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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application at Clear View Cottage, Whistley Green, Reading, RG10 0DU. The application is for the demolition of existing dwelling (Clear View Cottage) and erection of replacement dwelling, carport building with (ancillary) store over, a front garden wall and gate, solar panels to outbuilding and associated changes to landscaping
- 1.2 The proposal would be undertaken as a self-build.
- 1.3 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.4 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms, plans, and technical reports, as submitted by Hives Architects (the Planning Agent):
 - 2907 001 Location and Block Plan – 1:1250 / 1:500 (A1)
 - 2907 002 Existing Plans and Elevations - 1:100 (A1)
 - 2907 003 Proposed Floor Plans - 1:100 (A2)
 - 2907 004 Proposed Elevations - 1:100 (A1)
 - 2907 005 Proposed Car Port Plans and Elevations - 1:100 (A1)
 - 2907 005 Proposed Street Elevation and Garden Wall
 - 2907 C002 Design and Access Statement
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey ref: SWE-P25-0246-R1 (Sam Watson Ecology)
 - Flood report / drawing.

2. Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Clear View Cottage is a two storey dwelling with various outbuildings including that used as an existing office building, situated along the highway of Whistley Green, within the northern extent of the defined settlement of Hurst.
- 2.2 The property lies within a cluster of residential dwellings with non-residential buildings within the wider vicinity, including Hurst Gospel Hall, and retail units located at the junction of Broadwater lane with Lodge Road, some 60 metres to the northeast of the front boundary. There is a distinct character change between the west of the dwelling, which contains older, more traditionally-designed dwellings, and the east which contains a highly modern housing development.
- 2.3 The application site extends to approximately 0.35 hectares (the wider blue line covering approximately 0.5 hectares), with the existing dwelling positioned centrally within the northern part of the plot, with a winding driveway and aforementioned outbuildings, and a large garden area extending southwards. The dwelling is somewhat dilapidated, and is currently derelict, needing substantial renovation for use as a modern dwelling.
- 2.4 In addition to the aforementioned non-residential uses, the site lies in close proximity to the A32 and B3030, which connect to the centre of Hurst as well as nearby larger settlements of Winnersh and Twyford.

3. Planning History

- 3.1 There is no planning history recorded on the Council website for the site itself. From observations the site has been clearly used as a residential dwelling with curtilage, with a large outbuilding that has historically been used for office use, a gym and storage. Other outbuildings include a garage and a store adjoining the large outbuilding.
- 3.2 The property was originally part of a wider horticultural nursery site known as Valley Nurseries (though always utilised as a self-contained dwelling) which covered the area now comprising a residential development known as Nursery Gardens (as per the name of the cul-de-sac access). Nursery Gardens is a very modern housing development, of which the planning application details are:
- 3.3 Application reference 162219 for "Full planning application for the proposed erection of 16 no. dwellings with garages and parking spaces with new access to Whistley Green following demolition of derelict greenhouses". The application was refused by the Council on 22 December 2016. It was subsequently allowed on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate, dated 30 August 2017.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a replacement two-storey dwelling with a detached carport (including ancillary storage above), landscaping and associated works.
- 4.2 The proposal represents a high-quality, design-led replacement that respects the established suburban character of Whistley Green while significantly improving the architectural quality, sustainability performance, and visual contribution of the site. The proposed development will provide a carefully designed and visually balanced two-storey family home.
- 4.3 The full architectural justification of the proposal, including its design evolution, can be found within the separate Design and Access Statement.
- 4.4 The layout of the proposal would include:
 - Ground floor: Entrance hall with stairs, lounge, study, atrium, dining room, kitchen/breakfast room, living room, wc and utility.
 - First floor: Four double bedrooms, each with en-suite facilities, including a principal suite with dressing room and balcony overlooking the rear garden.
- 4.5 As per the Design & Access Statement, the architectural philosophy of the proposed dwelling is to combine a symmetrical architectural frontage, and then adjust to an Arts and Crafts style with some Tudor elements towards the rear elevation.
- 4.6 Various soft landscaping measures are proposed to offer replacement and enhancement of existing planting, particularly on the front and eastern side boundaries of the property.

- 4.7 The existing site access would be remodelled including through the provision of entrance gates. Parking would be provided to the frontage of the dwelling, with additional parking to the rear.

5. Policy Assessment

5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.

5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that "Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way" and "at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible". Paragraph 124 of the NPPF comments that planning should "promote an effective use of land" in "meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions".

5.3 Paragraph 61 confirms the Government's objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.

5.4 Paragraph 131 identifies that "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", whilst paragraph 139 states that significant weight should be given to "outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."

5.5 The National Design Guide builds on the above, and clarifies that "well-designed neighbourhoods need to include an integrated mix of tenures and housing types that reflect local housing need and market

demand. They are designed to be inclusive and to meet the changing needs of people of different ages and abilities. New development reinforces existing places by enhancing local transport, facilities and community services, and maximising their potential use" (para 109).

5.6 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.7 The Development Plan relevant to the proposal includes the following:

- Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010)
- Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD, 2014)
- In addition, the St Nicholas Hurst Neighbourhood Plan applies.

5.8 In addition, the Council is currently preparing its new Local Plan Update 2023 – 2040 ('LPU'). This Draft Plan has passed Regulation 19 stage and is under formal examination, with Inspector public hearing sessions expected in November 2025.

5.9 As a consequence, some weight can be applied to the policies of the LPU, however the weight applied to individual policies will vary depending on their specific topic and contents, as set out in the case law of *Tewkesbury BC vs SSCLG [2013] EWHC 286 (Admin)*.

5.10 The site is located within the settlement boundary of Hurst.

5.11 CS Policy CP1 sets out the overarching vision and spatial strategy for the Borough, seeking to prioritise development within sustainable locations and/or defined development.

- 5.12 CS Policy CP9 sets out that the scale of development proposals within the Borough must reflect the existing (or proposed) levels of facilities at or in the location, combined with their accessibility. Within CP9, Hurst is classed as a 'limited development location', to which development is therefore acceptable subject to an acceptable scale (which is namely the quantum of development).
- 5.13 NPPF paragraph 124 states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses. NPPF paragraph 125.c) goes on to state that substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land in settlements for development.
- 5.14 The proposal would form a replacement dwelling (albeit a larger dwelling), and whilst Policy CP9 and the aforementioned NPPF paragraphs are specifically focused on additional dwellings, they nonetheless remain relevant for development in general in the defined settlement.
- 5.15 The proposal therefore also aligns with MDD Policy CC01, which reinforces the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.16 In summary, as the site is located in a sustainable location within defined settlement, is fully proportionate to a limited development location, and involves previously developed land that is under residential use, it is acceptable in principle in this location. Therefore, matters including impact on the character of the area, residential amenity, etc. are considered below.
- 5.17 **Sustainable Development:** As noted above in paragraph 5.12, the site is located in a limited development area, within the defined settlement of Hurst. Immediate amenities are present in the form of a community & religious hall, and a bakery & café, to the immediate

northeast. Further to the north is the Public House of Elephant & Castle, and the site is also in walking distance of various amenities within central Hurst.

- 5.18 Public transport is available through bus stops located to both the north and southeast along Broadwater Lane (the A321).
- 5.19 In terms of general sustainability measures as set out in NPPF paragraph 8, The proposal will contribute to the local economy by contributing to construction related employment through the build phase, while representing a long term investment in the area when works are complete. The dwelling will offer a safe and accessible living environment, meeting the NPPF's social aim of fostering strong, healthy and inclusive communities. The new dwelling has been designed to significantly reduce energy demand compared with both current building control requirements and the existing dwelling, and will enhance on-site biodiversity through low-carbon technologies, electric-vehicle charging and fabric-first construction.
- 5.20 **Character and Appearance of the Area:** CS Policy CP3 expects proposals to be appropriate in elements including scale, form and character to their surroundings, as well as to protect landscape features, and to avoid overdevelopment of the site.
- 5.21 MDD Policy TB21 seeks for development to be informed by, and to respect, the Borough's defined landscape character areas (noting that the entire Borough is subject to these character areas, as opposed to them being valued landscapes).
- 5.22 The existing site forms a somewhat unique feature within the established settlement and character of area – comprising an extensive length, particularly in comparison to neighbouring properties, and moving away from the pattern of development via the setback of the existing dwelling combined with the various

outbuildings, of which the existing office outbuilding is particularly large.

- 5.23 As also noted in paragraph 2.2 above, the existing site sits as a transitional plot in visual and character terms from the more historic dwellings fronting the streetscene to the west, to a modern housing development which involves significant backland development to the east. Notwithstanding this visual transition, the overall character is one of a suburban area.
- 5.24 Given this contrast in design character, the proposal has therefore been developed to not seek to significantly disrupt these existing attributes, for the sake of respecting established character as per policy CP3.
- 5.25 This is achieved in several ways – the first the architectural style of a classical frontage to the dwelling, in order to respect the more historic character of both the existing dwelling and the dwellings to the east. This then evolves to an arts and crafts style rear elevation, which is more modernised and in-keeping with the modern dwellings along Nursery Gardens, to which said elevation has visibility. Further architectural details are present within the Design & Access Statement on this matter.
- 5.26 Secondly is the siting of the proposed dwelling in the same vicinity as the existing – to maintain the significant setback from the highway of Whistley Green established by the existing dwelling. A new outbuilding forming a garage is then proposed to the rear of the dwelling, amongst the existing outbuildings.
- 5.27 Thirdly significant replacement and additional planting is proposed to the proposal, in order to maintain its appearance of being a relatively low-density plot, marked by the significant retained frontage and

large rear garden area, which then in turn visually links to the undeveloped land further to the rear.

- 5.28 Street scene plans have been provided for consideration. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal would be notably taller than the existing dwelling, and taller than Whistley Green Farmhouse, this would be mitigated by the significant setback of the dwelling. Furthermore, the dwelling would be almost identical in height to that of 3 Nursery Gardens, especially when viewed by the naked eye.
- 5.29 The proposal would form a large manor-style dwelling, however it is considered that this is a highly appropriate setting and location for such a building, considering the extensive plot size, and also of course being within defined settlement. The siting as a corner plot between Whistley Green and Nursery Gardens offers the opportunity for a landmark building of high design quality to become a distinctive positive feature to the location, thereby meeting the NPPF's aspirations of prioritising high quality design as a fundamental part of the planning process (NPPF paragraph 131).
- 5.30 Additionally, key features of the dwelling that would respond to the local character of the area include the use of specific materials such as local character style red brick, stone detailing and clay tiles, reflective of nearby dwellings, a balanced front façade and the use of gable features.
- 5.31 In terms of the wider surroundings beyond the settlement boundary, the proposal would maintain the sense of separation between the rear garden of the plot and the undeveloped land beyond. As a consequence, and given the retention of the overall density and quantum of development on the site (as a replacement dwelling), the proposal would not be considered to result in any harmful impact upon the wider landscape character.

5.32 The proposal is therefore in summary considered to be a highly positive addition to the character of the area and to the immediate settlement.

5.33 **Trees and Landscaping:** As highlighted above, the existing plots contains extensive soft landscaped sections, and these would be retained and enhanced.

5.34 Whilst trees are proposed for removal, these are not considered to be of the highest visual value (and are not subject to Tree Preservation Orders). For every tree removed, two new native trees would be provided, thereby not only enhancing landscape value, but also biodiversity.

5.35 The above would also serve to enhance planting and landscaping on the northern, and in particular, eastern boundary of the site, providing visual softening to the proposal.

5.36 Existing hardsurfaced features would be retained, i.e. the existing lengthy driveway and various buildings at the rear. The driveway is proposed to be extended to the immediate frontage of the dwelling to provide parking.

5.37 It is agreeable that full details of soft landscaping be secured by planning condition.

5.38 **Residential Amenity – Neighbouring Occupants:** The proposed external layout preserves the acceptable separation distances between neighbouring dwellings, maintaining a sense of openness and privacy. This arrangement safeguards both the privacy of neighbours and the amenity of the proposed dwelling.

5.39 The proposal would be set back from the neighbouring property of Whistley Green Farmhouse, but this would be a recurrence of the existing relationship (where the existing dwelling is also of course two

storeys). The proposal would be at an oblique angle to the rear facing windows of Whistley Green Farmhouse, with no impact to the direct southern or western outlooks of this dwelling. Therefore it is not considered that the proposal would result in any loss of privacy or light impacts that are materially different from the existing situation.

- 5.40 Turning to the dwellings to the east, and 17 Nursery Gardens in particular, the proposal has been deliberately designed not to extend southwards past the existing electricity sub-station, which adjoins no.17 to its north. In doing so, the proposal preserved the rear (east-facing) outlook of this existing dwelling, with the relationship to the proposed dwelling again being oblique. With the proposal being to the north of no.17, there would be minimal impacts in terms of loss of light or overbearing due to the natural direction of sunlight.
- 5.41 Whilst the proposed garage would have some potential visibility from the rear boundary of no.17, its single storey height and overall scale would be as a typical incidental residential outbuilding, and therefore is considered appropriate in this siting.
- 5.42 **Residential Amenity – Prospective Occupants:** The proposed development aims to provide a modern living space that achieves excellent modern comfort standards.
- 5.43 Key design features include an open-plan kitchen, dining and family area, a dedicated study, four double bedrooms and integrated lift access. Therefore, this fully aligns with local and national policy objectives for high-quality residential design and occupant wellbeing.
- 5.44 The proposal will provide adjustments to the driveway and landscaping, with a generous amount of private external amenity space. The garden is directly accessible from the main living spaces through large, glazed doors, promoting strong indoor-outdoor connection and passive surveillance of external areas. The large

garden space offers a strong relationship between the dwelling and its natural surroundings.

5.45 **Transport and Parking:** As also explained in above sections, the site is well connected to the surrounding area, with convenient links to Hurst village, Twyford, Winnersh and Reading, ensuring reasonable accessibility to local services and public transport in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP6 (Managing Travel Demand).

5.46 The proposed development makes use of the existing vehicular access from Whistley Green, which will be remodelled with new recessed gates to improve visibility and turning movements. The access arrangement maintains safe and efficient operation for vehicles entering and leaving the site, with no changes required to the public highway. Ample space will be provided for parking, turning and manoeuvring, including additional spaces for the proposed occupants, and retained spaces for the existing office building use.

5.47 The proposal includes a detached double carport and additional on-site parking spaces on a resin-bound gravel driveway, accommodating up to eight vehicles in total. (a net increase of one from the seven existing) This provision comfortably exceeds the Council's parking standards for a four-bedroom dwelling, ensuring there is no risk of on-street parking or congestion. The inclusion of an electric vehicle (EV) charging point and permeable surfacing further supports sustainable travel and drainage objectives, consistent with MDD Policy CC07 (Parking) and the NPPF's emphasis on sustainable transport and low-carbon design.

5.48 Bins would be stored within the site and then brought to the site frontage on collection day, so they can be collected from Whistley

Green. Cycle storage can be provided within the existing garage to the rear of the dwelling.

5.49 **Drainage and SuDS:** The scheme incorporates permeable resin-bound gravel surfacing to the driveway and hardstanding areas, promoting natural infiltration and reducing the risk of surface water run-off. Roof water will be directed to soakaways within the curtilage, designed in accordance with current Building Regulations and Wokingham Borough Council's SuDS guidance, ensuring effective on-site attenuation and groundwater recharge. The proposed site's significant garden area and greenery will provide a natural SuDS source, using natural infiltration to prevent surface flooding from occurring.

5.50 **Ecology:** An Ecology Report has been provided with the application, and this concludes that the site has limited ecological value in view of the existing buildings and uses, combined with its location within settlement. Where there is some habitat value is in the amenity and ornamental grassland, which is largely proposed to be retained.

5.51 As the dwelling is proposed as a self-build, it is not subject to mandatory biodiversity net gain requirements. Nonetheless, the report sets out various standard mitigation and enhancement recommendation, in order to ensure the local and national requirements regarding non-numerically assessed ecological enhancements can be demonstrated.

5.52 It is agreeable that further details of ecological enhancements can be secured by planning condition, should this be required.

5.53 **Sustainability and Energy:** Paragraph 8 of the NPPF supports the transition of development to a low carbon future. The national Code for Sustainable Homes has now been abolished, however it is proposed that the development would conform to Part L of the

Building Regulations which as of 2022 requires a 30% reduction than current standards. By way of contributing to the reduction in carbon, the proposal would also achieve current building construction standards with added sustainability measures through;

- A. The limitation of the amount of external walls by providing a compact building form, inherently reducing material, structure and embodied energy through the employment of good building standards to create an excellent SAP rating;
- B. Use of locally sourced, recycled materials and labour where practicable;
- C. Maximizing the use of natural light through floor-ceiling windows to the rear orangery;
- D. Reduced internal water consumption of 110 litres per person per day through the incorporation of water efficient sanitary fittings, including low flow toilets and water efficient taps for wash basins;
- E. Refuse, recycling and composting facilities to be provided to work with the Council's existing waste and recycling collection service;
- F. Secure cycle provision to encourage sustainable modes of transport;
- G. 'A' rated electrical appliances and energy saving light fittings;
- H. High energy performance triple glazed windows;
- I. Water butts fitted to the rainwater down pipes for watering the garden;
- J. Recycling of waste construction materials where practicable;

K. Permeable driveway/parking spaces to avoid increase in surface water runoff;

5.54 The proposal is therefore considered to comply with sustainability objectives in this respect.

5.55 MDD Policy CC04 states that developments shall be of high quality through sustainable design and thorough construction standards. As part of this, it sets out that new dwellings will be expected to meet the full Code for Sustainable Homes and efficient water use.

5.56 The development is to utilise a 'fabric first' approach – maximising the performance of the components and materials that make up the building fabric itself for energy efficiency, before then turning to installing renewable energy systems. This involves factors such as a high efficiency of insulation and air tightness.

5.57 These fabric first principles will be supported by elements including EV charging points, roof-integrated solar PV panels, and a high efficiency air source heat pump.

5.58 In achieving the above it is noted that as a planning benefit the proposal would be demonstrably and significantly more sustainable than the existing dwelling, particularly in energy use terms.

5.59 It is agreeable that further details of the above can be subject to a planning condition.

5.60 **Provision of Self-Build Housing:** The regulatory basis of the provision of self-build housing is found within the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016). The requirement for a Council to maintain a custom & self-build homes register to establish the level of need is mandatory, as an entirely separate subject area to overall housing supply.

- 5.61 The Council does not appear to have a specific planning policy in its current Development Plan, and so turning to the proposed new Local Plan there is Policy H6 – which sets out how the Council intends to meet demand across the Borough. Within Policy H6, 150 self/custom build units are proposed, and the policy therefore acknowledges the significant need for units. As this plan has not been adopted, it therefore identifies that there is a current need required to be addressed, and current applications coming forward for self-build units should therefore be considered accordingly.
- 5.62 The provision of a self-build unit within this application (the fact that it is a replacement dwelling is irrelevant as the existing dwelling is not self-build) is therefore a significant planning consideration, and offers significant planning benefits in terms of providing a needed self-build unit that is uniquely within defined settlement.
- 5.63 **Community Infrastructure Levy:** As the proposal is to be a self-build, it is not CIL liable. The relevant forms have been completed and submitted with the application

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle, being a replacement dwelling within the defined settlement.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. A sensitive examination of the existing unique character of the existing property (in terms of plot size and layout) and surroundings has been undertaken (and expanded within the Design & Access Statement), and this has informed the proposal in terms of its siting, scale, design and use of materials etc. The proposal has also been further sensitively designed in respect of residential amenity considerations.
- 6.3 The proposal offers several planning benefits, not only in the form of providing a fit-for-purpose and superior residential dwelling to existing, but also in terms of enhanced landscaping, ecological and sustainability benefits, and the provision of a self-build property.
- 6.4 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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