



40 Culver Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 1DY

Proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling.

Planning Statement

Author:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preface

- 1.1.1 This planning statement has been prepared in support of a full application for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a replacement detached dwelling at 40 Culver Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 1DY.
- 1.1.2 The statement covers the subject matter and information required for submission as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD Local Plan) and the Borough Design Guide SPD. It outlines the application site and its context, the design strategy for the proposed development and the technical evidence submitted in support of the scheme, and it should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings.
- 1.1.3 The application is accompanied by the following technical reports, the findings and conclusions of which are addressed in Section 3 of this statement:
- BS 5837:2012 Tree Survey, prepared by Urban Tree Experts, ref. SPH/5837-26/04.08, survey undertaken on 4 August 2026 and reported on 7 August 2026;
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (daytime bat walkover and Preliminary Roost Assessment), prepared by Urban Tree Experts, survey undertaken on 4 August 2026;
 - Bat Emergence Survey, prepared by EchoWood Ecology, survey undertaken on 9 August 2026.

1.2 Site Location

- 1.2.1 The application site is located on the southern side of Culver Lane in Earley, within an established residential area to the east of Reading town centre. The site comprises a long plot which fronts Culver Lane at its northern end and extends southwards, with No. 42 Culver Lane adjoining to the east and the Palmerstone Place development (Nos. 1-9) adjoining to the west. The site is served by an existing vehicular access and hardstanding to the Culver Lane frontage.



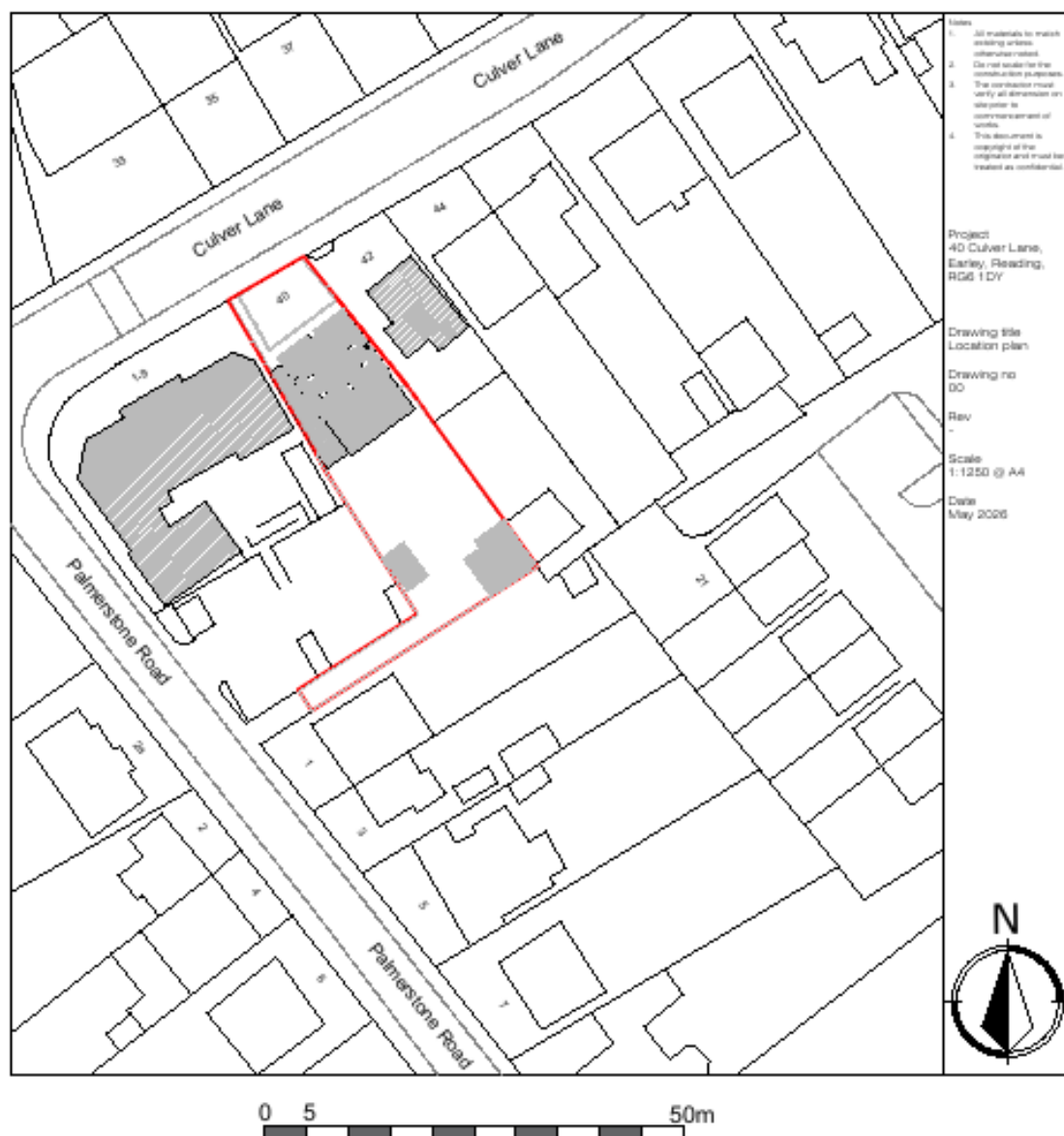


Figure 1: Location plan (drawing no. 00), application site outlined in red.

1.2.2 The application site lies within the development limits of Earley as defined on the Wokingham Borough Policies Map and is not:

- within a Conservation Area or the curtilage of a listed building;
- within the Green Belt;
- within Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3;
- the subject of any Tree Preservation Order, although one protected tree (a copper beech within the garden of No. 42 Culver Lane, covered by TPO 1850-2022) stands close to the eastern boundary of the site and is addressed at Section 3.6 below.



1.3 Site Description

- 1.3.1 The application property is a detached, chalet-style dwelling of one and a half storeys, set back behind a hardstanding and driveway to the Culver Lane frontage. The existing dwelling provides living accommodation, a kitchen, a bathroom and 2no. bedrooms at ground floor level, together with 2no. further bedrooms, a WC and a landing accommodated within the roof space at first floor level, as shown on drawing no. 01.

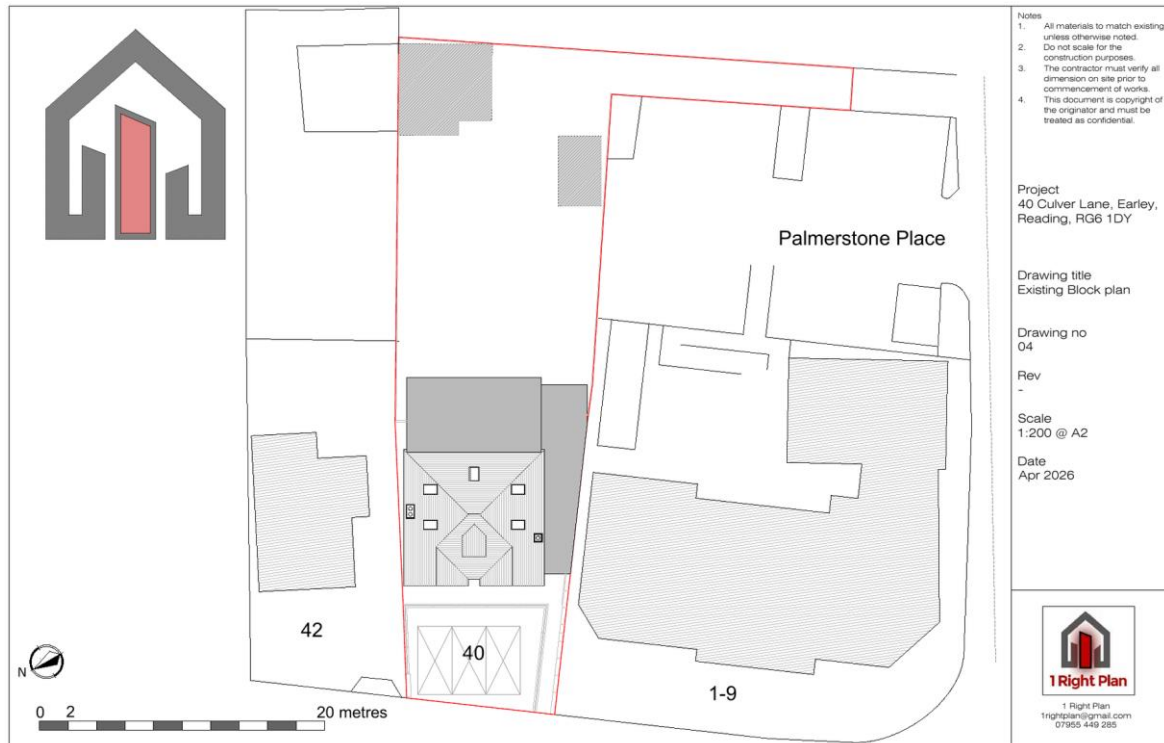


Figure 2: Existing block plan (drawing no. 04).





Figure 3: Existing ground and first floor plans (drawing no. 01).

1.3.2 The existing building has a hipped and gabled tiled roof with 2no. prominent chimney stacks. The main ridge sits at circa 7.0m above ground level, with the chimney stacks rising to circa 7.6m. A substantial single storey flat-roofed addition extends along the eastern side of the property and there are further ancillary structures within the plot, as shown on the existing block plan.



Figure 4: Existing elevations (drawing no. 03).

- 1.3.3 The existing dwelling is of no particular architectural or historic interest and is in a relatively poor state of repair. The Preliminary Roost Assessment records moved, raised, missing and broken roof tiles, together with missing mortar from the ridge and hip tiles. The property makes inefficient use of a generously sized plot, both in terms of the accommodation it provides and the quality of that accommodation, and its replacement would allow the site to be used more effectively.

1.4 Surrounding Area Description

- 1.4.1 The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character. The immediate context of the application site is notably mixed, comprising detached and semi-detached houses of varying age, scale and appearance together with more recent flatted development, including the Palmerstone Place scheme which adjoins the site to the west and which is of a materially larger scale and footprint than the surrounding houses.

- 1.4.2 Whilst the streetscene is characterised by a dominant presence of residential development, there is a significant level of diversity along this part of Culver Lane in terms of the following aspects:

- various sizes and depths of plots;
- an irregular building line;
- boundary treatments and the layout of front gardens;
- roof forms of the main buildings, including their pitch, design and ridge and eaves heights;
- fenestration and architectural detailing;
- scale, footprint and volume of the buildings;
- distance of the buildings from the highway.

- 1.4.3 It is relevant to note that, notwithstanding the one and a half storey form of the application property, the prevailing scale of development along this part of Culver Lane and in the wider surrounding area is two storey, with two storey ridge heights typical of suburban development of this age and type. The proposed replacement dwelling has been designed with that established pattern of development firmly in mind.

1.5 Planning History

- 1.5.1 There is no recent planning history on the application site which is material to the determination of this application.



2. Planning Policy

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)

2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was substantially revised and republished in August 2026, replacing the December 2024 version. The revised Framework separates plan-making policies from national decision-making policies and adopts a coded policy structure; it is this August 2026 version against which this application falls to be assessed as a material consideration.

2.1.2 The purpose of the planning system remains to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, by managing the use and development of land in the long-term public interest, pursued through economic, social and environmental objectives which are interdependent and which need to be delivered in mutually supportive ways (NPPF, paragraphs 15 to 17).

2.1.3 Policy S3 confirms that decisions on development proposals should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and that Policy S4 should be applied when considering development proposals within settlements. Policy S4(1) provides that:

"Development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework."

2.1.4 The application site lies within the settlement of Earley and Policy S4 is therefore directly engaged. Policy L2(1)(d) is relevant in so far as the proposal would create additional floorspace within an existing plot through redevelopment; the proposal would be consistent with the overall street scene and would maintain safe access and egress and acceptable living standards for residents and neighbours, in accordance with Policy L2(1)(d)(i) and (ii). As the proposal would not introduce additional units within a residential curtilage, the footprint and non-developed area tests at Policy L2(1)(d)(iii) are not engaged. Policy L3 requires development proposals to make efficient use of land, having regard to the identified need for different types of housing, local market conditions, a site's connectivity and the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places. Policy L3(2)(a) seeks an increase in density within settlements, save where there is clear justification that this is inappropriate or not possible, and confirms that the existing character of an area is to be taken into account in accordance with Policy DP3.



- 2.1.5 Chapter 14 (Achieving well-designed places) sets out the key principles for well-designed places at Policy DP3. Policy DP3(1) requires development proposals to respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings, such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features. Policy DP3(2) requires proposals to reflect relevant aspects of the seven principles of well-designed places, including Climate (DP3(2)(b)), Nature (DP3(2)(c)), Built Form (DP3(2)(e)) and Identity (DP3(2)(g)). Policy DP3(3) confirms that proposals should be refused if, without clear justification, they conflict with those principles, and that substantial weight should be given to compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing the design quality of proposals.
- 2.1.6 Policy CC2 (Mitigation of climate change) requires proposals, where relevant, to use design approaches which conserve energy and other resources in accordance with Policy DP3(2)(b), and to take advantage of opportunities to reuse existing structures and materials, including by reusing non-contaminated excavated soil and hardcore within the site. Policy CC3 requires proposals to be located and designed so that risks from climate change, including flood risk, are minimised or safely managed.
- 2.1.7 Policy N2 (Improving the natural environment) requires development proposals to conserve and enhance existing natural features of visual, historic or nature conservation value, such as established trees and hedgerows, to use appropriate landscaping to integrate the development into its surroundings, and to minimise any adverse impacts on biodiversity and include features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Policy N2(1)(f) confirms that development proposals should incorporate integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks) into their construction unless there are compelling technical reasons which prevent their use or would make them ineffective. Policy N3 (Trees in new development) recognises the benefits which trees provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and for the character and quality of the built environment, and requires suitable arboricultural advice to be sought and provision to be made for the long-term maintenance of existing and newly planted trees.
- 2.1.8 Policy P3 (Living conditions and pollution) requires development proposals to provide healthy living conditions for occupiers and users in terms of adequate access to light, not to give rise to unacceptable levels of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring



residents and occupiers, and to limit any adverse impact from artificial light on local amenity and nature.

- 2.1.9 Policies TR3 and TR4 require development to be located where it can support sustainable patterns of movement and offer a genuine choice of transport modes, and require transport considerations, including safe access and appropriate cycle and vehicle parking, to be integral to the design of development. Policy F8 requires proposals which could affect drainage on or around the site to incorporate sustainable drainage systems in a manner proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal.

2.2 Wokingham Borough Core Strategy

- 2.2.1 The development plan for the site comprises the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted 29 January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (adopted 21 February 2014). The Borough Design Guide SPD is not part of the development plan but is a material consideration.
- 2.2.2 Core Strategy Policy CP9 'Scale and location of development proposals' provides that "The scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility", and that "Development proposals (in addition to the Strategic Development Locations in policies CP18-21) within development limits will be acceptable in: 1) The major development locations of Earley, Green Park, Shinfield (North of M4), Twyford, Winnersh, Wokingham and Woodley". The application property is located within the development limits of Earley, which is expressly identified as a major development location, and the scale of the proposed development – a single replacement dwelling within an established residential area well served by local facilities – reflects the levels of facilities, services and accessibility at this location.
- 2.2.3 Core Strategy Policy CP1 'Sustainable development' requires proposals to "Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes" and to "Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car".
- 2.2.4 Core Strategy Policy CP3 'General Principles for development' confirms that planning permission will be granted for proposals that, inter alia:



- a) Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses;*
- d) Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*
- e) Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
- f) Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- i) Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land.*

2.2.5 Core Strategy Policy CP5 'Housing mix, density and affordability' confirms that "Planning permission will be granted for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes". The supporting text to the policy adds that, depending upon the character and needs of the area, it may not be necessary to include a mix of dwellings in every residential scheme, especially smaller ones. Policy CP6 'Managing Travel Demand' requires development to "Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice" and to be located where there are choices in the mode of transport available.

2.2.6 Core Strategy Policy CP7 'Biodiversity' resists development which would harm habitats or species of principal importance in England for nature conservation, unless it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site which would result in less or no harm is available to meet the need, and that mitigation or compensation measures can be secured. Policy CP8 relates to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area; as the proposal is for a replacement dwelling and would result in no net increase in residential units, no additional recreational pressure would arise upon the SPA and no mitigation is required in this instance.



2.3 Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD Local Plan)

- 2.3.1 Policy CC01 applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy CC02 'Development Limits' defines the development limits shown on the Policies Map and sets out the approach to proposals at the edge of settlements and within Strategic Development Locations; the application site lies well within the development limits of Earley and is not affected by either of those provisions.
- 2.3.2 Policy CC03 'Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping' requires development proposals to demonstrate how they have considered and achieved a series of criteria within scheme proposals, including to "Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features" and to "Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme".
- 2.3.3 Policy CC04 'Sustainable Design and Construction' requires new homes to be delivered to a high standard of sustainable design and construction, including meeting internal potable water consumption targets, and requires all development, including conversions, alterations and extensions, to incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.
- 2.3.4 Policy CC07 'Parking' requires proposals to demonstrate how the proposed parking provision meets the standards set out in Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan and that the scheme retains an appropriate overall level of off-street parking. Policies CC09 and CC10 address flood risk from all sources and sustainable drainage respectively.
- 2.3.5 Policy TB05 addresses housing mix and Policy TB07 'Internal Space Standards' sets out the minimum gross internal areas which the Council will apply to new residential units, requiring a minimum of 100 sq m for a 4 bedroom house with a designed occupancy of 6 bed spaces, together with a minimum combined floor area of living, dining and kitchen space of 31 sq m for a 6 person occupancy.
- 2.3.6 Policy TB21 'Landscape Character' requires proposals to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. Policy TB23 'Biodiversity and Development' requires proposals to demonstrate how they "Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing" and how they ensure that developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors.



2.4 Borough Design Guide SPD

- 2.4.1 The Borough Design Guide SPD of Wokingham Borough Council includes numerous references to design principles in chapter 4 – ‘Residential’, which provides more detailed guidance in terms of the desirable quality of submitted schemes. Paragraph 4.2 of the SPD states that "Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area", and contains a list of the different elements, and the degree of consistency or variety, which create the character of a place, inter alia:

"the network and hierarchy of movement, creating streets; the layout of development blocks and plots; the arrangement and form of buildings, including the building line and gaps between buildings; open spaces; the architectural design of buildings; the hard and soft landscape design of plots, boundaries, streets and spaces, parking areas; the details, decorative elements, materials and planting".

3. Appraisal

3.1 General Concept

- 3.1.1 The overall aim of the proposal is to make efficient and appropriate use of a generously sized and currently underused plot within the development limits of Earley, by replacing a poorly performing and deteriorating chalet-style dwelling with a well-designed, energy efficient, 4-bedroom family home of a scale and form which reflects the prevailing two storey character of the surrounding area. The proposal would deliver a substantially improved standard of accommodation, both internally and externally, without any net loss of residential units and without any material change to the established pattern of development along Culver Lane.

3.2 Principle of Development

- 3.2.1 The application site lies within the development limits of Earley, as defined on the Policies Map in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC02, and Earley is identified by Core Strategy Policy CP9 as a major development location in which development proposals within development limits will be acceptable. The principle of the residential redevelopment of the site is therefore established, and the scale of the proposal reflects the levels of facilities, services and accessibility at this location as CP9 requires.



- 3.2.2 The proposal relates to the replacement of an existing dwelling on a one-for-one basis and would not result in any net loss of dwellings or residential accommodation, in accordance with criterion i) of Core Strategy Policy CP3. As set out at Section 2.1 above, the site lies within a settlement and Policy S4 of the NPPF is engaged, such that the proposal should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework. The assessment which follows demonstrates that no such adverse effects would arise.
- 3.2.3 Core Strategy Policy CP5 and MDD Local Plan Policy TB05 seek a mix and balance of dwelling types and sizes across the borough. The proposal comprises a single dwelling and, as the supporting text to Policy CP5 acknowledges, it will not always be necessary to include a mix of dwellings within smaller schemes. The proposed 4-bedroom family dwelling is of a type and size which is well represented in, and entirely characteristic of, this part of Earley, and it would replace accommodation of a comparable size which no longer meets modern standards. The affordable housing thresholds within Policy CP5 are not engaged by a single dwelling.
- 3.2.4 In terms of Policy L3 of the NPPF, the proposal would make more efficient use of the plot by providing a substantially increased and better arranged floorspace within a building form which responds to the character of the area. The proposal would not increase the density of the area, in that a single dwelling would be replaced by a single dwelling. There is clear justification for that approach for the purposes of Policy L3(2)(a): the site sits within an established, low density suburban street of individual detached and semi-detached houses in generous plots, and a higher density form of development on this plot would conflict with the character of the area and with Policy DP3, to which Policy L3(2)(a) expressly requires regard to be had.

3.3 The Proposed Development

- 3.3.1 The proposal comprises the demolition of the existing dwelling and its ancillary structures and the erection of a replacement two storey detached dwelling providing 4no. bedrooms, each served by an en-suite. The existing vehicular access and frontage hardstanding would be retained.



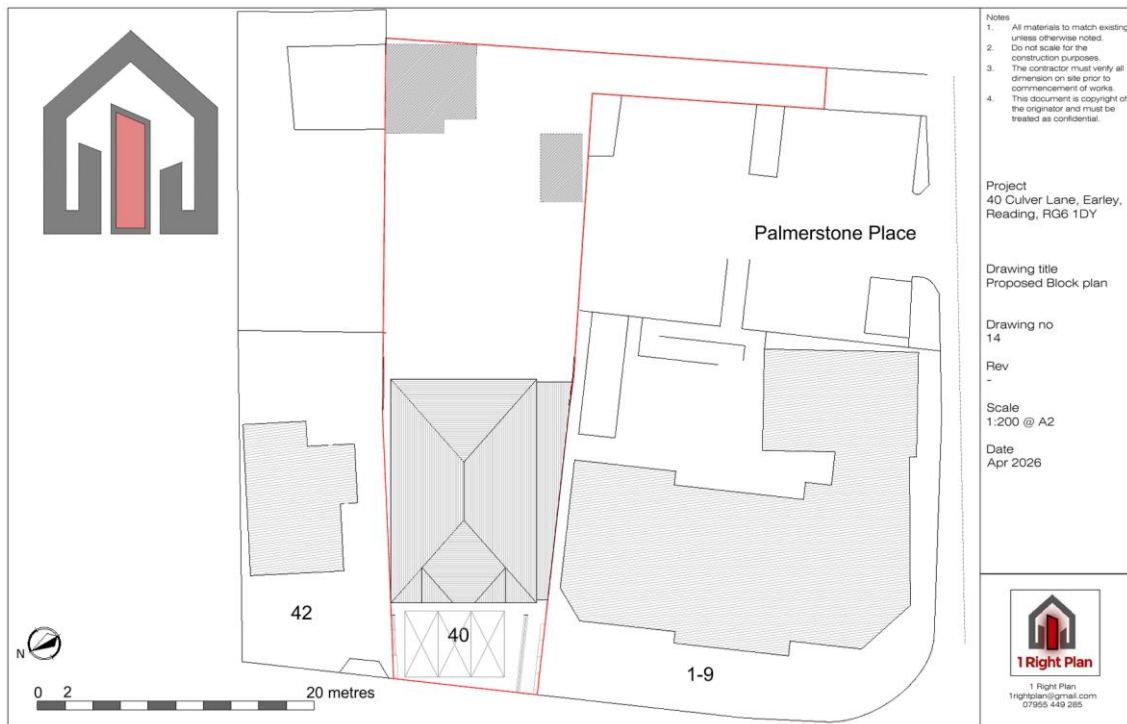


Figure 5: Proposed block plan (drawing no. 14).

- 3.3.2 The proposed dwelling would have a broadly rectangular footprint measuring circa 10.1m in width by circa 15.7m in depth, giving a footprint of circa 158.6m² and a gross internal floor area of circa 285.0m² across the two floors. At ground floor level the dwelling would provide a hall, reception room, lounge, study, a kitchen/dining room, a separate dining room and a bathroom. At first floor level it would provide 4no. double bedrooms, each with its own en-suite, arranged around a central landing.





Figure 6: Proposed ground and first floor plans (drawing no. 11).

3.3.3 The building would be covered by a hipped roof with a central ridge and subordinate hips to the front and rear, articulated on the front elevation by 2no. gables which break up the width of the frontage and give the elevation a domestic, well-proportioned appearance. The eaves would sit at circa 5.4m above ground level and the main ridge at circa 8.6m, which is commensurate with the two storey ridge heights found along this part of Culver Lane and in the immediately surrounding area.

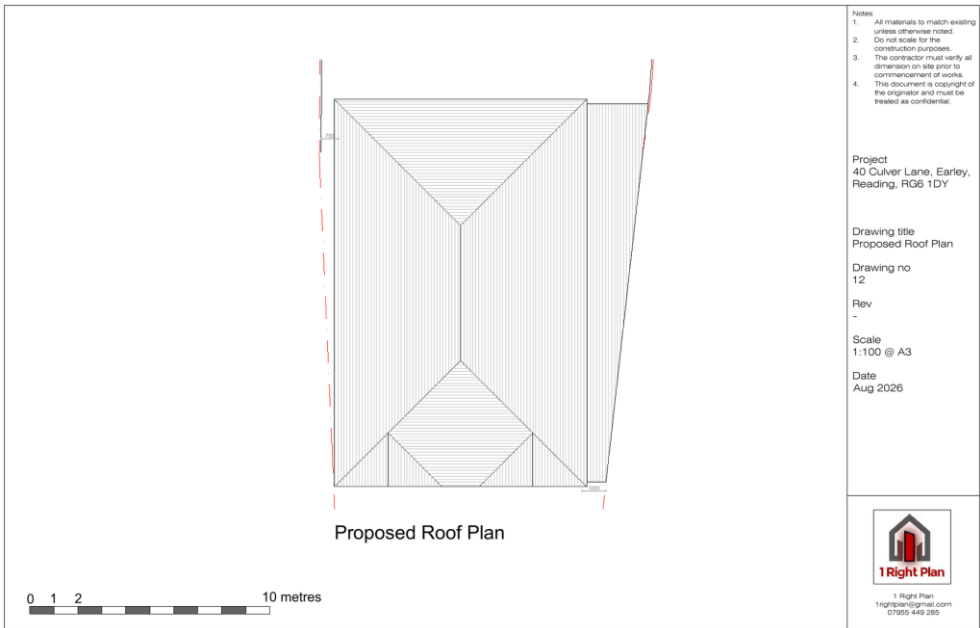


Figure 7: Proposed roof plan (drawing no. 12).



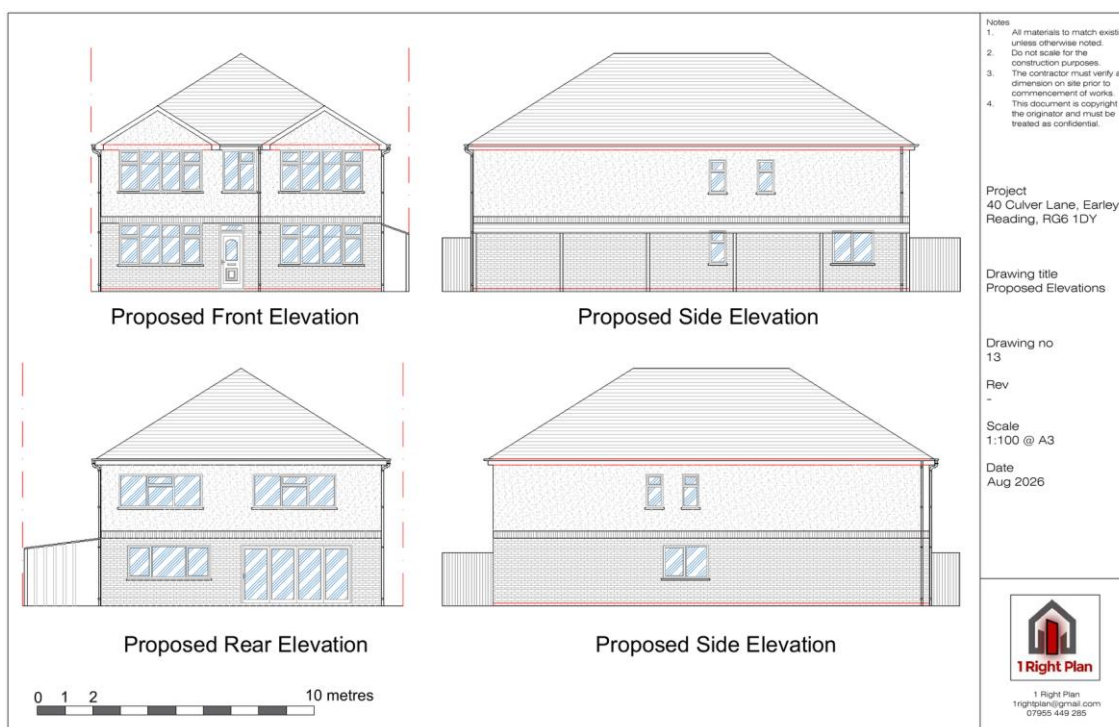


Figure 8: Proposed elevations (drawing no. 13).

- 3.3.4 The external materials would comprise facing brickwork to the ground floor, a contrasting render or hung finish to the first floor, plain tiles to the roof and UPVC fenestration, providing a coherent palette which reflects the mixed but predominantly traditional material treatment of the surrounding properties. Final details of the external materials could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition.

3.4 Impact on the Character of the Area

- 3.4.1 Core Strategy Policy CP3(a) requires development to be of an appropriate scale, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area, together with a high quality of design, and Policy DP3 of the NPPF requires proposals to respond to their context so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings.
- 3.4.2 In terms of scale, the proposed dwelling would be two storey in height, with an eaves height of circa 5.4m and a ridge height of circa 8.6m. Whilst this would represent an increase over the existing chalet-style building, whose main ridge sits at circa 7.0m with chimney stacks rising to circa 7.6m, the increase in overall height would be modest, amounting to circa 1.6m over the existing ridge and circa 1.0m over the existing chimney stacks, and the resulting building would be consistent with the two storey scale which prevails along this part of Culver Lane. The existing dwelling, by virtue of its one and a half storey form, is in



fact something of an anomaly within the streetscene, and the proposal would bring the site into line with the established character of the area.

- 3.4.3 In terms of built form, the use of a fully hipped main roof, rather than a gable end presented to either flank boundary, would reduce the perceived bulk and mass of the building when viewed from the neighbouring properties and from the street, and would allow the roof to read as a subordinate element above the two storey elevations. The 2no. front gables would provide visual interest and vertical emphasis to the principal elevation, and would reflect the gabled forms found elsewhere along Culver Lane, including on the existing dwelling itself.
- 3.4.4 In terms of site layout, the proposed dwelling would broadly respect the building line established by the neighbouring properties and would be sited in a position which reflects the footprint of the existing building. A generous private rear garden would be retained to the south of the dwelling and the frontage would continue to function as the access and parking area, so that the established relationship between the built form, the street and the rear garden would be preserved.
- 3.4.5 In terms of the streetscene, the proposal would replace a building which is in a relatively poor state of repair with a well-proportioned and carefully detailed dwelling. Given the notably mixed character of the immediate surroundings, which includes the substantially larger Palmerstone Place flatted development immediately to the west, the proposal would sit comfortably within its context and would represent a clear visual improvement over the existing situation.
- 3.4.6 For the reasons set out above, the proposal would comply with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3, MDD Local Plan Policy TB21, the guidance contained in the Borough Design Guide SPD and Policy DP3 of the NPPF.

3.5 Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

- 3.5.1 Core Strategy Policy CP3(a) requires that development should not be to the detriment of the amenities of adjoining occupiers, and Policy P3 of the NPPF requires that proposals should not give rise to an unacceptable level of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring residents and occupiers.
- 3.5.2 The properties whose amenity falls to be considered are No. 42 Culver Lane, which adjoins the site to the east, and the Palmerstone Place development (Nos. 1-9), which adjoins the site to the west.



- 3.5.3 With regard to loss of light and overbearing impact, the proposed dwelling would be sited in a comparable position to the existing building and would present a hipped roof form to both flank boundaries, so that the mass of the building would fall away from the neighbouring properties rather than being presented towards them. Given the orientation of the site, the separation distances to the habitable accommodation within the neighbouring properties and the hipped form of the roof, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of light or outlook, and would not appear unduly dominant or enclosing when viewed from the neighbouring properties or their gardens. The scheme has been designed having regard to the BRE guidance 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight – A Guide to Good Practice', and it is considered that the proposal would not result in an infringement of the 25° or 45° sightlines when measured from the central point of the habitable room windows of the adjacent dwellings.
- 3.5.4 With regard to privacy and overlooking, the principal habitable room windows would be oriented to the front and to the rear of the dwelling, facing the highway and the private rear garden respectively, and not towards the flank boundaries. The limited number of first floor windows proposed within the side elevations would serve en-suites and would be obscure glazed and non-openable below 1.7m above the finished floor level, which could be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition. On that basis, no unacceptable loss of privacy or overlooking would arise.

3.6 Arboricultural Impact

- 3.6.1 MDD Local Plan Policy CC03 requires development proposals to protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features, and Policy N3 of the NPPF requires suitable arboricultural advice to be sought and provision to be made for the long-term maintenance of existing and newly planted trees.
- 3.6.2 The application is accompanied by a tree survey prepared in accordance with BS 5837:2012 by Urban Tree Experts (ref. SPH/5837-26/04.08), based on a survey undertaken on 4 August 2026. Four individual trees with a stem diameter of 75mm and above which could be affected by the proposed development were inspected and categorised in accordance with the cascade chart for tree quality at Table 1, Section 4 of the British Standard, as follows:
- T1, a mature copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea') of 12.7m in height, standing within the garden of No. 42 Culver Lane, categorised as B2 with an estimated remaining contribution in excess of 40 years and a root protection area of 168.4m² (nominal radius 7.32m);



- T2, a semi-mature Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) of 6.9m in height, categorised as A2 with an estimated remaining contribution in excess of 40 years and a root protection area of 30.6m² (nominal radius 3.12m);
- T3, a mature twin-stemmed common laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) of 6.8m in height on the fence line, categorised as B2 with an estimated remaining contribution of 20 to 40 years and a root protection area of 34.6m² (nominal radius 3.31m);
- T4, a mature common laurel of 5.0m in height adjacent to the fence and overhanging the building, which has been subject to repeated topping, categorised as C2 with an estimated remaining contribution of 10 to 20 years and for which the survey schedule records a preliminary recommendation of felling.

3.6.3 A search of the Wokingham Borough Council interactive public GIS website undertaken on 7 August 2026 confirmed that T1, the copper beech within the garden of No. 42 Culver Lane, is covered by Tree Preservation Order number 1850-2022, and that the property is not located within a Conservation Area. No protected trees stand within the application site itself.

3.6.4 The root protection areas of the retained trees have been calculated in accordance with section 4.6.1 of BS 5837:2012 and plotted as dodecagons on the root protection plan (ref. SPH/RPA-26/04.08), taking account of the existing site constraints including the existing property, boundary treatments and hard surfaces. The report confirms that mitigation may be required to demonstrate how the root protection areas of the retained trees would be protected during development, including in respect of access to the development area, and that the retained trees should be protected by tree protection barriers and ground protection designed to provide construction exclusion zones in accordance with Figure 2, Section 6 of the British Standard.

3.6.5 T1, T2 and T3 would be retained. The proposed dwelling has been designed and positioned so as to avoid encroachment into the root protection area of the protected copper beech within the garden of No. 42 Culver Lane. The removal of T4 is a Category C common laurel of low quality which has been subject to repeated topping, which overhangs the existing building and which makes no meaningful contribution to the amenity of the area; its loss would carry very limited arboricultural weight and would be more than offset by the new native planting proposed as part of the landscaping scheme. An arboricultural method statement and tree protection plan prepared in accordance with BS 5837:2012, providing for tree protection barriers and ground protection to the retained trees for the duration of



the demolition and construction works, would be submitted and implemented, and can be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition. On that basis, no unacceptable impact upon the protected tree, or upon the other retained trees, would occur, and the proposal would comply with MDD Local Plan Policies CC03 and TB21 and with Policy N3 of the NPPF.

3.7 Ecological Impact and Biodiversity

3.7.1 Core Strategy Policy CP7 and MDD Local Plan Policy TB23 require proposals to protect habitats and species of principal importance and to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing ones, and Policy N2 of the NPPF requires proposals to minimise any adverse impacts on biodiversity and to include features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

3.7.2 The application is supported by a two-stage bat assessment. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (daytime bat walkover and Preliminary Roost Assessment) was undertaken by Urban Tree Experts on 4 August 2026, comprising a desk study based on a 2km search radius together with a detailed internal and external inspection of the building. The desk study identified two statutory designated sites and one European Protected Species Licence for bats recorded within 2km of the site, and recorded that whilst the immediate surrounding landform is predominantly urban and has a low potential to support foraging bats, there is some ecological connectivity to the wider landscape.

3.7.3 No bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the appraisal. However, moved, raised, missing and broken roof tiles and missing mortar from the ridge and hip tiles were identified as features which could provide potential roosting opportunities, and the property was accordingly characterised as having low potential to support roosting bats. In line with the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition), a single dusk emergence survey was recommended in order to establish the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

3.7.4 That dusk emergence survey was undertaken by EchoWood Ecology on 9 August 2026, using three surveyors and four night-vision cameras to provide comprehensive coverage of the building, in suitable weather conditions and in accordance with current best practice guidance. Very low levels of bat activity were recorded, comprising occasional passes by common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctule bats. No bats were recorded emerging from or returning to the building, and the survey findings therefore provide no evidence of a current bat roost within the building and indicate that roosting bats are likely to be



absent. No features typically associated with hibernation roosts were identified and the building is considered to have low suitability for hibernating bats.

3.7.5 The ecologist concludes that the proposed works are unlikely to result in the modification or destruction of a bat roost, or in injury or mortality of bats, that no further bat surveys are considered necessary and that a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence from Natural England is not required.

3.7.6 The principal residual risk identified relates to the potential disturbance of bats commuting within the surrounding landscape, and in particular those using the trees to the rear of the building. The recommendations of the ecological reports would be implemented in full and can be secured by condition, namely:

- external night-time lighting would be avoided between sunset and sunrise; where artificial lighting is required it would be directional and angled steeply towards the ground, mounted on short columns no higher than 3m, using lamps no greater than 2000 lumens with light sources peaking higher than 550 nanometres so as to avoid the UV, white and blue wavelengths, using a warm white spectrum LED below 2500 Kelvin in preference to a cool white spectrum, and fitted with cowls, hoods, baffles or louvres to avoid light spillage off site, avoiding reflective surfaces beneath the light; external security lighting would be set on motion sensors with a timer of one to two minutes;
- a precautionary approach would be maintained throughout the works, such that if a bat or evidence of bat use were discovered at any stage, all works in the affected area would cease immediately and a suitably licenced bat ecologist would be contacted before works resumed;
- no evidence of nesting birds was identified during the assessment; nevertheless, where works are undertaken during the main nesting bird season (March to August inclusive), the building and the affected areas would be checked for active nests before works commence. Should an active nest be found, an exclusion zone of a minimum of 5.0m would be put in place, works in that area would be halted, and the nest would be retained and protected from disturbance until the young have fledged.

3.7.7 It is noted that the ecological reports carry a validity of 12 months, running from the site inspection in the case of the Preliminary Roost Assessment and from the date of the final review in the case of the emergence survey. Should there be a delay of greater than 12 months between the surveys and the commencement of works, the surveys would be repeated.



- 3.7.8 In terms of biodiversity enhancement, the proposal would incorporate integrated nest boxes (swift bricks) within the fabric of the new dwelling in accordance with Policy N2(1)(f) of the NPPF, together with integrated bat boxes, and gaps of 13cm by 13cm would be provided at the base of the boundary fencing to maintain hedgehog permeability across the site in accordance with Policy TB23. New native planting, including hedgerows, shrubs and wildflower planting, would be provided within the retained garden areas as an integral part of the landscaping scheme, in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC03.
- 3.7.9 The statutory biodiversity gain condition imposed by Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is subject to the exemptions set out in the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, as amended by the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Amendments and Transitional Provisions) (England) Regulations 2026, which came into force on 6 August 2026. Those amendments introduced an exemption from the biodiversity gain condition for development where the area within the red line boundary is no greater than 0.2 hectares, provided that the development would not negatively impact an onsite priority habitat.
- 3.7.10 The application site, as outlined in red on the location plan (drawing no. 00), extends to less than 0.2 hectares. The site comprises the existing dwelling and its ancillary structures, associated hardstanding, amenity grassland and ornamental garden planting. None of these constitutes a habitat of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and no priority habitat was identified within the application site by the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The proposal would not therefore result in any negative impact upon an onsite priority habitat.
- 3.7.11 The development accordingly benefits from the exemption for development of 0.2 hectares or below and is not subject to the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement. The statutory biodiversity gain condition would not apply to any planning permission granted, and no biodiversity gain plan or statutory biodiversity metric calculation is required in support of the application.
- 3.7.12 Notwithstanding that exemption, the biodiversity enhancement measures described above would be delivered as an integral part of the scheme. The proposal would therefore continue to accord with Core Strategy Policy CP7, with MDD Local Plan Policies CC03 and TB23, and with Policy N2 of the National Planning Policy Framework.



3.8 Internal and Private Outdoor Amenity Space

- 3.8.1 MDD Local Plan Policy TB07 requires a minimum gross internal area of 100 sq m for a 4 bedroom house with a designed occupancy of 6 bed spaces, and a minimum combined floor area of living, dining and kitchen space of 31 sq m for that occupancy.
- 3.8.2 The proposed dwelling would provide a gross internal floor area of circa 285.0m² across the two floors, which would substantially exceed the minimum standard set out in Policy TB07 and would also exceed the relevant minimum set out in the 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard' (Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2015) for a two storey, 4 bedroom dwelling. The ground floor would provide a lounge, a reception room, a separate dining room and a kitchen/dining room, so that the combined living, dining and kitchen space would comfortably exceed the 31 sq m minimum. Each of the 4no. bedrooms would be a double bedroom served by its own en-suite, and the layout would provide an appropriate level of privacy and living quality for future occupiers, with all habitable rooms served by at least one window providing adequate natural light in accordance with Policy P3 of the NPPF.
- 3.8.3 In terms of external amenity space, the proposal would retain a private rear garden which would extend across the full width of the plot to the south of the dwelling and which would occupy the majority of the site area, consistent with the established pattern of deep rear gardens in this part of Culver Lane and generous by comparison with the surrounding properties. The private amenity space would not be compromised by the parking and turning arrangements, which would remain confined to the frontage of the site.

3.9 Transport, Parking and Waste

- 3.9.1 The application site is located in a highly sustainable location within the settlement of Earley. The site lies within convenient walking distance of the retail parade and local services on Wokingham Road, and of bus stops on Culver Lane and Wokingham Road which provide frequent services to Reading town centre, Woodley, Earley and Wokingham. The broader road network around the site provides a wide choice of cycle routes and walking paths, including the cycle routes which link this part of Earley with Reading town centre. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy TR3 of the NPPF and with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP6.
- 3.9.2 The existing vehicular access from Culver Lane would be retained without alteration, and the frontage of the site would continue to provide off-street parking, as shown on the



proposed block plan. Appendix 2 to the MDD Local Plan applies an allocated provision of 2no. spaces to a house of this size, together with a modest residual unallocated demand, and the frontage is of a size capable of accommodating 2no. to 3no. vehicles clear of the highway, with space to enter and leave the site in a forward gear. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy CC07. Covered and secure cycle parking would be provided within the curtilage of the dwelling in accordance with Policy TR4 of the NPPF, and can be secured by condition.

- 3.9.3 Screened storage for general waste and recycling bins would be provided within the frontage of the property, within convenient carrying distance of the highway for collection and consistent with the arrangements typical of the surrounding area, in accordance with MDD Local Plan Policy CC04(3).

3.10 Sustainability and Energy

- 3.10.1 MDD Local Plan Policy CC04 requires new homes to be delivered to a high standard of sustainable design and construction, and Policies CC2 and DP3(2)(b) of the NPPF require design approaches which conserve energy and other resources and which contribute to climate change mitigation and the transition to net zero.

- 3.10.2 Policy CC2(2) of the NPPF gives substantial weight to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings. In this instance, the existing dwelling is a chalet-style building of poor thermal performance and in a relatively poor state of repair, whose form, storey heights and roof construction would not allow the standard of accommodation or the level of energy performance sought to be achieved through refurbishment alone, and refurbishment is not therefore a reasonable alternative to replacement. The replacement of that dwelling with a new building constructed to current Building Regulations standards would in itself deliver a substantial improvement in energy efficiency, and the demolition materials would be reused and recycled so far as practicable in accordance with Policy CC2(1)(d). In addition, the following measures would be incorporated into the proposed development:

- reducing air permeability to the minimum consistent with health requirements;
- a design which reduces thermal bridging;
- the highest practicable level of insulation to walls, roof, floors, hot water pipes and hot water storage vessels;
- high performance double or triple glazing;



- the fitting of minimum B rated appliances;
- permeable paving where applicable;
- energy efficient internal and external lighting;
- water efficiency measures designed to meet the internal potable water consumption target of 105 litres or less per person per day required by Policy CC04;
- recycling of waste and a site waste management plan, to ensure that materials arising in the demolition and construction process are recycled and, where practicable, reused on site in accordance with Policy CC2(1)(d) of the NPPF.

3.11 Drainage and Flood Risk

- 3.11.1 The application site does not lie within Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3 on the Environment Agency's flood maps and is not identified as being at risk of flooding from other sources in the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. In any event, Policy CC09(3)(a) of the MDD Local Plan confirms that the sequential test is not required for the replacement of an existing single residential property. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy CC09.
- 3.11.2 Surface water would be managed within the site by means of sustainable drainage, incorporating permeable surfacing to the hardstanding areas and soakaways where ground conditions permit. The retention of substantial areas of soft landscaping within the rear garden would ensure that the proposal would not give rise to any material increase in surface water run-off from the site. A surface water drainage strategy setting out the proposed measures, as required by Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan, would be provided and can be secured by an appropriately worded condition, in accordance with Policy F8 of the NPPF. Foul drainage would connect to the existing mains drainage serving the property. The proposal would accordingly adapt appropriately to the effects of climate change in accordance with Policy CC3 of the NPPF.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a replacement 4-bedroom detached dwelling at 40 Culver Lane, Earley would make efficient and appropriate use of a generously sized and currently underused plot within the development limits of Earley, which Core Strategy Policy CP9 identifies as a major development location.



- 4.1.2 The submitted drawings demonstrate a design which reflects the prevailing two storey scale of this part of Culver Lane, which uses a fully hipped main roof form to reduce the perceived mass of the building towards both flank boundaries, and which is articulated on the front elevation by 2no. gables that give the principal elevation a well-proportioned and domestic appearance. The proposal would replace a building of no particular architectural merit, which is in a relatively poor state of repair, with a well-designed and energy efficient family home, and would represent a clear visual improvement over the existing situation.
- 4.1.3 The application is supported by a BS 5837:2012 tree survey which identifies the constraints posed by the retained trees, including the protected copper beech within the garden of No. 42 Culver Lane, and sets out the tree protection measures which would be required; the scheme has been designed so that those trees would be retained and protected throughout the demolition and construction works, with the exception of a low quality Category C laurel; and by a two-stage bat assessment which concludes that roosting bats are likely to be absent from the building, that no further survey work is required and that no European Protected Species Mitigation Licence is necessary. The lighting, precautionary working and nesting bird recommendations of those reports would be implemented in full, and the scheme would deliver biodiversity enhancement through swift bricks, integrated bat boxes, hedgehog permeability and new native planting, together with the statutory minimum 10% biodiversity net gain secured through the biodiversity gain condition.
- 4.1.4 The proposal would result in no net loss of residential accommodation, would provide a substantially improved standard of internal and external amenity space which exceeds the requirements of MDD Local Plan Policy TB07, would not give rise to any unacceptable impact upon the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties, and would retain a safe and appropriate access and parking arrangement in a highly sustainable location.
- 4.1.5 In summary, it is considered that the proposal complies with Policies CP1, CP3, CP5, CP6, CP7 and CP9 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, with Policies CC02, CC03, CC04, CC07, CC09, CC10, TB05, TB07, TB21 and TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, with the guidance contained in the Borough Design Guide SPD, and with Policies S3, S4, L2, L3, CC2, CC3, DP3, N2, N3, P3, TR3, TR4 and F8 of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026). We therefore respectfully request that the application be approved.





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