clear point of contact will be provided to address any community-related issues promptly.' We would welcome the opportunity to have such communication.