

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250464
Site Address:	299 Wokingham Road, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 7DU
Expiry Date:	29 April 2025
Site Visit Date:	19 March 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed demolition of existing house, construction of front wall and gates, extension of existing dropped kerb (part-retrospective).	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Local Authorities
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Ground Water Zones
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Borough Wards
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Safety Hazard Areas MAH Pipelines
Green Routes and Riverside Paths Consultation Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB21 – Landscape Character

	TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM10 - Flood Risk DM11 - Water Resources DM14 - Ancillary development DM15 - Site History
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
250467	Full application for the proposed change of use of the land to allow installation of caravan for residential use, demolition of existing house, construction of front wall and gates and extension of existing dropped kerb. (part-retrospective).	Live application

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Building Control – Initial consultation – Specified a demolition notice may be required. 21/03/2025 – Dangerous structure declared and demolition notice issued.
WBC Drainage – No objection, subject to condition.
WBC Highways – Request further information relating to visibility splays.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection, subject to a landscaping condition.
WBC Ecology – No comments received.

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Objection relating to: - Lack of detail relating to front walls and gate. - Loss of a dwelling.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	- One letter of concern regarding lack of elevation plans for the front walls and gate. - Trustees of the estate of Roderick Mackie - One objection relating to the ownership of the property and the wall and gates being out of character with the area. - One objection letter. Concerns include: - Removal of vegetation and impact on bats.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

At the time the application was submitted, the site consisted of a derelict, detached property located towards the rear of the plot. The property is believed to have dated from either the late 18th or early 19th century. The property had been uninhabited for several years and was in a poor state of repair.

On the 21st March 2025 the Council's Building Control officer deemed the dwelling a 'dangerous structure' and a demolition notice was issued. Subsequently, the property was demolished.

The site now comprises a large shingle driveway and small rear garden which consists of bare earth. There is also one outbuilding sited centrally along the eastern boundary including a caravan. The caravan does not form part of this application.

Front boundary pillars, walls and gates have been erected which are constructed from block and render with metal framed gates with a boarded back.

Wokingham Road which is identified as a Green Route, boasts a range of property types which include detached, semi-detached, terraced, bungalows and flats. Dwellings vary in age, size and appearance. The section of Wokingham Road surrounding the application site consists residential properties, including an adjoining block of flats, commercial units, including a dentist and care home, and Earley Train Station approximately 70m to the north.

Site Ownership:

The planning officer carried out a Land Registry search to establish the ownership of the site. Although the land is unregistered, there is a 'Pending first registration' for the site which is the process in which an unregistered property becomes registered at The Land Registry. No further details were available.

During the application process, an objection was received from 'The Trustees of the estate of Roderick Mackie'. However, no contact details were supplied.

Proposal:

The application seeks retrospective approval for the erection of front boundary walls and entrance gates, extension of the existing dropped kerb, and the demolition of the property.

NOTE:

The demolition of the original property was carried out during the application process.

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 site is located within settlement limits and as such the principle of a residential extension in this location is acceptable providing that it complies with the wider policy objectives contained within the Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery (MDD).

Character of the Area:

There is no established character to the dwellings within proximity to the application site. Properties are diverse and vary in age, form and design. Although, many of the surrounding properties do benefit from many traditional features such as private driveways, front lawns and garages.

This application seeks approval for the demolition of the original property. The derelict property had not been lived in for several years and had subsequently fallen into disrepair. Upon the Council's Building Control officer declaring the dwelling a 'dangerous structure', a demolition notice was issued, and the property was demolished and all resultant material removed from the site.

The application also seeks retrospective approval for the erection of four front boundary pillars which measure approximately 2.35m in height and boundary walls which measure approximately 1.95m in height. The pillars and walls are constructed from rendered block work. Set centrally within the boundary wall is a set of entrance gates. These have a maximum height of 2.58m and are constructed from a metal frame which is backed with boarding. The walls and gate are finished in a dark grey finish.

CP3 of the Core Strategy states that proposals should be of an appropriate scale of mass, built form and character. The Council's Borough Design Guide (BDG) SPD gives advice on residential developments.

The height of the front boundary treatment is tall within the context of surrounding local area. Whilst there is no uniform design to boundary treatments along Wokingham Road, the established character is for low-level walls/fencing and/or hedging which creates a sense of openness. These features add to the quality of the Wokingham Road environment which is identified as a Green Route road. This is applied to key routes in the borough that are characterised by mature trees and landscaped boundary plots. Criterion a of Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 seeks for development proposals to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of development.

The low-level nature of front boundary treatments in the local area retains views into sites and through to the green backdrops of back gardens. Whilst the considerable variety to the individual frontage treatments is recognised, the generally verdant character and appearance to the road is assisted by a predominance of soft planting.

Although there are a small number of exceptions, the height of boundary treatments, especially where fences or walls are used, are generally modest and supplemented with planting.

In this instance, all vegetation has been removed from the application site which is in stark contrast to the soft landscaped frontages of surrounding properties.

The pillars, walls and gates are of an inappropriate height which encloses the site and obscures views through and into the plot. This is out of keeping with the established character and local area and contrary to Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan.

In addition, it was noted during the site visit that the quality of finish of the walls was of poor quality. R12 of the BDG states that 'Boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm'. It further specifies that boundaries to the public realm should be 'robust and high quality, so that they last over time'. In addition, the BDG outlines appropriate types of boundary treatment and specifies 'Generally, low boundary walls or hedges provide separation between public and private spaces and ensure an appropriate level of privacy for residents at the front of properties'. The existing walls and gates fail to comply with this guidance.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking, Loss of Light & Overbearing:

The proposed changes included the demolition of the original dwelling, this element of the scheme has already been completed. There are no detrimental overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts generated by this change.

By virtue of the location of the front boundary walls and gates and significant separation distance to neighbouring dwellings, there are no adverse overlooking, loss of light or overbearing impacts generated by this development.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposal includes the erection of front boundary walls and gates and the extension of the existing dropped crossing. The Council's Highways officer was consulted, they commented regarding the proposed extension of the dropped crossing:

"A329 Wokingham Road is a classified road. The applicant will need to obtain separate consent from the councils Traffic Management team (TM) for any amendments to the dropped crossing. Initial enquires with TM have indicated a preference to utilise the existing access and dropped crossing onto Wokingham Road. Highways request that the proposed boundary wall and gates details are revised to accommodate this.

TM would not support any extension of the dropped crossing. Should the applicant wish to pursue a more centralised access, this will require part of the existing dropped crossing to be reinstated to full height kerbs. In addition, due to a utilities cover in the footway, the applicant will need to seek permission from the relevant utilities company to alter this. It is advised that this takes place prior to issuing any planning consent as approval might not be forthcoming".

They also commented in response to the front boundary walls and gate. They commented:

“In respect of the proposed boundary wall and gates. Highways request a revised plan which provides pedestrian visibility splays of 2.0m x 2.0m either side of the access, measured to the back edge of the footway. The area within the visibility splays shall be clear of obstructions exceeding 0.6m in height and this will require amendments to the proposed wall.

The proposed gates shall be set back a minimum distance of 5.0m from the edge of the carriageway. Clarification is sought on whether the gates are to be automated”.

Therefore, insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the entrance gates and widening of the dropped kerb would provide adequate visibility splays on either side of the access in the interests of Highways safety. This is contrary to Policy CP3 and CP6 of the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

Following the introduction of ‘Biodiversity Net Gain’, major developments (from November 2023) and minor developments (from April 2024) must demonstrate how the development will increase biodiversity by a minimum of 10%.

Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the development meets the exception criteria set out in [paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#) the [Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#), and [The Environment Act 2021 \(Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions\) Regulations 2024](#). In the event planning permission is granted, and the exceptions do not apply, paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 grants permission subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition”) and that development may not begin unless:

- a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

In this instance, the development does not trigger BNG requirements, however, the applicant should note that BNG would be required to support a full application for a replacement dwelling.

Flooding and Drainage:

The application site is in flood zone 1 and at a low risk from surface water flooding according to the Environment Agency mapping system. The Council’s Drainage officer was consulted and commented:

“There may be increase in impermeable area and we would have no objection to the principle of the development but as Drainage details have not been provided and the existing drainage details has not been mentioned, we would recommend securing via condition”.

Whilst this is noted, by virtue of the proposal not including a proposed replacement dwelling, at this stage, drainage details are not required. However, the applicant should note that existing and proposed drainage details would be required to support a full application for a replacement dwelling.

Landscape and Trees:

The application site has recently been cleared of all trees and shrubs and now comprises a large area of shingle and bare earth. The Council's Landscape and Trees officer was consulted and commented:

"The site is located along Wokingham Road, Earley – a Green Route as identified on the Designations Plan and Policy CC03. The Green Route designation is applied to key routes in the borough that are characterised by mature trees and landscaped plot boundaries. Many of the trees lining these routes are either Veteran trees or protected by TPO.

Until recently the site was covered with vegetation, but all of this has been clear felled and removed completely along with a derelict house that stood within which was deemed unsafe and needed to be demolished.

Where sites contain vegetation it is a requirement to submit tree information in the form of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment to BS5837:2012 in order that important trees are retained and protected in accordance with Policy CC03d. of the Local Plan. In this case no information was received and the site has been stripped and prepared for development.

As no trees or other vegetation remain on site, there is no need for an AIA. However, in order to restore the landscape character of the designated Green Route and something of the site character, a comprehensive landscape scheme will be required as a condition of planning in accordance with Policy CC03e and Policy CP3 in order to recover and provide a setting for development that fits with the existing character of the Green Route".

Ecology:

The application site is in an area suitable for bat roosts. Prior to the demolition of the property, a bat survey was submitted which established no impact on protected species. The applicant also instructed their ecologist (bat licensed) to conduct a site supervision throughout the demolition of the property. The supervision consisted of a 'toolbox talk' being delivered detailing how to safely remove roof tiles and to check for bats, a pre-works inspection was undertaken of the building, and a methodology for the roof removal was agreed and undertaken under supervision around the perimeter of the property.

Conclusion:

The proposal is unacceptable in principle as the front boundary treatment would be out of character in the street scene contrary to Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, Policy CC03 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and the BDG and lacks the required information to determine impact to highway safety.

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.

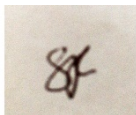
RECOMMENDATION	
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Conditions agreed:	Not required
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Recommendation:	Refusal
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Date:	16 April 2025
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Earliest date for decision:	27 March 2025
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Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
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Date:	28.4.25
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