

TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

MR & MRS WESTELL

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

**THE OLD THATCH
LOWER SANDHURST ROAD
FINCHAMPSTEAD
RG40 3TH**

**Erection of replacement dwelling and car port
following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings**

**DAVIS
PLANNING LTD**

Chartered Town Planners

19 Woodlands Avenue | Wokingham | Berkshire | RG41 3HL

t – 01189 787972

e – mail@davis-planning.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a planning application by Mr Robert Westell for the erection of a replacement dwelling and car port following the demolition of the existing house.

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 3 January 2025 (LPA ref. 242731) raised a number of points, particularly in relation to the size of the proposed replacement dwelling, which are summarised in the Planning History Chapter of this statement. The current submission seeks to overcome the concerns 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

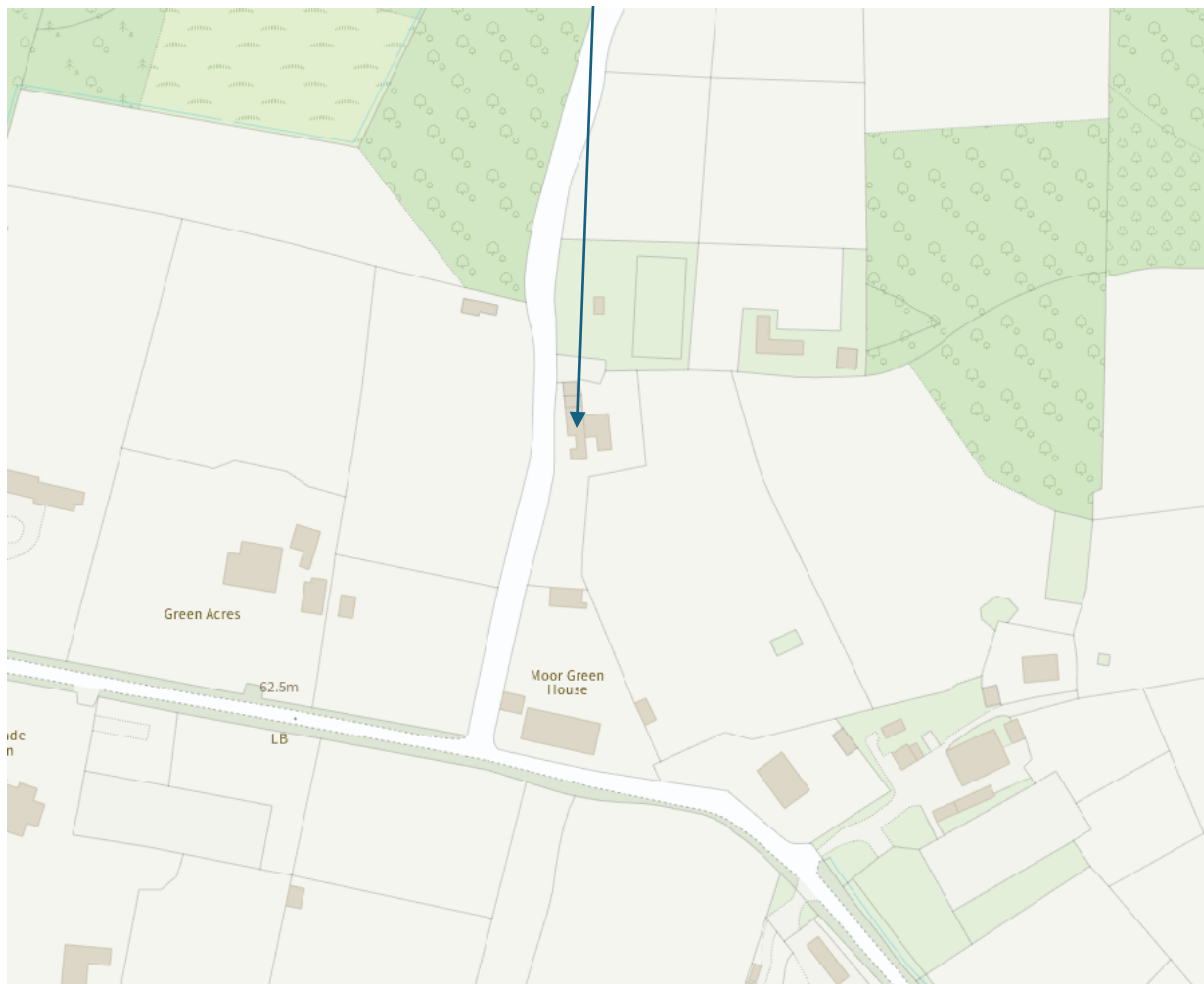
would not result in any harm to the countryside and the wider area in general. It will also demonstrate that the proposal would not result in any adverse effects on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, highway safety, and the biodiversity of the site. The Sustainability and Energy Statement demonstrates that the new dwelling will substantially outperform the current structure in terms of energy efficiency.

1.5 The application is accompanied by the following consultant reports:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- Sustainability and Energy Statement;
- AIA, Tree Protection and Tree Constraints - Merewood

2 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site comprises of a large two storey dwelling set within a large irregularly shaped plot. It appears to have been extended on a number of occasions (see site history below) and this in itself has removed any historic significance that the property may once have provided. The extensions themselves are generally of a poor quality, detracting heavily from the character of the existing structure and its countryside location. There are a number of variously sized outbuildings lying to the north. The property is accessed via a 'restricted' bridleway which is directly to the north of Lower Sandhurst Road.
- 2.2 The site and the surrounding area fall within land defined as 'Countryside' in the adopted Local Plan Proposals Map. The area also has the following classifications:
- Landscape Character Assessment;
 - Water Utility Consultation Zone;
 - Bat Roost Habitat;
 - Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone.
- 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.

Application site

2.4 The surrounding area generally comprises of larger than average dwellings set within generous plots. Some of these are recently constructed properties (replacement dwellings) and this includes the contemporary style property at 'Broomfield', approved in 2018 under planning ref.173566 (see appendix 3). 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

Approved elevation ref.173566



- 2.5 Various other examples of replacement dwellings within designated countryside are attached to this statement at appendices 1 and 2 (Barn Farm, Hurst) and 4 (Foxley Farm, Binfield – allowed at appeal).

3 PLANNING HISTORY AND PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

3.1 The planning history of the property at The Old Thatch is set out below:

i) R/186/67 - Addition. Approved 28.09.1967.

ii) 996/71 - Single storey extension. Approved 30.09.1971.

iii) F/2008/0080 - Single storey rear extension, plus demolition of existing single storey rear extension. Approved 07.03.2008.

3.2 These are the only records which the Council hold and therefore for the purposes of establishing the extent of the 'original' dwelling, the existing plans relating to the earliest application (R/186/67) must be considered to be the most accurate record. The applicant has carried his own research using microfiche records and the project architect has depicted the extent of the 'original' dwelling on Plan S01 (see below):

3.3 As stated in the Introduction and in accordance with central government advice, pre-application advice was recently sought for a replacement dwelling (LPA ref. 242731). The Council's written response dated 3 January 2025 raises the following main points:

- Whilst the architectural design of the proposed dwelling is not inherently objectionable, given the varied architectural styles in the surrounding area; the height, scale and expansive frontage of the proposed dwelling would be inappropriate in this countryside setting and would have a harmful impact on the landscape and character and appearance of the locality.
- Advises that a replacement dwelling could be acceptable if it reduces scale and bulk, breaks up the massing, and is set further back from Drift Lane. The proposed car port, with its modest size and open design, is acceptable and preserves the area's open character.

- A tree survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment will be required in accordance with BS5837:2012. The Tree and Landscape Officer raised no objection in principle subject to the above appropriate reports and assessment.
- The proposal would meet the required standards for internal and external space.
- The proposal would be located a suitable distance away from neighbouring residential dwellings not to pose any overlooking, overbearing or loss of light concerns.
- Highways and parking – no objections in principle.
- Flooding and drainage – the full submission should be accompanied by a drainage strategy.
- 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.

Floor plans indicating extent of original dwelling and approved applications



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.
- 4.6 Chapter 16 of the NPPF concerns 'Conserving and enhancing the historic environment'. Paragraph 209 states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing up applications that directly or indirectly affect non designated heritage assets, a 'balanced judgement' will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the asset.

ii) The Development Plan

Wokingham Core Strategy (2010) (CS)

- 4.7 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.

4.8 Policy CP3 requires, amongst other matters, that new development is of an appropriate scale, mass, activity, built form, height, materials, character and design quality. Proposals should not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring land uses. Paragraph c) requires that sites are used to their full potential.

4.9 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

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

Managing Delivery Development Local Plan (2014) (MDD)

- 4.11 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

- 4.12 Chapter 8 of the SPD is concerned with rural and settlement edge areas. The main points relating to this proposal are set out below:
- 4.13 RD1 – New development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area;
- 4.14 RD6 - The elevations of new buildings must be well composed, well-proportioned and well detailed.
- 4.15 RD7 – New buildings should respond to the materials, details and colours that may be distinctive to a locality.
- 4.16 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.

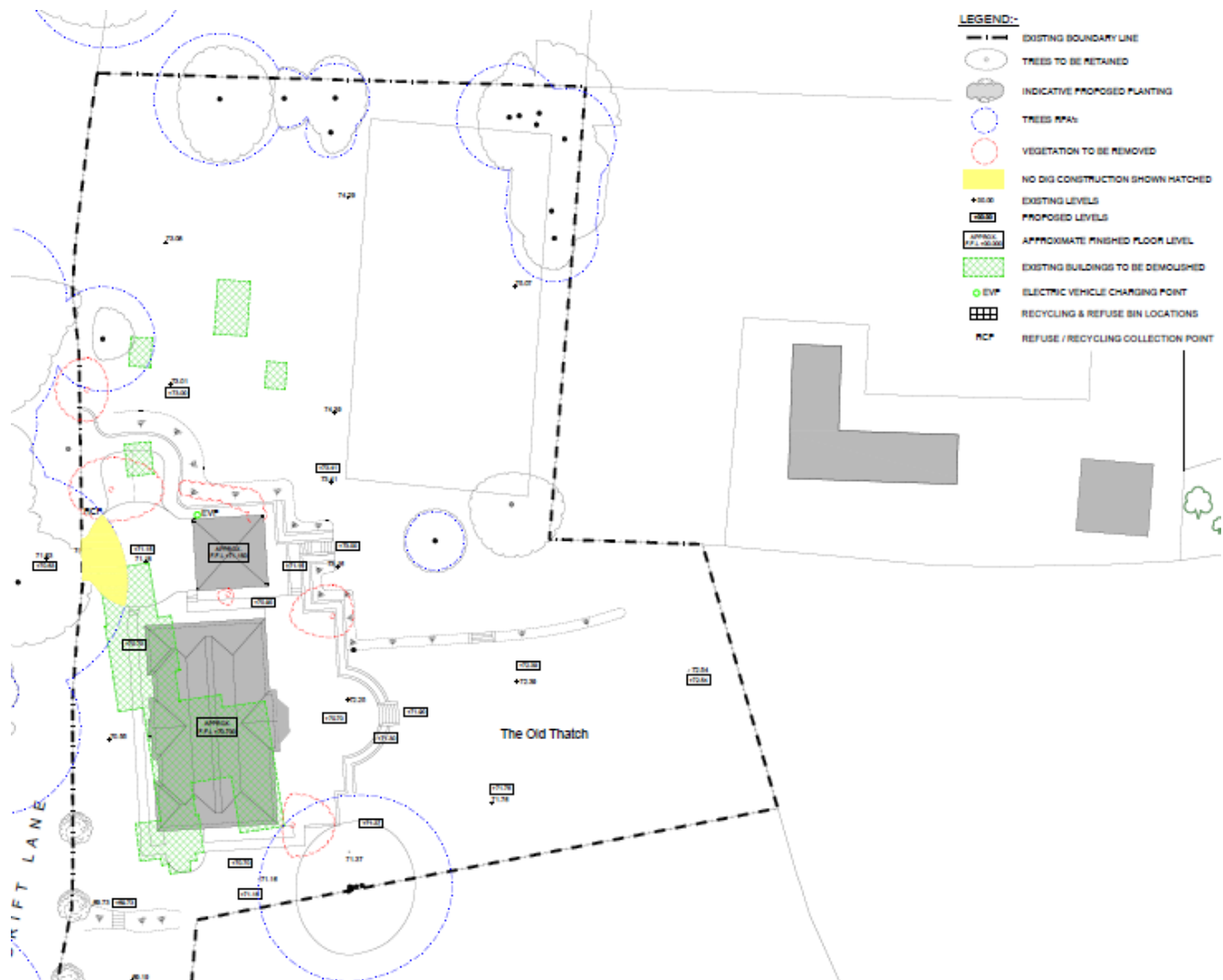
5 THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The application proposal is for a replacement dwelling, following the demolition of the existing building which is lawfully used as a residential dwellinghouse.
- 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) Biodiversity
 - vi) Sustainability.

i) The principle of a replacement dwelling in this location

- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 The existing property is sited adjacent to a byway with its access immediately to the north. The proposed replacement dwelling would overlap a significant proportion of the existing dwelling's built footprint, reflecting its orientation and separation distance from the byway lying to the west. In conjunction with this proposal, there are several small outbuildings to the north within the curtilage that will be removed, confining built form overall to a smaller area (see Site Information Plan and extract below). The proposed carport will not extend as far north as the existing outbuildings to be removed and is sited entirely within the property's defined curtilage.
- 5.6 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. Built development following completion would be more confined and less sporadic.

Site Information Plan extract



5.7 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 relandscaping. The proposal would result in some 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 proposals adherence to the existing built footprint and modest height would prevent this from occurring.

- 5.8 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 from 652.1m³ (original) to 1659.9m³ representing an increase of 154.5%. In terms of the uplift against the 'existing' dwelling, the proposal would result in a substantially lower increase of 63.8%.
- 5.9 When considered against the pre-application submission, the proposal is smaller in all respects. In terms of volume, the applicant has reduced this from 1903m³ to 1659.9m³. Floor space is reduced from 427sq.m to 392sq.m whilst the overall ridge height is reduced by a further 0.3m.
- 5.10 By way of comparison with local examples, the consented uplift at 'Broomfield' (appendix 3) which is very close to the application site, resulted in a volume increase of 212% above the 'existing' dwelling and a volume uplift of 268% when compared to the 'existing dwelling'. The officer report 173566) noted that the original dwelling was comparable in size to the Old Thatch:

'The original dwelling on the property was a single storey cottage sited near the eastern boundary, comparable to the scale and size of Old Thatch House, which is a smaller single storey thatch house on the adjoining property to the north. The existing building on the site was approved in 2001 (with a car port approved in 2008 and enclosed garage approved in 2012). It is sited towards the centre of the property, is two storeys in height and is largely consistent with the scale, height and form of other properties in the immediate vicinity (with the exception of the Old Thatch). It is 45% larger in footprint, 55% higher and 268% larger in volume than the original building'

- 5.11 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.
- 5.12 In respect to Barn Farm, Hurst (Ref.221221, approved 2022 – see appendices 1 and 2), the volume uplift agreed by the Council amounted to 113.6%. The site also straddled a public bridleway. Page 5 of the officer sets down 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’.

- 5.13 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).
- 5.14 In conclusion, the proposal is considered to be compliant with the aims and objectives of CS Policy CP11 and would result in a notably lower volume uplift than the 692.9% figure relayed in the pre-application response which we consider has not been correctly calculated based on the site’s planning history. Furthermore, the volume of the proposed dwelling has been reduced by lowering the ridge height and altering the roof form from gable ends to side hips.

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

- 5.15 As stated above, the Council have, within the last 10 years, granted permission for an eclectic range of different built forms and sizes within the area including the very large replacement modern property at Broomfield with an overall volume uplift of 212% and a contemporary design.
- 5.16 This proposal is to replace the existing dwelling with a traditionally designed two storey property. The main features are as follows:
- Traditional hipped roof with external chimney breast;
 - Traditional fenestration with timber sash windows;
 - Traditional stock brick walls with brick quoins;

- Detached open car port.

5.17 The proposal responds well to the comments made by officers at pre-application level. The introduction of side hips to the roof reduces the buildings scale and overall perception of an 'expansive' frontage meaning that the new dwelling would now be appropriate to its countryside setting. Furthermore, the massing of the dwelling is broken up through the use of frontage facing hipped two storey projections and less regimented fenestration.

5.18 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 design objectives set out in paragraphs 131 - 141 of the NPPF.

iii) Parking and highways

5.19 The application submission would maintain the same access point onto the adjacent byway. The proposal provides for at least 4 parking spaces within a proposed open sided carport and hard standing.

iv) Living conditions of existing and future occupiers

5.20 The proposed siting of the dwelling would ensure that there will be no unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties or loss of light. The dwelling has been designed to comply with the Council's minimum internal space standards, a point already acknowledged in the pre-application response. The dwelling will be sited within a very large plot and the garden will maintain the same generous size, exceeding the minimum depth of 11 metres. The positioning of the front main wall towards the site entrance will avoid any conflict with habitable room windows on any neighbouring elevations. The proposal would therefore create a satisfactory living environment for the new dwelling and existing surrounding properties in accordance with Policy CP3 of the CS and TB07 of the MDD.

v) Biodiversity and trees

- 5.21 The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). Four bat droppings were found in the main house whilst all of the other outbuildings were found to have negligible bat potential. Further survey work was therefore recommended on the main house and if there is a bat roost, a licence will be required from Natural England.
- 5.22 The unmanaged modified grassland habitat has some potential to support reptiles, so these areas are generally retained. Recommendations in this regard are set out within chapter 5 of the PEA. Ecological enhancements are also recommended within chapter 5. No 10% BNG is required as the proposal is for a self-build.
- 5.23 The proposals do not raise any tree issues and all existing trees can be adequately protected (see Merewood plans and reports).

vi) Sustainability

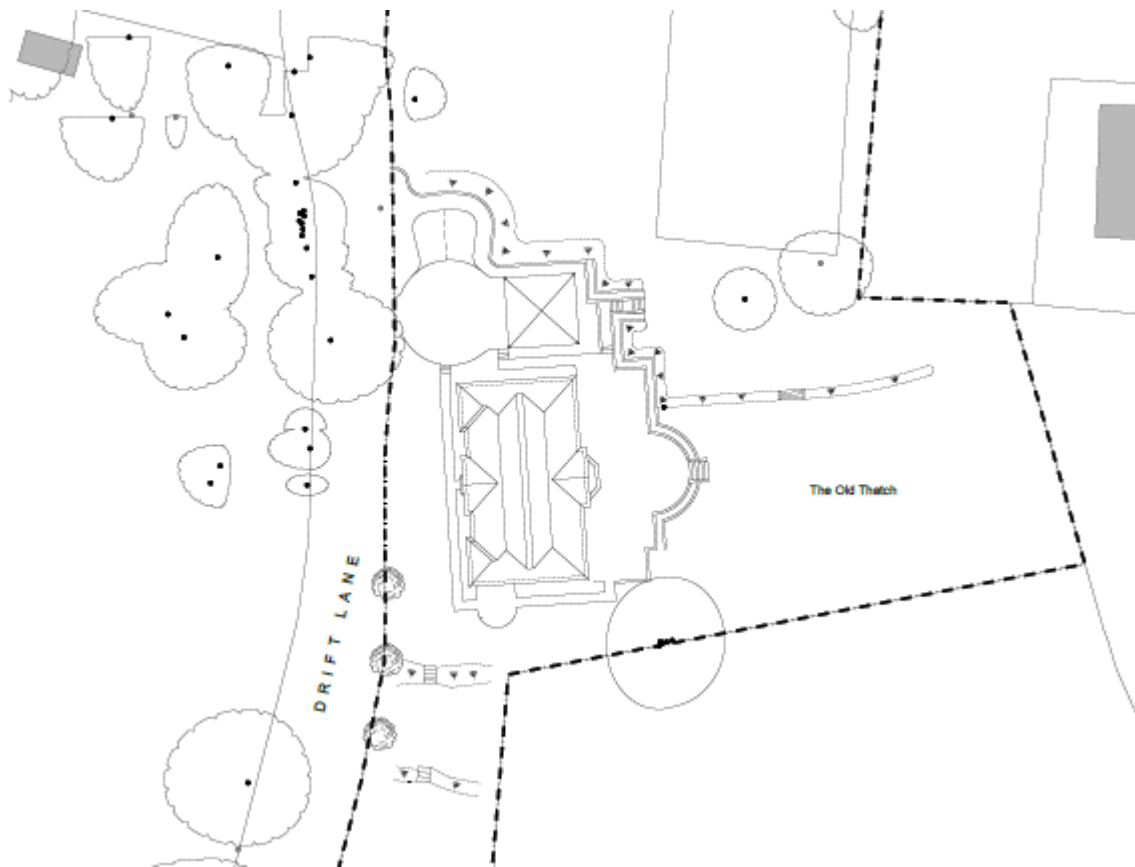
- 5.24 The Sustainability and Energy Statement confirms that the new house will reduce energy demand by 85% as a result of energy efficiency measures and systems incorporated into the new dwelling. The conclusion is that the proposals would significantly exceed Council requirements in all respects.

vii) Summary and conclusions

- 5.25 The application proposal is to replace an existing property with a high-quality new dwelling. Following the pre-application discussions in 2025/2025, the scale of the new dwelling has been reduced, and further clarity has been provided concerning the existing and original dwelling's built volume. The result is that proposed volume uplift is well below that stated in the officer response and broadly comparable in all regards to the case examples appended to this statement all of which clearly indicate that there is no volume guide or maximum. The amendments also ensure that the new dwelling would reflect more closely the countryside location which is dominated by individual designs comprising of large houses set with substantial plots.

6 DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 6.1 Use and Amount: The application proposal is for a replacement dwelling with a floorspace of 392sq.m.
- 6.2 Layout: The proposal will maintain the existing site layout. The existing built footprint will be replicated and there are no changes proposed to the site's current access and parking arrangements.



- 6.3 Scale: The scale of the building reflects the height of a conventional two storey dwelling (8.4m). As stated above, the ridge height has been reduced since the pre-application stage with the side gables being replaced with side hipped roof slopes (see below).



FRONT (EAST) ELEVATION

SCALE 1:100 (OPTION 1)

- 6.4 Appearance: The proposed dwelling will have a traditional appearance using appropriate materials such as red brick and a clay tiled roof (see above).
- 6.5 Landscaping: The site layout provides numerous opportunities to introduce new areas of planting.
- 6.6 Access: Existing access arrangements are maintained.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The application should be supported for the following reasons:

- i) The proposal meets CS Policy CP11 as 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 and is accompanied with an analysis of the property's detailed history of extensions since 1967.
- ii) The proposed building is of a traditional design and appearance and would be constructed in appropriate materials (brick) which would ensure that the development would harmonise with the appearance of other buildings within the area.
- iii) 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.
- iv) The proposal maintains the same access arrangements as the existing property and would provide for 4 parking spaces.
- v) The PEA recommends further survey work to the main house due to bat droppings. In all other respects, the proposal would not harm the site's biodiversity. A series of enhancements are recommended.
- vi) The proposed dwelling will be constructed to a very high standard of energy efficiency which far exceeds the performance of the existing dwelling in all respects.