

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250820
Site Address:	Beech Court, Wokingham Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RQ
Expiry Date:	2 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	28/04/2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of a 1.5 storey extension to the existing building to provide additional office space (Use Class E), plus changes to fenestration and landscaping.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Green Routes and Riverside Paths
- Areas of Special Character
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Householder
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Minor

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation

Plan (JMWP)	
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
061944	Proposed erection of single storey side, front and rear extension to dwelling.	Approved, 06/08/2006
062110	Proposed erection of security gates.	Refused, 10/08/2006
071216	Proposed erection of two advertisement boards - letting/sale boards.	Refused, 09/07/2007
242200	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. single storey storage building in association with the existing use of Beech Court, plus changes to parking layout and landscaping.	Approved, 31/10/2024

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received.
WBC Drainage – No comments received.
WBC Highways – No objections.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Hurst Parish Council – No adverse comments.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Beech Lodge, Beech Court, Wokingham Road, Hurst RG10 0RU – Concerns that the proposed development would result in increased traffic movements. <i><u>Officer comment:</u> Concerns regarding increased traffic movements as a result of the proposed development have been noted. However, given the limited scale and nature of the proposal, it is not considered that the development would generate a level of traffic that would have a significant impact on the local highway network. The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the application and raised no objections. As such, no concerns are considered to arise in this regard.</i>

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Beech Court is a well-contained and gated office complex located to the east of Wokingham Road in Hurst. It comprises a large, staggered square-shaped building arranged around a central open courtyard. The surrounding area is semi-rural in character, featuring a mixture of residential properties and open fields.

Principle of Development:

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 settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

The application site is located outside the defined development limits. Policy CP11 of the Borough Core Strategy states that, in order to protect the distinct identity of settlements and maintain environmental quality, proposals outside development limits will not normally be permitted, except where, inter alia:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.

The existing building at Beech Court comprises 12 individual office units. According to the submitted planning statement, the intended purpose of the proposed extension is to serve Units 1, 2, and 3 within the main building, currently occupied by Pinnacle Property Management, a property management firm operating throughout the Reading area.

In relation to criterion 1 of Policy CP11, it is acknowledged that the proposed extension to provide additional office space does not fall within the traditional definition of a diverse or sustainable rural enterprise, nor is it directly linked to countryside-based. However, the site has operated as office accommodation for approximately 20 years, as confirmed by planning history records, and forms part of an established employment use in this location.

While not a rural enterprise in the narrow sense, the continued use and modest expansion of the existing office accommodation contributes to the economic activity and local employment opportunities within this part of the borough. In this context, the scheme can be seen to support the social and economic vitality of the rural area, aligning with the broader sustainability objectives of the development plan. As such, it is considered that the proposal can reasonably be seen to accord with the spirit and intent of criterion 1 of Policy CP11.

In relation to criterion 2 of Policy CP11, while the proposed extension would occupy part of an open grassed area to the east of the main building, it remains physically and visually well-related to the existing structure. The extension is modest in scale and form, appearing as a subordinate addition rather than a detached or sprawling expansion.

Importantly, the proposed development would be fully contained within the established site boundaries and would not extend beyond the current curtilage, which comprises the main building, car park, and associated landscaped areas. Given its close relationship to the existing structure and its modest scale, the extension would not result in excessive encroachment or an uncharacteristic spread of built form into the surrounding rural area. It is therefore considered to accord with the aims of criterion 2 of Policy CP11.

Character of the Area:

Beech Court is a well-contained and gated office complex located to the east of Wokingham Road in Hurst. It comprises a large, staggered square-shaped building arranged around a central open courtyard. The surrounding area is semi-rural in character, featuring a mixture of residential properties and open fields.

The proposal involves the erection of a one-and-a-half-storey extension projecting approximately 8.5 metres from the eastern side elevation of the main building. Section 8 of the Borough Design Guide, particularly Figure 8.20, advises that extensions should be contained within the existing development zone and discourages additions that result in significant elongation of built form, which may compromise the sense of openness.

While the proposed extension would modestly elongate the building's eastern elevation, it would not do so to an extent that materially undermines the site's openness or setting. The existing building does not follow a uniform layout but instead has an irregular quadrangular form with recessed sections. In this context, the extension would adhere to the existing built pattern. It would appear as a subservient and sympathetic addition, utilising matching materials, a consistent hipped roof design, and architectural detailing—such as gable features—that reflect those found on the main office building. As such, the proposed extension would not adversely impact the character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed extension would be suitably located any from any residential properties and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns of overbearing or

loss of light.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and offers the following comments:

Parking:

The proposal seeks to increase the office floor area from 2,181m² to 2,307m² (Use Class E(g)), resulting in a net loss of four parking spaces and a total provision of 97. The additional floor space is not expected to generate significant traffic impacts on the wider highway network.

It is noted that a recent approval (Ref. 242200) for a 120m² ancillary storage building affects two existing parking spaces but also introduces seven new driveway spaces. These changes have not been reflected in the current submission.

Under WBC's Parking Standards, the proposed floor area requires 93 car parking spaces. With 97 spaces proposed, the provision is acceptable. The Council's Highways Officer raised a concern that the end space adjacent to the extension may be difficult to access due to limited manoeuvrability, suggesting it be excluded unless supported by swept path analysis. However, given that the proposal exceeds the minimum parking requirement even without this space, the case officer considers a swept path analysis unnecessary in this instance.

Cycle Parking:

The provision of two additional cycle spaces is welcomed.

Landscape and Trees:

The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed the application and agrees with the conclusions of the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment (By GHA trees arboricultural consultancy ref: GHA/DS/163330:25) which confirms that no trees would be lost or pruned as a result of the proposals. Accordingly, the landscape character of the site would remain unaffected.

No objections are therefore raised, subject to the inclusion of a condition requiring the submission of a detailed landscaping scheme, in the interest of visual amenity. A suitable condition will be attached to any approval.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of surface water flooding. The proposed addition of 73 square metres of new built footprint is not considered to significantly increase the risk of flooding or surface water run-off. Sufficient permeable land would remain around the site to adequately manage surface water and ensure that the development does not adversely affect the site's overall flood risk.

Ecology:

The site also lies within a red zone which contain suitable habitat and GCN are highly likely to be present.

A District Licensing Officer on behalf of NatureSpace has reviewed the application and considers that the proposed works are of limited potential to impact great crested newts, given their small scale and location on existing hardstanding. However, a pond is located within 10 metres of the proposed works, no great crested newt surveys have been undertaken, and the site lies within a red impact risk zone, with historic records of the species within 100 metres.

Given the proximity of suitable habitat and the known presence of great crested newts in the area, the applicant should be aware of the potential for this protected species to be present, the legal protections afforded to them, and the appropriate course of action should they be encountered. Accordingly, a suitable informative will be attached to any approval, advising the applicant to stop works immediately and consult a qualified ecologist if great crested newts are found on site.

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:	27 May 2025
Earliest date for decision:	30 April 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	02.06.2025