

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242566
Site Address:	Hurst Grange Farm House, Pound Lane, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RS
Expiry Date:	6 December 2024
Site Visit Date:	01/11/2024
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of a single storey front extension to create porch, 2no. two storey side extensions along with changes to fenestration following demolition of the existing conservatory.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- 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 TB21 – Landscape Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

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PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
97/66352	Rear extension to form conservatory.	24/10/1997
37225	Erection of detached garage	Approved, 22/05/1991
36883	Rear extension to form conservatory.	Approved, 18/01/1991
24506	Demolition of existing cottage and erection of new dwelling	Approved, 15/05/1986

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objections.
WBC Green Infrastructure – No comments received.
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objects to development.
WBC Public Rights Of Way – No comments received.
WBC CIL – The proposed development would be CIL liable.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.

External

Berkshire Archaeology – No objections, subject to a condition.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	St Nicholas Hurst Parish Council – No adverse comments.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Hurst Grange farmhouse is a detached property located towards the eastern end of Pound Lane, a rural road to the southeast of Hurst.

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 dwelling is located outside of settlement boundaries within a rural location. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that 'in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted' apart from the exceptions listed within the policy as follows (inter alia):

- In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

The Borough Design Guide provides detailed guidance on development in the countryside, including a recommended maximum increase of 50% in the volume of the original dwelling for extensions. While this is noted as a guideline, the submitted volume calculations indicate that the proposed extensions would result in an approximate 270% increase over the volume of the original dwelling, significantly exceeding the recommended figure and conflicting with the Borough Design Guide

Furthermore, the property has already been extended through the addition of a conservatory, approved under application PA: 36883, and a detached double garage, approved under application PA: 37225. In light of these previous additions, any further development should remain modest in scale to align with the principles of proportionate and sensitive development in the countryside.

The proposed 2.no two storey side extensions are substantial in both size and scale, extending approximately 7 metres to the west and 2 metres to the east of the main dwelling. Cumulatively, this would result in the building spanning approximately 22 metres in width. The extensions are also prominently higher than the existing building. Even putting aside the numerical increase in volume, the proposed extensions are visibly inappropriate in size that would lead to a significant increase in scale and massing, constituting disproportionate additions over and above the size and volume of the original building. This would result in an extensive built form encroaching across the site, set within the countryside, contrary to CP11 aimed at preserving the openness and rural character of such areas.

The consideration regarding the size of the extensions and resulting form is further explored in the following section of this report.

Character of the Area:

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework states 'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

National Design Guide

Section B1, Paragraph 68 of the National Design Guide states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;

- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Wokingham Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that maintain and enhance the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy emphasises 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.

Borough Design Guide SPD Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide states that any alteration and extension to an existing building should be well-designed, respond positively to the original building, contribute positively to the local character and street scene, and relate well to the neighbouring properties

The application site comprises a one-and-a-half-storey detached dwelling located towards the eastern end of Pound Lane, Hurst. The surrounding area along this section of Pound Lane is characterised by sporadic rural development, consisting of small clusters of residential, agricultural, and industrial uses, primarily concentrated along the eastern portion of the road.

The majority of dwellings in the area are either single-storey or one-and-a-half-storey in height, set back from the road, and screened by mature hedging along their front boundaries. Buildings are generally well spaced, with green gaps between them that contribute to a sense of openness and reinforce the rural character of the area.

The site is located in the countryside in Landscape Character I1 Area Ashridge Farmed Clay Lowland. Part of the landscape strategy is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern through controlling development and protect the perceptions of rural tranquillity in the landscape, through the management of development.

Section 4 of the BDG SPD advises the following:

‘Alterations or extensions should be clearly subservient to the form and scale or the original building in most situations, although there may be exceptions where it is more appropriate to design a seamless continuation.’

The proposed single storey front extension to form a porch is modest in terms of height, depth and design. The proposal is clearly subservient and sympathetic to the host property, therefore, would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

However, the proposed side extensions would not be subservient in scale or design to the original building and would fail to provide a seamless continuation of its form. Instead, the cumulative enlargement would dominate the original structure, compromising its simple design. The original dwelling would appear visually overwhelmed, almost as if sandwiched between the two prominent front-facing gable elements, which extend well above the ridge height of the main dwelling. It would therefore conflict with the guidance in the Borough Design Guide setting out that

extensions should be subservient in form and scale.

The resultant dwelling would feature a front elevation approximately 22 metres in width. This expansive built form would be further exacerbated by the proposed side extension on the south-eastern side, which would adjoin the western wall of the existing detached garage. The garage, notable as a standalone structure due to its sizeable roof pitch, would contribute to the perceived scale of the development. The proposed connection between the dwelling and the garage would result in a continuous built frontage of approximately 27.8 metres, significantly increasing the overall massing and visual prominence of the site. This excessive scale and massing would be deemed unacceptable in the context of its countryside setting. It would also appear significantly out of character with other small-scale dwellings in the locality.

When viewed from Pound Lane through the site entrance, the proposed extensions would significantly reduce the visual gap between the dwelling and garage, obscuring views of the characteristic green backdrop behind the house. It would result in a continuous block of development spreading significantly across the site that would further urbanise the rural location. Notwithstanding the visibility of the proposal, it is well established in policy that the impact of development should be assessed under both character and appearance and is therefore not reliant on the visibility of the extension.

As set out above, the proposal would fail to adhere to the guidance in the Borough Design Guide and para 139 of the NPPF states *'development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.'* The development should therefore be refused given the conflict with the Borough Design Guide in term of the significant increase in size and failure to be subservient and respect the scale and form of the original building.

Overall, the proposed two-storey side extensions, due to their scale, bulk, and design, would form overly dominant and incongruous additions, detracting from the character of the existing dwelling and resulting in an excessive and inappropriate expansion within a sensitive rural countryside location. The proposals would therefore be contrary to policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide, section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Section B1 of the National Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The views afforded by the proposed fenestration would be comparable to those provided by the existing arrangement. As such, the development would not result in any unacceptable overlooking or a loss of privacy beyond what is currently experienced in relation to neighbouring residential properties.

While the proposed side extensions are substantial in size and scale, they would be positioned well within the site boundaries. The western side extension, in particular, would maintain a separation distance of approximately 3.4 metres from the neighbouring side boundary shared with Hodge. Consequently, any potential loss of light or overbearing impacts on the adjacent property are expected to be minimal.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and notes that the numbers of habitable rooms will remain unchanged as 8 in the proposal. Three driveway parking spaces of dimensions 5m x 2.5m are proposed, and the existing garage will be retained.

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Village location will require three parking within the red line boundary. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

The driveway has ample spaces for more than three parking spaces by utilising the existing access, which is acceptable. The existing garden store will remain suitable for cycle storage, which is acceptable. As such, no objections are raised on highways grounds.

Landscape and Trees:

The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement, and Tree Protection Plan (Trevor Heaps, Ref: TH 4790, Dated September 2024) and considers the information provided to be satisfactory. Consequently, no concerns have been raised regarding the impact on trees or related landscape matters.

However, the Trees and Landscape Officer has expressed that the proposed development, within its countryside setting, would adversely impact the character of the area, as disused in this report above.

Ecology:

Paragraph 185 of the NPPF 2023 seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

Core Strategy Policy CP7, carried forward by MDD LP Policy TB23, requires appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value.

The site is located in habitat which matches where bat roosts have previously been found in the borough and is surrounded by a habitat suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats.

Paragraph 4.2 of the submitted Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (GS Ecology, Ref: ECO3569, September 2024) identifies the main house at Hurst Grange Farmhouse as a "confirmed" bat roost. This conclusion is based on the presence of features potentially suitable for roosting bats, its location within a habitat of 'high' suitability for commuting and foraging bats, and the discovery of bat droppings in the loft. Given this status, the proposed works are likely to impact several of these potential roost features. Consequently, the assessment recommends further dusk surveys to determine the status of the identified roost and investigate whether any additional roosts are present.

No further survey has been provided by the applicant, and it is noted that the optimal season to conduct this survey is from May to August. It would have also not been

expedient to wait for the survey season due to the objections raised elsewhere in this report.

Consequently, insufficient information has been provided for the council to determine the likely impact of the proposals upon bats, which are a protected species and material consideration in the planning process. This is contrary to Section 15 of the NPPF 2023, Policies CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy 2010, and Policy TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014.

Berkshire Archaeology

The Archaeology Officer, on behalf of Berkshire Archaeology, has reviewed the proposal highlights the potential archaeological significance at the site, given its proximity to an Iron Age settlement and evidence of prehistoric and medieval activity nearby. To mitigate potential impacts, it is recommended that a condition requiring archaeological investigation, including a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI), be applied if permission is granted. In the event of any approval, an appropriate condition would be applied.

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:	Refusal
Date:	3 December 2024
Earliest date for decision:	1 November 2024

**Recommendation
agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)**

MC

Date:	05.12.2024
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