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Planning Statement

**Dairy Cottage,
Heathlands Road,
Wokingham RG40 3AN**

Prepared For
Hall Hunter Partnership

1272
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CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTON	1
2	THE SITE AND PROPOSAL	2
3	RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY	3
4	PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT	5
5	RESPONSE TO PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK	8
6	CONCLUSIONS	12

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement relates to the accompanying planning application for the erection of five dwellings following demolition of the existing five dwellings on the site with associated landscaping and open space.
- 1.2 This application is submitted following the refusal of application 241881 on 8th October 2024 and the subsequent pre-application advice reference 250043 received on 4th March 2025 which followed a pre-application meeting.
- 1.3 In addition to this statement and the accompanying plans this application is supported by the following documents:
- Design and Access Statement prepared by OSP Architects
 - Arboricultural Development Report prepared by Woods Tree Consultancy
 - Tree Protection Plan prepared by Woods Tree Consultancy
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment prepared by Arbtech
 - Transport Assessment prepared by Motion

2 THE SITE AND PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The application site lies to the west side of Heathlands Road and comprises a detached two storey dwelling known as Dairy Cottage and four further single storey dwellings.
- 2.2 The application proposes the demolition of the existing dwellings on the site, including the extended mobile home, with the replacement dwellings being sited on the approximate footprint of the existing dwellings and extended mobile home.
- 2.3 The site is visually enclosed by hedging and fencing along the road and along the other boundaries of the site. The site has an area of about 0.65 hectares.
- 2.4 The proposals would provide two 2 bedroom dwellings, two 3 bedroom dwellings and one 4 bedroom house replacing Dairy Cottage.
- 2.5 The proposed dwellings would be arranged in a traditional farmstead grouping and constructed using traditional materials. Further details relating to the layout and appearance of the proposed dwellings is set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.
- 2.6 The application site has two existing access points. To the south of Dairy Cottage is an existing access onto Heathlands Road which serves Dairy Cottage and two further dwellings. The northernmost dwelling would be accessed separately from Heathlands Road to the north. This access is shared with Heathlands Farm.
- 2.7 It is proposed that both accesses are retained to serve the proposed development. Plots 1-4 would be accessed via the southern access with Plot 5 accessed from the northern access.
- 2.8 Plots 1-4 would be accessed via the southern access with Plot 5 accessed from the northern access.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 Four of the dwellings on the site excluding Dairy Cottage have been the subject of lawful development certificate applications which are set out in Table.1 below.

Reference	Description	Decision
230578	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the stationing of a static caravan for residential use.	Approved 02/06/2023
230642	Certificate of existing lawful development for use of a building as a residential dwelling (Flat 1)	Approved 25/05/2023
230643	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the siting of a static caravan for use as a residential dwelling (Flat 3)	Approved 25/05/2023
230649	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for the use of a building as a residential dwelling (Flat 2).	Approved 25/05/2023

Table.1 – Lawful Development Certificate applications

- 3.2 Subsequent to the approvals of the above lawful development certificates, application reference 241881 was submitted for the erection of 3no. detached dwellings with associated access, car ports and landscaping, following demolition of the existing 4no. dwellinghouses and associated buildings, plus the removal of 1no. static caravan pitch. This application was refused on 8th October 2024. The refused layout is shown in Figure.1 below.

- 3.3 This application was refused on three grounds which are summarised below:

- The proposed development will have a negative and detrimental impact on the landscape character & rural appearance of the area by reason of the excessive encroachment and expansion of development away from the original buildings on site, resulting in a locally incompatible, urban style cul-de-sac residential layout

- The proposed development results in a net loss of 2no. dwellings at a time when the Council are currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply as required by the National Planning Policy Framework
- The siting of the proposals would conflict with several visually valuable and prominent trees on or adjacent to the site, including Veteran trees, to the detriment of their health and subsequently to the detriment of the rural character of the area.



Figure.1 – Refused application 241881 site layout

4 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 Pre-application advice (reference 250043) received on 4th March 2025 following a pre-application meeting.
- 4.2 The scheme submitted for pre-application discussion was developed having regard to the issues set out in the officer delegated report relating to application 24188. The submitted layout is shown in Figure.2 below.

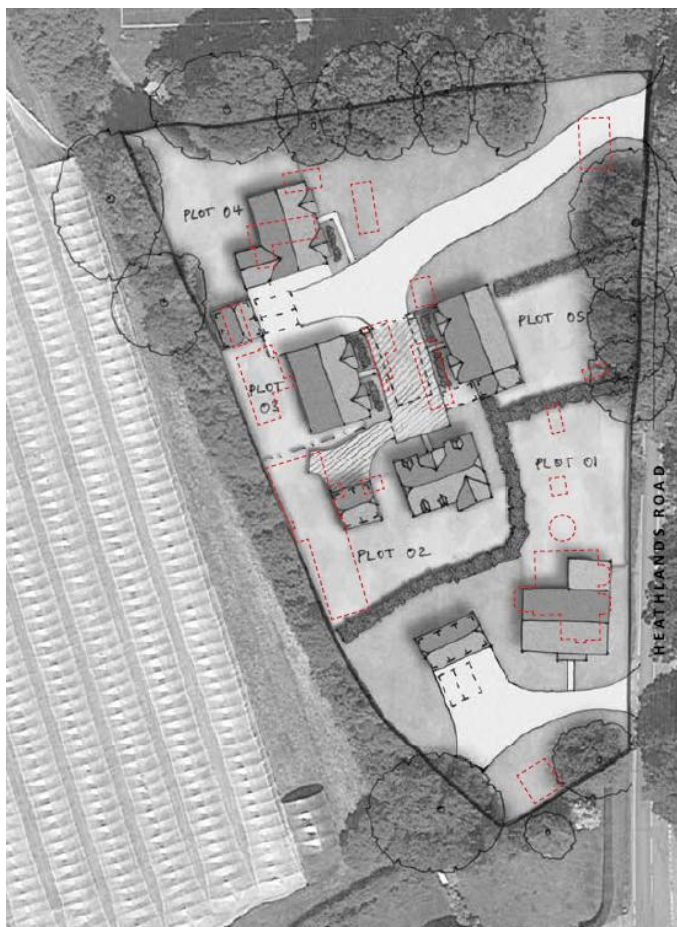


Figure.2 – Layout submitted for pre-application feedback

- 4.3 The pre-application feedback noted that the site is located outside of development limits and therefore subject to assessment under Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. Policy CP11 does not usually permit development outside of development limits unless it falls within the criteria within this policy. Criterion 5 states:

In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must

- *Bring about environmental improvements; or*
- *Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building*

- 4.4 The feedback advised that the proposed development would result in a significant and inappropriate increase in both the scale and footprint of the original contrary to criterion 5. Furthermore, the feedback advised that the scheme would replacement very small dwellings with significantly larger properties spread across the entire site away from their established lawful curtilage.
- 4.5 The feedback acknowledged that the Council could not demonstrate a 5 year housing land-supply which at the time was only 1.7 years and agreed that the tilted balance in accordance with paragraph 11(d)ii of the NPPF would be engaged. The Council however argued that the under supply should be tempered in light of a historic oversupply which would impact on the overall balancing exercise in the decision making process.
- 4.6 With regard to the impact of the proposed replacement dwellings on the character of the area, the pre-application advice noted that the majority of the dwellings on the site are small in scale with limited curtilages. The layout of the application is very much reflective of the site's rural/agricultural surroundings and that the site retains the visual appearance of a single dwelling sited in generous grounds when viewed from the road. The feedback advised that the scheme would significantly alter the site's rural character through the introduction of four market-sized dwellings, associated carports and formal cul-de-sac layout. The advice concluded that the proposed layout would erode the sense of openness and rural character that defines the area, introducing an inappropriate suburban-style form of development.
- 4.7 Particular concern was raised over the introduction of the second access coupled with large expanses of hardstanding for driveways and turning areas, which was considered to further exacerbate the urbanising effect of the proposal.
- 4.8 The advice noted that the lawful development certificates do not confirm the lawfulness of the curtilages of each of the dwellings and therefore proposed expansion of the curtilages across the site, combined with the associated paraphernalia, would have a greater impact on the character of the area compared to the current situation.

- 4.9 The pre-application response set out the comments of the Trees and Landscape Officer regarding the need for a buffer to the veteran trees which adjoin the site and the importance of the hedging within the site.

5 RESPONSE TO PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The proposals for the site have been significantly amended to take account of the pre-application feedback received. The revised layout is shown in Figure.3 below.



Figure.3 – Proposed site layout

- 5.2 The layout has removed the new access onto Heathlands Road and now proposes to utilise the existing exiting access serving Dairy Cottage and the three further existing dwellings. It is also proposed to access the northern dwelling (Plot 5) from the existing access serving the extended mobile home. This addresses the concerns expressed in relation to the suburban appearance of a new access opening up views into the site to the dwellings and associated hardstanding and parking areas from the road.
- 5.3 The suburban layout of the earlier schemes has been replaced with a 'farmstead' arrangement of buildings more suited to the rural character of the site and surrounding area. The proposals have retained Dairy Cottage as the principal 'farmhouse' with the other dwellings being subordinate in scale. Plots 2 and 3 would resemble converted stables and

Plot 4 a farm cottage. Plot 5 would appear as a converted field barn and accessed separately. Further details of this design approach are set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

- 5.4 In terms of layout, the revised scheme sites the replacement dwellings on the approximate position of the existing dwellings and within the curtilages of the dwellings. Whilst the lawful development certificates do not define the extent of the residential curtilage with each dwelling it is clear from inspection of the ground that each unit has a curtilage. The proposed dwellings are sited within the overall curtilage of the dwellings within the previously developed (PDL) area of the site. The undeveloped northeastern part of the site is outside the curtilage/PDL area, and this area is now proposed to remain undeveloped and retained open as open space which would be managed to enhance its biodiversity value.
- 5.5 With regard to the requirements of policy CP11, it is considered that the scheme will bring about significant environmental improvements. The environmental improvements are described below.
- 5.6 The existing dwellings on the site are substandard in terms of their quality, size and energy efficiency. Flat 1 (one bedroom) has a floor area of 43 sq.m and, Flat 2 (3 bedroom) a floor area of 95 sq.m and Flat 3 (3 bed) 57.5 sq.m. Flats 1 and 3 fall below minimum floor area of the Nationally Described Space Standard.
- 5.7 The existing dwellings are poorly constructed and insulated with low energy efficiency. In contrast the replacement dwellings would be highly energy efficient, with high levels of air tightness and insulation above Building Regulations requirements (see section 4.11 of the Design and Access Statement).
- 5.8 The development would also dispose of water through the implementation of a SuDS strategy across the site. The replacement dwellings would also necessarily be water efficient to meet Building Regulation requirements.
- 5.9 The retention of the hedge, trees and fence along the western boundary of the site would continue to screen the site from the road. In view of the height and positioning of the proposed dwellings the dwellings on Plots 2 to 5 would not be seen from the road. The single storey dwellings would not be seen from the road. Only Plot 1, the replacement for Dairy

Cottage, would be seen from the road. The current Dairy Cottage is of little merit architectural. In contrast the design of the proposed property would be of a high quality and would enhance the appearance of the site and the street scene.

- 5.10 The amenity spaces for flats 1 to 3 are poor quality with areas of in terms of their size and overshadowing of the tall coniferous trees which are up to 16 metres in height and dominate the interior of the site.
- 5.11 The removal of the non-indigenous trees and the formation of indigenous hedges and planting of additional trees would be beneficial to the biodiversity of the site and appearance of the site. Of course, the development would also deliver a 10% uplift in the biodiversity value of the site.
- 5.12 For the above reasons it is considered that the development would deliver environmental improvements and would therefore satisfy the first test of policy CP11.
- 5.13 Policy CP11 only requires on of the two tests for replacement dwellings is satisfied. In this case, it is considered that the proposals would also not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original buildings. Neither the policy or its supporting text provides any guidance as to the increase in scale which would be acceptable and what would be deemed inappropriate. Therefore the judgement must be made having regard to the characteristics of the site and the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area.
- 5.14 The size and scale of the proposed dwellings on Plots 2 to 5 have been reduced significantly from the size and scale of the dwellings considered at the pre-application stage. The replacement for Dairy Cottage (Plot 1) has remained as per that considered at the pre-application stage so that this remains the principal dwelling in the site with remainder reduced from two storey to single storey (Plots 2,3 and 5) with Plot 4 a chalet bungalow. These reductions in size and scale mean that these dwellings would not be seen from the road and would not impact on the rural character of the area. The scale, form and footprint are therefore not considered inappropriate.
- 5.15 In response to the tree officer concerns relating to the veteran trees, the tree survey identifies the location of these trees and applies an RPA appropriate to the status of these

trees. The only development in the RPAs of these trees is in the southwestern corner of the site. Here, the existing garage would be removed and the access road realigned away from the veteran tree and its RPA.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The scheme has taken into consideration the pre-application feedback received which has resulted in a number of significant changes to the scheme including revisions to the site access and the size and scale of the proposed dwellings.
- 6.2 It is considered that the proposals would deliver significant environmental improvements, including enhanced energy efficiency, improved living conditions, biodiversity enhancements and improvements to the appearance of the site and its contribution to the rural character of the area.
- 6.3 In view of the above it is considered that the development satisfies the policy requirements of the development plan.