

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242200
Site Address:	Beech Court, Wokingham Road, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10 0RQ
Expiry Date:	4 November 2024
Site Visit Date:	18/10/2024
Proposal: 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.	

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	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation

and Waste Plan (JMWP)	
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List A Design for Hurst

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
072978	Proposed change of use of land - 1 from Class B1 to Agricultural and 2 from Agricultural to Class B1. Formation of hardstanding to access paddock.	Approved, 10/05/2007
031548	Proposed erection of building for B1 office use. Demolition of existing building.	Refused, 10/09/2003 Allowed at appeal on 25/06/2004
970355	Proposed Demolition Of Existing Temporary Buildings And Erection Of Replacement To Accommodate Office restroom toilets and showroom	Refused, 31/10/1997
970609	Proposed Change Of Use From Garden Centre To Manufacture Of Storage And Distribution Of Garden Ornaments and retention of 2 temporary buildings (retrospective)	Approved, 21/07/1997
961475	Erection Of 32 Houses, Garages And Access.	Refused, 13/04/1996

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objections.
WBC Drainage – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Highways – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objects to proposal, approval subject to a condition.
WBC Ecology – No objections, subject to a condition.
WBC Public Rights Of Way – No objections.
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received.
WBC Ecology Newts – No comments received.

External

SSE Power Distribution – No comments received.
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

Beech Court is situated to the east of Wokingham Road, south of central Hurst. The site is positioned within a triangular area bounded by Wokingham Road to the west, Islandstone Lane approximately 0.3 km to the south, and an unnamed lane to the east that provides access to nearby small farms. The subject site consists of a triangular-shaped parcel of undeveloped land currently utilized for overflow parking.

The proposals seek the erection of storage building in association with the existing use of Beech Court a small business park which provides 12 office units (Class E(g)) plus changes to parking layout and landscaping.

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.

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. The proposal seeks to erect a storage building in association with the ongoing use of the main Beech Court building. The intended purpose of the proposed storage facility 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. According to supporting documentation, the storage building would house garden maintenance and property cleaning equipment used off-site to support business operations, as well as business archives.

With regards to criterion 1, while this proposed use does not strictly qualify as a diverse or sustainable rural enterprise, nor as a countryside-based business, its

established function as an office has been in place for approximately 20 years, as confirmed by planning records. Accordingly, it contributes to the social and economic vitality of the rural area, thus supporting sustainability objectives and criterion 1 in this context.

With respect to criterion 2, the proposal would introduce a degree of encroachment into the countryside by extending built form onto a currently grassed area. However, the proposal does not constitute isolated development within an open countryside setting, the storage building would be situated within an enclosed parcel of land surrounded by existing built form. In the context of the large main office building and surrounding residential properties, the outbuilding's modest footprint is considered proportionate and not excessive. Although the proposal would be located approximately 35 meters from the main office building, it would remain connected to an established area of hardstanding that forms part of the wider setting of Beech Court. Therefore, the proposal would not lead to an unacceptable expansion of development beyond the original building. Therefore, despite it being in the countryside in planning policy terms, the proposed development would relate closely to existing built form and would be suitably located, therefore would not be contrary to policy CP11.

It should be noted that the use of the building described is not an ancillary function of the existing office. Whilst it is a storage building connected to a business operating from the office, in planning use class terms it is not logical extension of an office use. A condition is recommended tying the storage facility to the office building so that any use of the structure as an unfettered storage building would need to be considered and assessed via a new planning application. This is considered necessary because the use described by the application is deemed acceptable, but other storage uses of the building could have additional impacts, particularly with neighbouring occupiers.

Character of the Area:

The proposed scale, height, and design of the outbuilding would be subservient and sympathetic to the main office building while also harmonizing with the surrounding residential properties. Positioned within a triangular parcel of land bordered by residential properties to the north and west, the development would constitute a logical infill of a residual gap, fitting well within the established development pattern of the area and not appearing as an intrusive feature within the countryside setting. Furthermore, the outbuilding would be partially screened from public view by mature vegetation along all boundaries and would not harm the visual amenity of the area. Given the analysis provided, the proposals would not adversely impact the character of the area.

In terms of overbearing and loss of light impacts, the proposal is suitably located and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns to any neighbouring properties.

Whilst there would be some additional encroachment into the countryside by reason of adding additional built form outside of settlement limits, the harm in this regard would be limited.

Neighbouring Amenity:

With regards to the new ground floor windows, the existing boundary hedgerow would be high enough to sufficiently mitigate any overlooking concerns towards neighbouring residential amenities. In terms of overbearing and loss of light impacts, the proposals are suitably located and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns to any neighbouring properties.

Regarding noise impacts, the proposed storage building would be located near the boundary with a neighbouring residential property, Beech Lodge, to the west. The activities associated with the building would largely be vehicles and employees coming and going. This occurs for the existing office use - however it is noted that the nature of this would be different to the office building. The building is modest in scale and the use described would result in small vehicle movements rather than large HGVs.

To ensure acceptable levels of noise and disturbance are generated by the development, the Case Officer considers that it is necessary to attach a condition which restricts the storage building's hour of use in order to safeguard nearby residential amenities. A suitable condition will be attached to any approval.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposal involves the erection of a 120m² storage building ancillary to the existing use. The applicant also proposes 9 associated driveway parking, whereas two of those are replacement to the existing parking spaces.

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and considers that the traffic generated from the storage building of such scale is unlikely to have significant impacts on the wider highway network.

The wider site will be accessed via the existing fully engineered junction to the A321, Wokingham Road. The new gated access for the proposed storage building will be provided by voiding 2 of the original parking spaces and widening the existing overflow car parking. There will be no negative impacts on pedestrian visibility and public highway safety, which is considered acceptable.

The driveway will be paved with permeable blockwork and tarmac surface. The Highways Officer welcomes the proposed surfacing improvement.

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, Class B1 development of such scale will require five additional car parking allocation. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. While the proposal is unlikely to induce a significant level of additional traffic due to the existing use of the site, the applicant has proposed 7 additional driveway parking of dimensions 5m x 2.5m. The driveway clearance between parking spaces is 7.2m wide, which will provide sufficient spaces for a large saloon car to manoeuvre and turn at forwards gear.

Cycle parking is proposed immediately adjoining the new building, the Highways Officer welcomes such provisions.

Overall, the Highways Officer has raised no objection to the proposed development.

Flooding and Drainage:

The proposed development is in Flood zone 1 according to the Environment Agency mapping with a low risk of surface water flooding. The Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed the application and has noted that the drainage details have not been provided and the existing drainage details has not been mentioned. The Drainage Officer has subsequently recommended a condition be implemented which secures details of the surface water drainage system of the site prior to the commencement of development.

However, the Local Planning Authority consider this condition too onerous when compared to the scale of the development; the increase in hardstanding would be minimal. As such, the remaining permeable land around the site would be considered sufficient enough to as not adversely impact the flood risk of the site and the surrounding dwellings.

Landscape and Trees:

The site is in Countryside, off a Green Route, adjacent to a light industry/commercial complex. The north boundary can be viewed from Byway open to all traffic STNH11 and bridleway STNH10. The building and carparking are located outside of the rooting area of trees. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer notes that the trees will need to be protected from the construction phase of a build. This can be accommodated by suitable conditions attached to any approval.

The Trees and Landscape Officer has expressed concerns regarding the positioning of the building, which is situated far from existing structures and close to the northern edge of the site, as well as the intermittent screening provided by the surrounding vegetation. The building is surrounded by existing built form and would have negligible impact on the countryside character and appearance of the area. The encroachment with regard to policy CP11 is not considered to be excessive.

Ecology:

A District Licensing Officer representing NatureSpace has reviewed this application and notes that the proposed development lies within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts. Impact risk zones have been established through advanced modelling techniques to create a species distribution map, which predicts the likelihood of presence. In the red impact zone, there exists potentially suitable habitat and a likelihood of great crested newt presence for the following reasons:

- There are 15 potential breeding ponds and documented great crested newt records within 500 meters of the proposed development.
- There is strong connectivity between the application site and the surrounding landscape.
- Given the proximity of potential breeding ponds and the likelihood of great crested newts travelling through or resting on site, there is a reasonable risk that the development could adversely affect both the great crested newts and

their habitats.

A suitable condition will be attached to any approval requiring a licence for development works affecting GCN is obtained from Natural England to ensure that GCN populations adversely affected by the development.

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.

Conclusion and Planning Balance:

Whilst the development would result in some harm to the countryside by reason of an additional building in rural location, the impact would be limited due to the surrounding development. Any encroachment would not be excessive in relation to policy CP11. Noise and disturbance impacts would be mitigated by appropriate conditions. There would be a benefit to the scheme with regard to facilitating a local business in the countryside. Overall the development is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	29 October 2024
Earliest date for decision:	24 September 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	30.10.2024

