

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242720
Site Address:	11 Old Bath Road, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6SZ
Expiry Date:	31 January 2025
Site Visit Date:	8 November 2024
Proposal: Full application for the proposed demolition of existing dwelling and erection of new two-storey dwelling with roof accommodation, along with associated outbuilding, access gates and boundary wall.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Affordable Housing Thresholds
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Sonning (Limited Development Location)
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – Green, Amber and Red Risk Zones
Nuclear Consultation Zone – 12km Zone
Tree Preservation Orders
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) National Design Guide
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sonning Parish Design Statement

	Sonning Design Appraisal
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PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
No relevant planning history for the site.		

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No objections
WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC CIL – Development is CIL liable
WBC Ecology Newts – No objections
WBC Ecology – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One neighbour representation received raising the following concerns: - Proposed garage protrudes too far forward, would stand out and is not in keeping with other properties. - Not convinced development is on similar footprint to the original dwelling, request clarification on separation between new dwelling and neighbouring boundaries (Officer comment: The dwelling would retain separation distances of 3.2 metres from the boundary shared with no.9 Old Bath Road and 2.6 metres from the boundary shared with no.15.)

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a large, detached dwelling sited within generous grounds on Old Bath Road, Sonning. The site's frontage, side boundaries and rear garden are densely populated by mature trees and hedgerows, giving the site a secluded, verdant appearance within the street scene.

Old Bath Road is characterised by large residential plots with large, detached

dwelling exhibiting a variety of architectural styles and material choices. Frontages are well landscaped and gives the street a somewhat rural character, owed to the street's close proximity to the designated Countryside.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of 1no. four bedroom detached dwelling, plus the erection of an outbuilding in the rear garden for incidental residential purposes.

The proposed dwelling would have a hip to flat (crown) roof form with three large two storey gable protrusions on its frontage that include large expanses of modern fenestration. The overall ridge height of the dwelling would be 9.1 metres.

A modern, flat roof garage extension is also present on the dwelling's frontage. To the rear is a first-floor balcony and 2no. flat roof second floor dormers, sited within the hipped roof form.

The outbuilding in the rear garden would have a flat roof form and would include an external terrace area. The building would be used as incidental living space (garden gym) in association with the main dwelling.

Principle of Development:

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plans for the area are the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy 2010 and the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014. At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) constitutes guidance which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must have regard to. The NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making but is a material consideration in any subsequent determination.

Core Strategy 2010:

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the principle of development should be acceptable according to Policy CP9 providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDDLPL):

Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

National Planning Policy Framework (2024):

The latest published assessment of housing land supply concluded a deliverable supply of 3.2 years as of the 31st March 2023.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states under paragraph 11 that where a local planning authority is unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, the most important policies relating to the application may be viewed as being out of date. It continues to advise that unless there are specific policies in the NPPF protecting the land subject to the application, that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF. This presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is commonly referred to as the ‘tilted balance’ as harm and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted according to paragraph 11(d)ii).

Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposals to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole and the three pillars of sustainable development. These will inform the planning balance exercise carried out at the end of this report.

Summary:

The principle of the proposed development within the settlement boundary of Sonning is supported in principle by Policy CP9. Notwithstanding the above, the development would represent sustainable development in terms of the principle of development.

Character of the Area:

Policy Context:

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that 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);

Similarly, paragraph 139 states that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. This is supported by paragraph 129 of the NPPF too, which states:

“Area-based character assessments, design guides and codes and masterplans can be used to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.”

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of

well-designed placed should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Paragraph 68 follows on from this stating that houses and streets should establish an appropriate relationship with the pattern, sizes and proportions of existing houses in the local area.

Policy CP1(1) only supports development that maintains or enhances the high quality of the environment, with policy CP3 supporting development of an appropriate mass, layout, built form, height and character to the area CP3(a) and which makes a positive contribution to the sense of place contributes to the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings CP3(f).

The Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document provides further guidance for developers with general guidance that development should respond positively to its site and local context (G1) and respond positively to the local character of the area (G2).

Assessment:

The modern architectural design of the dwelling proposed would be sufficiently in-keeping with the street scene; there are several properties exhibiting similar features in the site's immediate vicinity, namely nos. 7, 15 and 19 Old Bath Road. Additionally, the height of the dwelling (9.1 metres) would remain commensurate with the heights of surrounding properties. Crown roof forms are generally discouraged but, in this instance, there are several examples of similar roof forms in the area and it also facilitates the installation of Solar PV panels, a sustainable, renewable source of energy production.

Several trees would need to be removed from the site's eastern and western side boundaries, but this would have a negligible impact on the street scene (WBC Landscape and Trees raise no objections in this regard), plus replacements will be secured via a landscaping condition. The dwelling would also retain acceptable separation distances of 3.2 metres from the boundary shared with no.9 Old Bath Road and 2.6 metres from the boundary shared with no.15.

The front garage extension would notably protrude from the dwelling's principal building line, but this would have a negligible impact on the character of the area as the dwelling is well set back from the street scene and the building lines of dwellings to the immediate west of the application site stagger forwards.

To the rear, the flat roof dormers would be well set in from the sides and ridge line of the roof. Their form is modest and would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area. A balcony is also located to the rear of the property but as this would be well screened from any public viewpoints, it would have a negligible visual impact.

The outbuilding proposed would abut the site's eastern site boundary shared with no.9 Old Bath Road. Its overall scale is modest and would be well screened from the

street scene, thus having an negligible/acceptable impact on the character of the area. A condition will be imposed on the building to ensure it remains incidental to the main dwelling and is not sold/sub-let as a separate unit of residential accommodation.

The proposed central front boundary wall would be 1.3 metres tall and is reflective of other front boundary walls along Old Bath Road. Its form is modest and would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area.

The proposed vehicle gates/pillars would sit either side of the front boundary wall, reaching 2.5 metres in height. The gates would be a mixed infill with horizontal slats. Overall, the height of the gates/pillars is notable but is commensurate with surrounding properties along Old Bath Road who also have large entrance gates and boundary treatments; dwellings along the street are generally large in size and sited within independent, private plots enclosed by dense vegetation and vehicle gates on their frontages. Overall, the impact of the gates would be acceptable.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

The dwelling would maintain adequate separation distances from surrounding properties to the front and rear of the site. No first floor or second floor windows are proposed. There are therefore no overlooking concerns.

Loss of Light and Overbearing:

As outlined above, the dwelling would retain acceptable separation distances of 3.2 metres from the boundary shared with no.9 Old Bath Road and 2.6 metres from the boundary shared with no.15. Combined with the densely vegetated site boundaries, there are no concerns of overbearing.

Similarly, when the separation distances and south facing nature of the neighbouring gardens are combined, there are no concerns on loss of light grounds.

Amenity Space:

External:

The Borough Design Guide's minimum garden length of 11 metres is a generally accepted guideline for private garden space, provided the space is usable.

The rear garden depth would remain sufficient to serve the occupants of the dwelling and would be acceptable.

Internal:

Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity.

The overall GIA, bedroom sizes and the cumulative living, kitchen and dining spaces all meet the minimum standards outlined in TB07 which is acceptable.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Access/Highway Safety:

The existing accesses are proposed to be retained. New gates and a boundary wall are proposed, and these are set back to ensure no adverse impact on visibility splays from either of the accesses. Each of the accesses is shown to be surfaced with block pavements. Highways supports the provision of hard bound material however the applicant will need to liaise with the council's Highway Assets team for those works taking place within the public highway.

Parking:

The proposed driveway would provide a suitable level of parking, which meets WBC parking standards. The proposed garage does not meet the council's standards for parking a car due to the internal dimension not being 6.0m minimum in length. However, due to the level of driveway parking this is not considered necessary.

The garage would remain suitable for cycle storage, and this has been indicated on the drawing.

Electric Vehicle Charging:

An EVC point will be required in accordance with Building Regulations and a suitable location has been indicated on the drawing.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of surface water flooding. A sustainable drainage strategy has been submitted with this application, but WBC Drainage have not responded to the consultation regarding it. It is therefore assumed WBC Drainage have no objections to the strategy and as such, compliance with its contents will be secured via condition.

Landscape and Trees:

WBC Landscape and Trees raise no objections to the proposals; the Arboricultural information submitted is satisfactory, as is the associated method statement. The protection of retained trees is ensured, and those lost will be replaced with alternative planting provision.

Subject to conditions ensuring compliance with the submitted arboricultural information and the submission of a landscaping strategy, there are no concerns on these grounds:

Biodiversity Net Gain:

The BNG metric provided with this application outlines that a 10.89% gain in hedgerow units can be achieved on-site but only a 2.45% gain is proposed for habitat units, meaning the additional gains needed to reach a 10% gain habitat units will

need to be provided off-site. These details will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Ecology:

Bats:

A Bat Emergence Survey report (Arbtech, 27th May 2024) was submitted with this application. The report concludes that Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within this building and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats in this location as a result of the proposed development.

Minor on-site mitigation measures are proposed to ensure this species is not harmed during development. Compliance with such details will fall under the 'Approved Details' condition.

Newts:

WBC Ecology Newts have no objections to the proposals; there are no ponds within 500m of the proposed development and as such impacts on great crested newts are highly unlikely.

General:

Paragraph 185 of the NPPF states that plans should identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. As it has already been concluded a 10% net gain cannot be achieved on site and will need to be dealt with via off-site mitigation, a condition should be set to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development on-site. This will be secured via a planning condition.

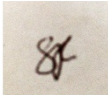
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

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

Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	21 January 2025
Earliest date for decision:	3 December 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	21.1.25