

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
JATINDER SINGH RAHI
PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**SILVER BIRCHES
HEATH RIDE
FINCHAMPSTEAD
RG40 3QJ**

**Erection of replacement two storey dwelling with basement and 2no. car ports
following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings. Erection of front wall and
entrance gates.**

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1. INTRODUCTION

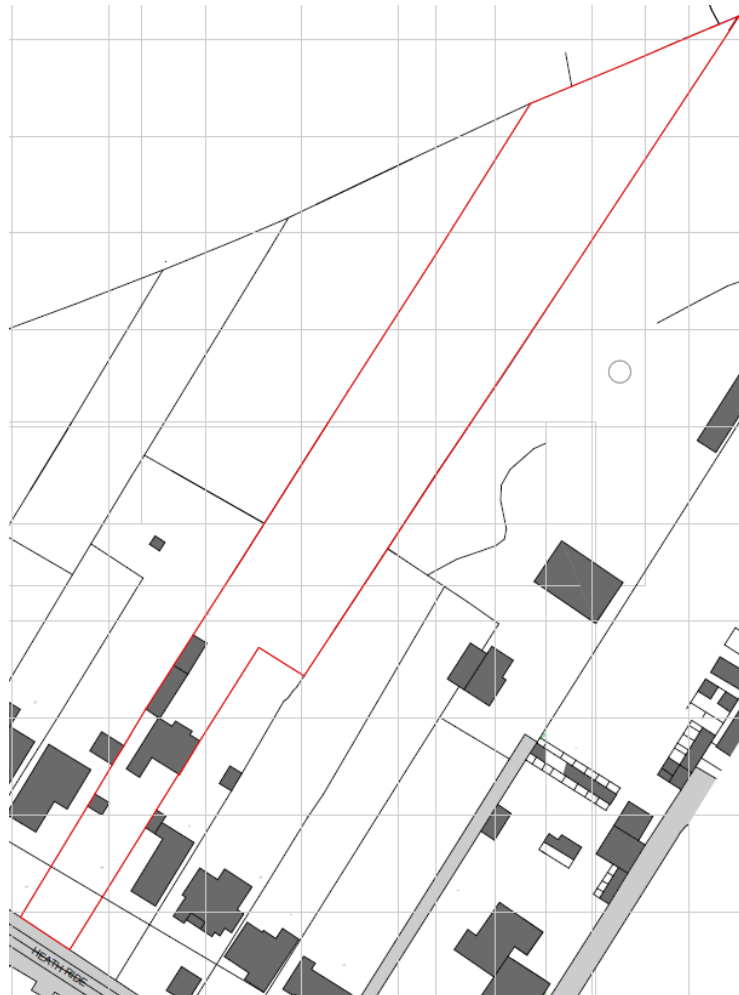
- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Jatinder Singh Rahi for the erection of a two storey replacement dwelling with basement and 2no. car ports following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings. New entrance gates and walls are also proposed.
- 1.2 The Statement is divided into the following sections:
- Site and Surrounding Area
 - Planning History (including pre-application advice)
 - Planning Policy Context
 - The Application Proposal
 - Design and Access Statement
 - Summary and Conclusions
- 1.3 The application follows a recent request for pre-application advice for a similar scheme. The Council's response dated 2 May 2025 (LPA ref. 250884) raised a number of points, particularly in relation to the siting of the proposed replacement dwelling and its potential effect on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. The Council's comments are summarised in the Planning History Chapter of this statement. The current submission seeks to overcome the comments highlighted by officers at the pre-app stage whilst also providing additional information in the form of consultant reports and a detailed analysis of the planning history including conclusions on the extent of the original dwellinghouse.
- 1.4 This Statement describes the site and its surroundings and sets out how the proposal meets the Council's Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. In particular, it will demonstrate that the proposal would be of a high-

quality design that would respect the existing character and appearance of the area including its rural location. The proposal would be of a size, scale and design that would not result in any harm to the countryside and the wider area in general. It will also demonstrate that the proposal would not result in any adverse effects on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, highway safety, and the biodiversity of the site.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site comprises of a detached bungalow with a detached garage to the front and a large outbuilding to the rear. The existing bungalow is sited much deeper into its plot than the adjacent dwellings along Heath Ride although there are other examples along Heath Ride of dwellings located deep into their plots as well as two tier development. There is a large area to the front of the bungalow which provides off-street parking, in addition to the detached garage. The existing property is not considered to be of any particular architectural merit.

Existing site location



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- 2.2 The frontage of the site is within the settlement of Finchampstead North and this includes the existing dwelling apart from the large elongated detached outbuilding which is within defined countryside.
- 2.3 The site is not located within a conservation area and none of the buildings on the site or on adjacent land are defined as being nationally or locally listed buildings. The site falls within Flood Zone 1 and as such is not considered to be prone to flooding. The central and rear edges of the site are covered by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 874/1997. Heath Ride is classified as a Public Right of Way – Restricted Byway.
- 2.4 The surrounding area generally comprises detached dwellings of an individual design and appearance, including bungalows, chalets and two storey dwellings, mostly located in large, deep plots. Some of these are recently constructed replacement dwellings, whilst others have been significantly altered and extended.
- 2.5 The adjacent dwellings, Little Acorns and Little Oak are chalet style and are similarly located within deep plots. Beyond Little Oak is a large two storey, detached dwelling (Victoria House).
- 2.6 There are examples close by in Heath Ride of replacement dwellings that have been approved in the countryside. One such example is at Friars Lodge where an application to replace an existing bungalow with a two storey dwelling was approved in 2015 under 152027, with a resultant volume increase of 237% and an increase in footprint of 50%.
- 2.7 There are also examples in the wider area, including contemporary style property at 'Broomfield' (approved in 2018 under planning ref.173566). This provided for some substantial increases when assessed against the original dwelling amounting to the following:
- 55% increase in height
 - 45% increase in footprint
 - 268% increase in volume

3 PLANNING HISTORY AND PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

3.1 The planning history of the property at Silver Birches is set out below:

250144 – Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of a detached pool house including lower ground floor level, outdoor swimming pool and associated structures to rear. Refused 21.03.2025.

20582 – Single storey rear extension to provide utility room and playroom/bedroom. Approved 30.01.1984.

3.2 As stated in the Introduction and in accordance with central government advice, pre-application advice was recently sought for a replacement dwelling (LPA ref. 250884). The Council's written response dated 2 May 2025 raises the following main points:

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

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- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
 - Further advice was given in relation to a proposed annexe and swimming pool which is no longer pursued under this application.
 - A Tree survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with BS5837:2012. A Landscape Proposals Plan and an Arboricultural Method Statement should also be provided with the application for expediency.
 - Highways and parking – no objections in principle.
 - Ecology – An Ecological Appraisal will be required. Advises that Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the development meets certain exception criteria.
 - Flooding and drainage – the full submission should be accompanied by a drainage plan.

4 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 Relevant planning policy guidance falls within the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 and the development plan which comprises of the Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) and the Managing Delivery Development Local Plan (2014).

i) National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 4.2 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 states that in achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are an economic objective, a social objective and an environmental objective. Paragraph 10 states that *'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 11).*
- 4.3 Paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 4.4 Chapter 12 is concerned with achieving well designed places. Paragraph 131 states that 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.
- 4.5 Paragraph 135 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure developments:
- a) Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

- b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- e) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

ii) **The Development Plan**

Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) (CS)

- 4.6 Policy CP1 requires that a number of criteria are met. These include: maintaining or enhancing the high quality of the environment; providing attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes; demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel particularly by the car; and contribute towards reaching zero – carbon development as soon as possible.
- 4.7 Policy CP3 requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality. Paragraph c) requires that sites are used to their full potential.
- 4.8 Policy CP11 applies specifically to proposals outside of settlements and within the countryside. It states as follows:

- Proposals outside of development limits will not be permitted except where:
 1. It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural communities 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;
 3. It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvements;
 4. Not applicable.
 5. In the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must:
 - i) Bring about environmental improvements; or
 - ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building

4.9 The main factors to take into account are considered to be paragraphs (2) and (5).

Managing Delivery Development Local Plan (2014) (MDD)

4.10 Policy CC01 states that there will be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Planning applications that accord with policies in the Development Plan will be approved without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

iii) Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD

- 4.11 Chapter 8 of the SPD is concerned with rural and settlement edge areas. The main points relating to this proposal are set out below:
- 4.12 RD1 – New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area;
- 4.13 RD6 - The elevations of new buildings must be well composed, well-proportioned and well detailed.
- 4.14 RD7 – New buildings should respond to the materials, details and colours that may be distinctive to a locality.
- 4.15 RD11 – The form, or massing of a replacement dwelling should relate well to its context and to local character. The relationship between the form of the building, the topography and landscape, will be of particular importance.

5 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

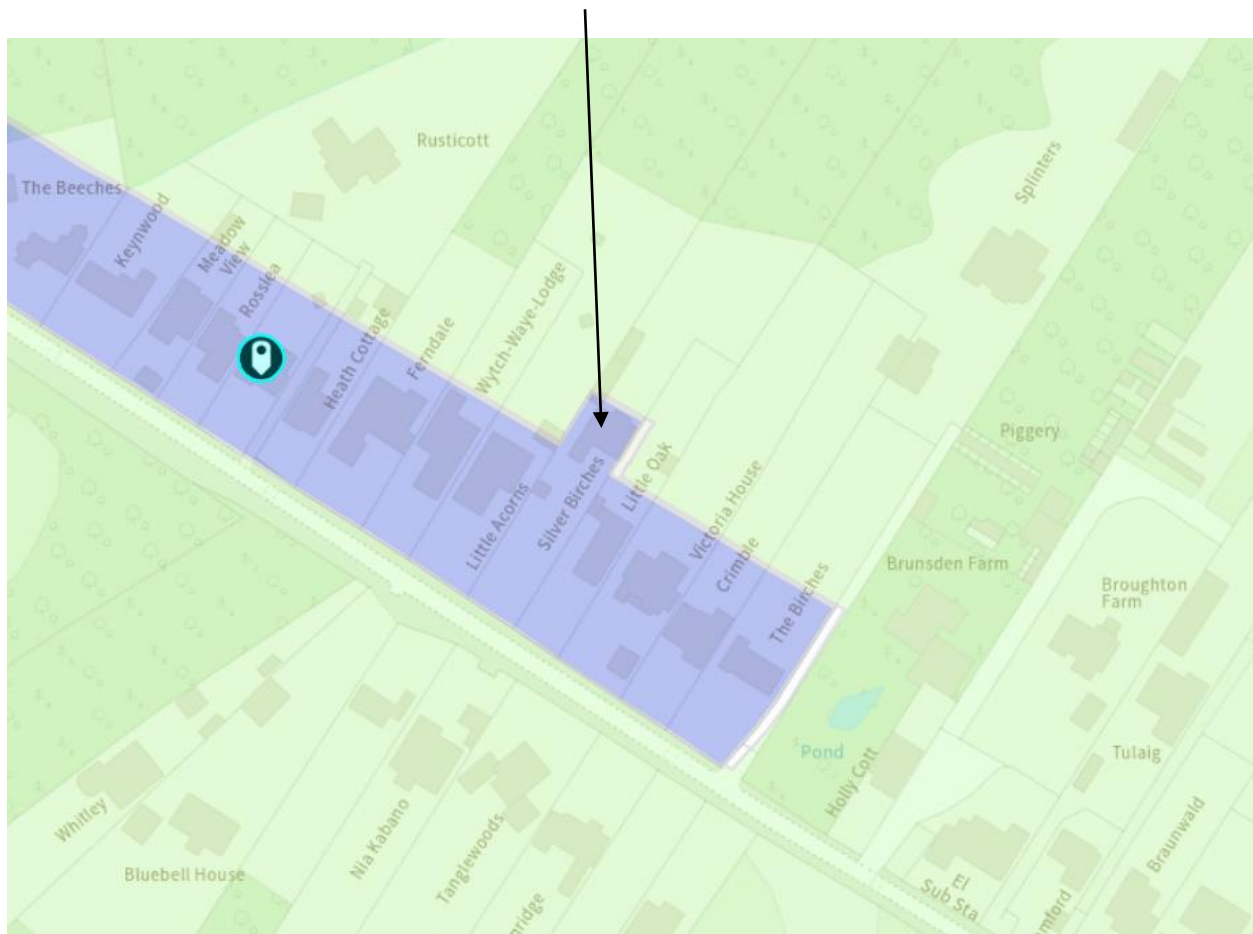
- 5.1 The application proposal is for a replacement dwelling, following the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuilding.
- 5.2 Planning law and the NPPF (para 2 and para 11) requires development proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 15 of the NPPF states that the planning system should be genuinely plan-led. Therefore, the Development Plan should be the starting point for decision making and development that conflicts with the development plan should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development. For decision taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
- 5.3 This chapter assesses the proposal in relation to the following matters:
- i) The principle of a replacement dwelling in this location;
 - ii) The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance and the wider landscape;
 - iii) Parking and highways;
 - iv) Amenity of existing and future occupiers;
 - v) Sustainability.
- i) The principle of a replacement dwelling in this location**
- 5.4 In respect to the positioning of the proposed dwelling, it would be split between being sited within the settlement of Finchampstead North and designated countryside. Policy CP11 supports the principle of replacement dwellings outside of

the main development locations/settlements. The most important considerations are whether the proposal would:

- Whether the proposal would lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings?
- Either bring about environmental improvements or not result in an inappropriate increase in size when compared against the original building. In considering this aspect of the proposal, it is clear that both CP11 and the Council's BDG offer no specific guidance or maximum by which increases should be assessed against.

Local Plan Proposals Map extract

Application site



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- 5.5 Following consideration of the Council's pre-application advice, the siting of proposed dwelling has been amended so that it would now fully overlap the existing dwelling's built footprint (which is located within the defined settlement), with its front elevation positioned slightly forward of the main front elevation of the existing dwelling. The dwelling would comprise of two main elements connected by a recessed link and whilst of greater depth than its neighbours, the bulk and mass of the dwelling would be further significantly reduced due to its contemporary flat roof design and staggered building height which steps down in height by about 1.5m as the dwelling extends deeper into the site. The sun terrace to the rear would be enclosed by a glass balcony which would further reduce its visual prominence. The first floor element of the rear part of the dwelling would also be generously set in from the side walls of the ground floor element, further reducing its perceived bulk and mass.
- 5.6 The dwelling would be well screened by natural vegetation and other buildings in views from Heath Ride and it would not be a dominant feature in the street scene. Any glimpses of the dwelling would be in context with the other large dwellings that in part, characterise the road and given the low height of the dwelling, views across the site would still be obtainable and the backdrop of mature trees to the rear of the site would predominate.
- 5.7 The proposed basement would sit beneath the footprint of the dwelling and would not be evident when viewed from outside of the site.
- 5.8 Two car ports are proposed to the front of the dwelling, with the car port adjacent to the north western boundary positioned on the foundations of the existing garage to be demolished. Both of these structures are within the settlement area and in any case, are low in height and are subservient in appearance to the main dwelling, comprising of timber batten screens, oak posts and a green roof. The proposed front boundary walls and entrance gates would be similar in size and appearance to other means of enclosure along Heath Ride and would not have any adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area.

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- 5.9 The intentions of Policy CP11 are primarily to protect the separate identity of settlements and this purpose is engrained in numerous appeal decisions and officer reports. The proposal is considered to meet paragraph (2) of CS Policy CP11 as there is no 'excessive' encroachment or expansion of development away from existing buildings. In any event, a significant proportion of the replacement dwelling would still be sited within the defined settlement.
- 5.10 In terms of sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph (5) of CS Policy CP11, it is acknowledged that the proposal would likely result in a neutral impact on the environment with potential enhancements in terms of the site's re-landscaping. The proposal would result in an increase in the scale, form and footprint of the original building, but this is not considered to be excessive or harmful. In terms of whether the proposal would prejudice the key aim of CS Policy CP11 (i.e. protecting the separate identity of settlements), it is clear that the siting of the dwelling in relation to the existing dwelling to be demolished and the adjoining dwellings, together with the proposal's modest height and careful bespoke design would prevent this from occurring.
- 5.11 The term 'inappropriate increase' is not defined within the policy or supporting text. In terms of actual volume uplift, the proposal would result in an increase in volume (above ground) from 586.15m³ (existing) to 1039.5m³ representing an uplift of 77%.
- 5.12 The existing dwelling has a footprint / floorspace of 214.8sqm (plus extensive outbuildings amounting to 63.1sqm). The dwelling would have a ground floor footprint of 328.9msq and a total GIA above ground of 542.5sqm. The basement would be contained beneath the footprint of the dwelling and would have a GIA of 333.9sqm.
- 5.13 By way of comparison with local examples also in the countryside, at Friars Lodge, Heath Ride just to the south east of the site, planning permission was granted for the replacement of an existing bungalow with a two storey dwelling in 2015 under 152027. The resultant volume increase of 237% and an increase in footprint of 50% is set out in the officer's report which states as follows:

“The proposal would increase the volume of 237% inc over the existing. This is mainly due to the second storey element”.

- 5.14 Elsewhere in the borough on land that is also defined as being ‘countryside’ there are a number of other recent decisions that have been granted at a local level or at appeal with large volume uplifts.
- 5.15 The consented uplift at ‘Broomfield’, resulted in a volume increase of 212% above the ‘existing’ dwelling and a volume uplift of 268% when compared to the ‘existing dwelling’.
- 5.16 In respect to Barn Farm, Hurst (Ref.221221, approved 2022), the volume uplift agreed by the Council amounted to 113.6%. Page 5 of the officer reports sets out the main considerations and taken as a whole, the officer report appears to take a very relaxed view on the actual uplift:

‘Although the proposal will result in an increase footprint, height, and volume, it is appropriate in the context of the existing dwelling and would not represent a dominant element within the countryside, and thus is acceptable’.

- 5.17 The appeal decision at Foxley Farm, Binfield (Ref.193184) approved a replacement dwelling which amounted to a 93% volume uplift on the existing dwelling and a volume uplift described in the Council’s appeal statement as being three times the original volume (i.e. a 300% uplift).
- 5.18 In conclusion, whilst the built footprint is split between land defined as settlement and countryside, the proposal is still considered to be compliant with the aims and objectives of CS Policy CP11.

ii) The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area

- 5.19 This proposal is to replace the existing bungalow and outbuildings with a two-storey dwelling of a contemporary, flat roof design. The design of the proposed dwelling has been amended to take into account comments made by officers at the pre-

application level, including measures to reduce its overall size, scale, bulk and height. The contemporary design approach is consistent with the pre-app proposal which was well received by officers:

“While the proposed contemporary design marks a significant departure from the existing dwelling, the proposal relates well with examples of contemporary dwellings within the local area and would not harm the local character in this respect. Furthermore, the existing dwelling has no particular architectural merit, and its external appearance has a neutral contribution to the character of the area.”

- 5.20 Furthermore, the proposal palette of materials, comprising of stone, feature stone, timber, extensive glazing and a green roof with solar, was also deemed appropriate at the pre-application stage:

“The proposed materials would relate well to the surrounding natural landscape and woodland. In addition, there is no prevailing character to the material palette, style and design of properties along Heath Ride. Therefore, the proposed materials are not considered to cause any detrimental impact to the character of the host dwelling or public realm.”

- 5.21 In conclusion on this issue, the proposed new dwelling would be of a high-quality design that reflects the very varied local context and would make a positive contribution to the existing character and appearance of the area. The proposal therefore complies with Policies CS1 and CS3 of the CS, as well as meeting the high quality design objectives set out in paragraphs 131 - 141 of the NPPF.

iii) Parking and highways

- 5.22 The application submission would maintain the same access point onto Heath Ride. The proposed replacement dwelling would not result in any significant increases in traffic as the number of dwellings remains unchanged. The proposal provides for at least 6 parking spaces within the proposed car ports and internal garages. Cycle and bin storage is also detailed in the application.

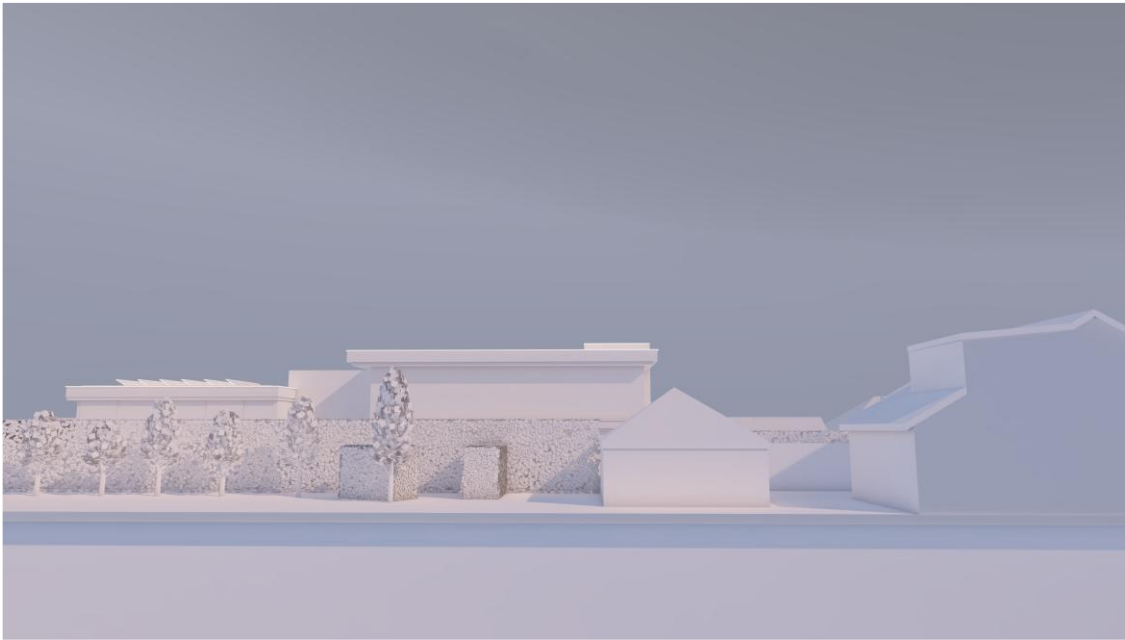
- 5.23 A 2m high brick wall with piers and entrance gates is proposed. The gates would be set back into the site with the walls splayed on either side to ensure that good visibility at the access is maintained.

iv) Living conditions of existing and future occupiers

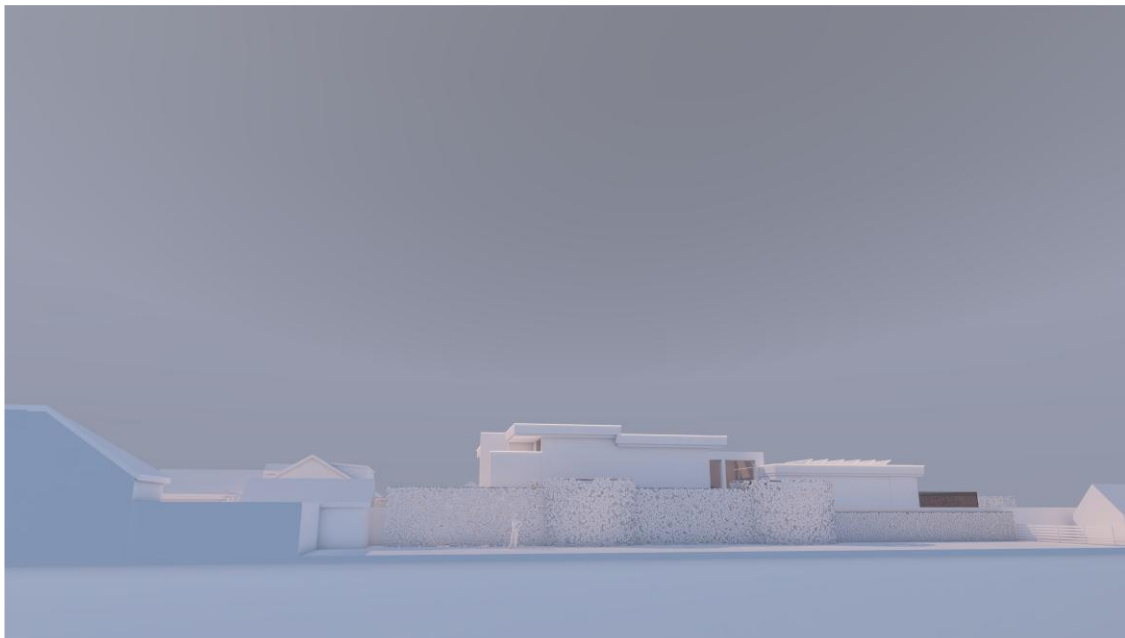
- 5.24 The Council's pre-app response raised concerns particularly in relation to the siting of the replacement dwelling deeper into the plot and its potential to adversely impact the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. The proposed dwelling is now in the same part of the site as the existing dwelling which limits the angle of any views towards the rear of Little Oak and Little Acorns. Whilst windows and inset balconies are proposed on the front elevation of the dwelling, the recessed windows and the solid sides of the balconies would prevent direct views into habitable windows on the rear elevations of Little Oak and Little Acorns and would also ensure that the private garden space immediately to the rear of those dwellings would not be materially overlooked.
- 5.25 There are no side facing windows proposed at first floor level, other than for frosted windows serving the corridor within the recessed link that connect the two blocks. The sun terrace to the rear of the dwelling would also be set well in from the side boundaries of the site and would be enclosed by a glass barrier. Main views from the rear terrace would be mostly over the extensive garden of the host dwelling and only angled views of the extremities of neighbouring gardens would be obtainable. The proposed dwelling would therefore not have any significant adverse effect on the living conditions of adjoining residents by way of overlooking or loss and privacy.
- 5.26 The proposed replacement dwelling would be set in from the side boundaries of the site and given its siting beyond the rear elevation of the neighbouring dwellings and its low, flat roof design, its built form would not result in any material loss of light to windows within the adjoining dwellings. The dwelling would be in the same part of the site as the existing pitched roof bungalow. Whilst the dwelling is of a greater depth, it has been carefully designed to ensure that it would not be visually imposing or overbearing on the occupiers of the adjacent dwellings. In particular, the long

elevation is broken up by the central recessed link which provides both physical and visual relief to the built form.

West side neighbour view



East side neighbour view



- 5.27 The overall height of the dwelling steps down towards the rear of the site, which would further effectively reduce its visual prominence when viewed from neighbouring gardens. In addition, the first-floor element of the rear block is set a considerable distance in from the ground floor flank walls and the side boundaries of the site which would ensure that this section of the dwelling would not be overbearing upon the rear gardens of the adjoining properties.
- 5.28 The dwelling would provide high quality internal living space in excess of the Council's standards and the substantial plot would provide extensive private amenity space for future occupants.
- 5.29 In conclusion, the proposal would create a high quality living environment for occupiers of the new dwelling and would ensure that the living conditions of occupiers of existing surrounding properties would not be materially harmed, in accordance with Policy CP3 of the CS and TB07 of the MDD.

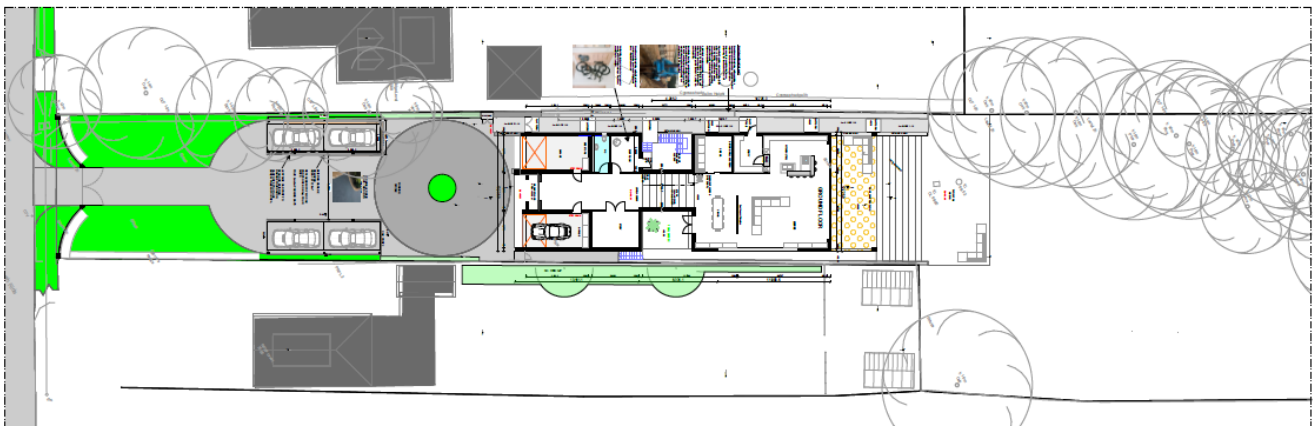
v) Sustainability

- 5.30 The application is accompanied by a Sustainability Statement which addresses the key principles of sustainable development as set out in the Wokingham BC Climate Emergency Action Plan. The statement confirms that the proposed replacement dwelling is compliant with the principles of sustainable development as therefore consistent with the relevant Core Strategy Policies (CP1, CP3 and CP18-CP21); the Sustainable Design & Construction SPD; the Climate Change SPD (2023); and the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP).
- 5.31 The proposal delivers a balanced, sustainable, and future-ready approach to residential construction, delivering a low-impact, environmentally responsible new home that meets the functional needs of future occupants and the Council's climate priorities.

6 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 6.1 Use and Amount: The application proposal is for a replacement dwelling with an above ground floorspace of 542.5sq.m (GIA). The proposed basement is entirely below ground and has a floorspace of 333.9sqm.
- 6.2 Layout: The proposal would maintain the existing site layout. The proposed replacement dwelling would fully overlap with the built footprint of the existing dwelling, with an extensive garden retained to the rear. Two car ports are proposed to the front of the dwelling, with one of the car ports constructed on the foundations of the existing garage. Walls and gates are proposed to the front of the dwelling. No changes are proposed to the existing access onto Heath Ride and parking in excess of the standards is proposed in the form of garages and car ports.

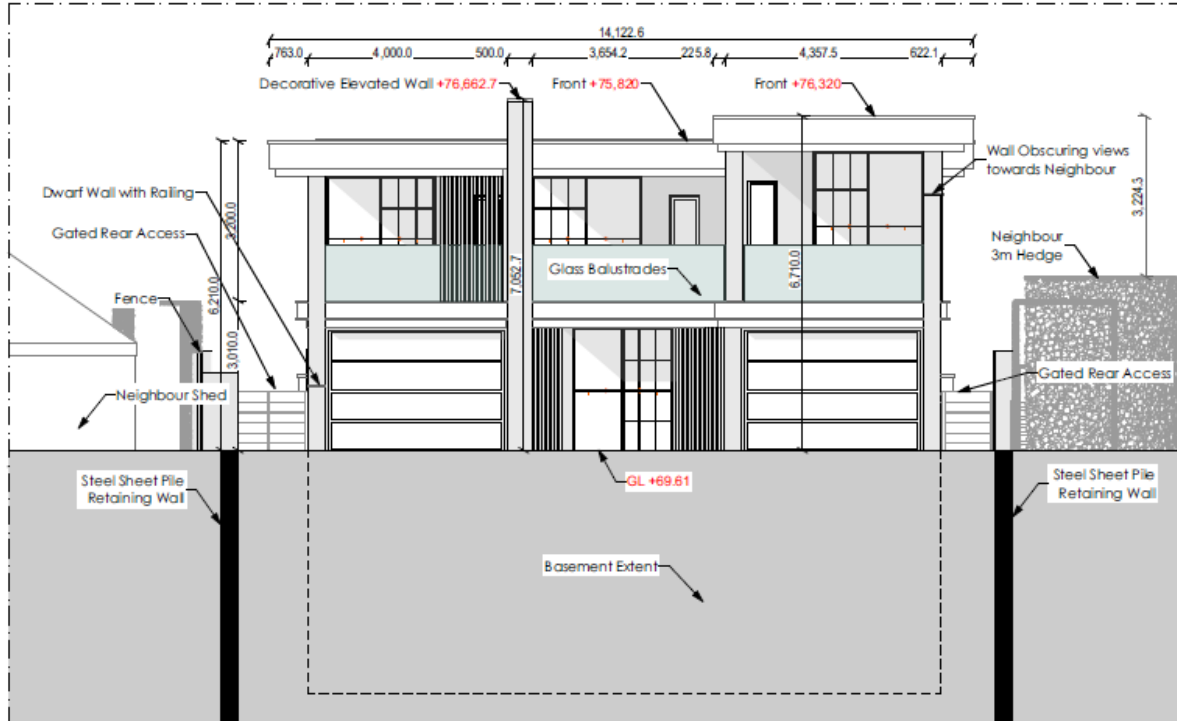
Proposed site layout



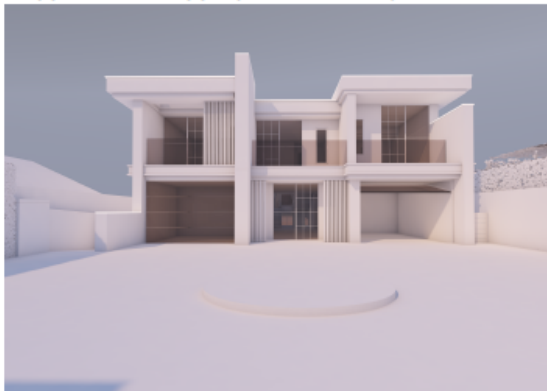
- 6.3 Scale: The dwelling is arranged in the form of two connected blocks with a recessed link. It is of a contemporary flat roof design, which is stepped in height to the rear, with the rear first floor element also set in from the side walls. These measures ensure that the scale of the dwelling is commensurate with other dwellings along Heath Ride.

Proposed front elevation

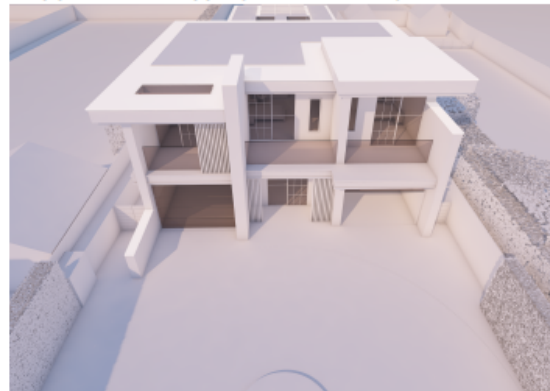
FRONT ELEVATION - Scale 1:100



ILLUSTRATIVE MASSING RENDER - FRONT



ILLUSTRATIVE MASSING RENDER - FRONT AERIAL



- 6.4 Appearance: The proposed dwelling will have a contemporary appearance (see above) using a range of appropriate materials such stone, stone features, timber, extensive glazing and a green roof with solar.
- 6.5 Landscaping: The site layout provides numerous opportunities to introduce new areas of planting.
- 6.6 Access: Existing access and servicing arrangements are maintained.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The application site is split between defined settlement (Finchampstead North) and land defined as countryside on the adopted Proposals Map. The proposed dwelling would be sited within both designations. Insofar as the proposal relates to countryside CS Policy CP11, it would not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings and does not amount to an inappropriate increase in the scale, form or footprint of the original building. This statement has provided a number of examples of similar increases within the countryside in Wokingham with greater volume uplifts.
- ii) The application site has been the subject of high-quality pre-application discussions with all of the comments raised being acted upon positively in terms of amendments.
- iii) The proposed building is of a high quality contemporary design and appearance and would be constructed in appropriate materials which would ensure that the development would harmonise with the appearance of other buildings within the area and its landscaped, woodland setting. The proposal meets CS Policy CP3.
- iv) The proposed development provides a high standard of amenity for future residents in terms of internal space meeting local and national standards. The proposal has taken into account the siting of adjacent buildings and ensures that no material loss of amenity would occur to the occupiers of neighbouring properties.
- v) The proposal maintains the same access arrangements as the existing property and would provide at least 6 parking spaces.