

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251223
Site Address:	121 Nash Grove Lane, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4HG
Expiry Date:	19 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	9 June 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. dwelling, following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.	

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 CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits 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 CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside SS10 – Meeting our housing needs CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging

<u>Those highlighted in yellow hold moderate weight, all others hold limited weight</u>	H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H2 – Presumption against residential losses H6 – Self-build and custom build H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC5 – Environmental protection HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC9 – Contaminated land and water HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
34/66	Detached bungalow	24/03/1966

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Highways – No objection
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition
WBC Public Rights of Way – No comments received
WBC CIL – Development is CIL liable
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection
WBC Sustainability – No comments received
WBC Ecology – No comments received
WBC Waste Services – No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received

External

Natural England – No comments received
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received
South East Water – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objection but wanted to highlight an error in the Community Involvement Statement stating that the site does not lie within a Neighbourhood Plan area. However, the site is located within the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan area.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

121 Nash Grove Lane is a detached bungalow, set back from the road, behind no. 117. It is accessed via a private driveway/ access track. Surrounding the site are residential dwellings that do not have a linear arrangement, with examples of 'backland' development. To the south-west of the residential plot is a paddock, in the ownership of the applicant. Beyond that is Rooks Nest SANG.

Proposal:

Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the detached bungalow and various outbuildings (garage, summer house, swimming pool and enclosure) and erection of a two storey, 5 bedroom, contemporary dwelling. It is proposed that the dwelling would be self-build. The existing access to Nash Grove Lane is to be retained with a slight alignment of the driveway as it approaches the dwelling.

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. 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.

The principle of development is assessed under the NPPF, the Development Plan (Core Strategy, Managing Development Delivery Plan and the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan).

The Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP) also forms part of the Development Plan however this is not relevant to this proposal.

The other documents which form part of the Development Plan (as mentioned above) will be considered in assessing the principle of the change of use, alongside the NPPF. Furthermore, the Local Plan Update is also relevant.

a) Principle of Development under current development plan

Countryside

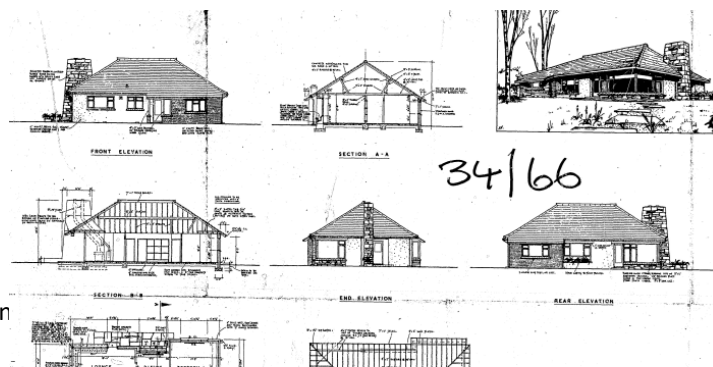
Policy CP9 of the Core Strategy outlines the spatial strategy of the Borough. It directs new development to defined settlement limits. The pre-application site is located outside of settlement limits in the Wokingham countryside. As such, policy CP11 of the

Core Strategy applies. The overarching policy aims of CP11 are to protect the separate identity of settlements and to maintain the quality of the countryside environment. It gives exceptions for when development is normally permissible in the countryside:

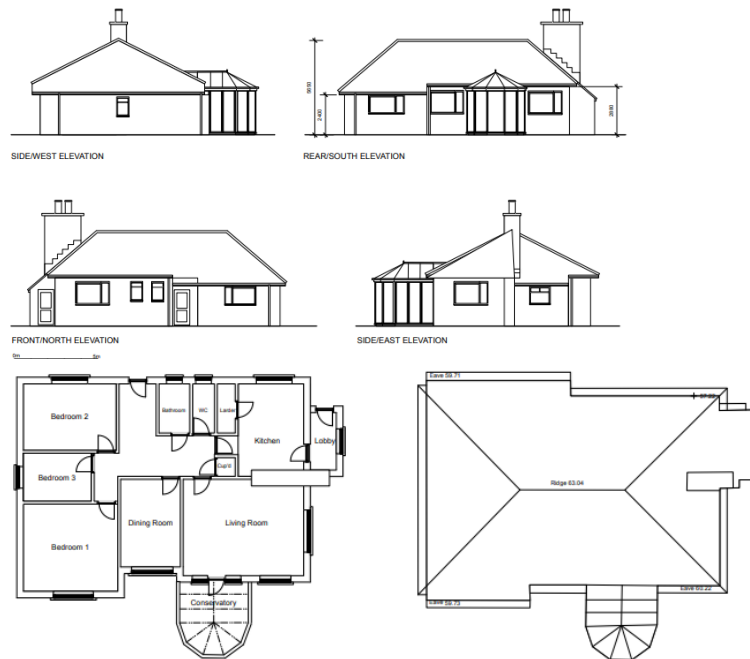
- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside; and*
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and*
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or*
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;*
- 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.*
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.*

The proposal comprises of a replacement dwelling and therefore it needs to be assessed as to whether exception (5) will apply. In terms of exception 5(ii) which states that the replacement dwelling must not be of an inappropriate increase in scale, form or footprint of the original building, 'original' is taken to be the building as it stood in 1948 or as originally constructed (ie. not including any extensions). This definition is taken from the NPPF. To establish what an appropriate scale, form or footprint would be, the Wokingham Borough Design Guide figure 8.19 gives some guidance as to an acceptable volume uplift in the countryside – this is taken to be 50% (above the *originally* constructed dwelling).

In terms of footprint, the footprint of the proposed replacement dwelling is approx. 450 sqm. The applicant has provided the footprint of the existing dwelling (including outbuildings) which equates to 300 m2. However, the outbuildings are not part of the main dwelling, and furthermore, they were not 'original'. The existing dwelling has also been extended; the extended parts appear to be the lobby area and conservatory, although there is no record of these having obtained planning permission. From looking at historical documentation, the extent of the original dwelling is below:



This is compared to the existing dwelling as it stands today:



Officers have calculated that the footprint of the original dwelling (un-extended without outbuildings) to equate to 112sqm. As such, the uplift of footprint is approx. 338 sqm. In volumetric terms, the uplift is also above 50%.

As such, when looking at the original dwelling against the proposed dwelling, it would result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building and so would not comply with exception 5(ii).

In terms of exception 5(i) (as a proposal needs to comply with either (i) **or** (ii), a sustainability statement has been provided with some acknowledgement of sustainable design and construction techniques and the roof of the dwelling would comprise of solar panels. It is noted that the existing dwelling also has solar panels. From the information supplied, it has not clearly been explicitly demonstrated and quantified what environmental improvement this dwelling would bring above and beyond the existing situation.

As such, Officers are not convinced that exception 5 of policy CP11 applies to this scheme.

Nevertheless, Officers are mindful that attention then has to turn to the overall aims of policy CP11 and whether the proposal would comply with these. To re-cap, the

overarching policy aims of CP11 are to protect the separate identity of settlements and to maintain the quality of the countryside environment.

Owing to the proposal being for a replacement, single dwelling, it would not result in settlement coalescence due to its modest scale in relation to settlement gaps.

In terms of whether the proposal would 'maintain the quality of the environment', this is a multi-faceted assessment which encompasses a number of material considerations which will need to be further assessed in this report.

In summary, the proposal does not meet any of the exceptions for development in the countryside so there is a substantial policy breach and conflict with the spatial strategy for the borough. Whether or not the proposal also conflicts with the overarching aims of policy CP11 can only be determined once assessment has been made against all material considerations. This will also form part of the planning balance which will be returned to at the end of this report.

Isolated dwellings in the countryside

Paragraph 84 of the NPPF seeks to avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances such as a need for a rural worker's dwelling, optimal viable use of a heritage asset, reuse of redundant or disused buildings, and subdivision of an existing building or if the building is of exceptional design. The site is located in the vicinity of other residential dwellings and would be a replacement of an existing dwelling. As such, the proposal will not result in an isolated new dwelling and will comply with paragraph 84 of the NPPF.

Site sustainability

Policies CP1, CP4, CP6, CP9 and CP11 of the Core Strategy permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of access to local facilities and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. Expanding on this, paragraph 4.57 in the Core Strategy aims to prevent the proliferation of development in areas away from existing development limits as they are not generally well located for facilities and services and would lead to the increase in use of the private car.

Despite being situated within the countryside where transport links are more limited, WBC Highways raise no objection to the proposal in light of the site already being in use for the existing dwelling.

Development of a private residential garden

Policy TB06 of the MDD focuses on development of private residential gardens,

Proposals for new residential development that includes land within the curtilage or the former curtilage of private residential gardens will only be granted planning permission where:

- a) The proposal makes a positive contribution to the character of the area in terms of:*
 - i. The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area;*
 - ii. A layout which integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas, and*

iii. Existing pattern of openings and boundary treatments on the site frontage
iv. Providing appropriate hard and soft landscaping, particularly at site boundaries. v. Compatibility with the general building height within the surrounding area
vi. The materials and elevational detail are of high quality, and where appropriate distinctive and/ or complementary

b) The application site provides a site of adequate size and dimensions to accommodate the development proposed in terms of the setting and spacing around buildings, amenity space, landscaping and space for access roads and parking

c) The proposal includes access, which meets appropriate highway standards

d) The proposal does not lead to unacceptable tandem development

e) The design and layout minimises exposure of existing private boundaries to public areas and avoids the need for additional physical security measures.

The above matters relate to other material considerations (primarily 'Design') and so will be discussed later in this report.

Notwithstanding the comments made in relation to the principle of development in relation to policy CP11 earlier in this letter, the principle of development in a private residential garden is accepted, subject to compliance with policy TB06.

b) Principle of development under the made Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan

The application site is located within the parish of Finchampstead and therefore the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan (formally adopted at Council on 21 September 2023) forms part of the development plan for the area.

The FNDP contains a number of policies on issues including housing; settlement separation; the natural and historic environment; retail facilities; business and commercial development; transport; and design. These inter-relate with other material considerations which are to be discussed.

Policy AHD1 of the FDNP This only allows development outside of development locations where will only be supported where they are in accordance with national and Borough planning policies. Supporting text at paragraph 5.5 states that other forms of development outside development limits will be supported when considered against the criteria set by Core Strategy Policy CP11, or successor. Due to the alignment between CP11 and AHD1, should the proposal be considered acceptable in relation to CP11, it will also be acceptable in relation with AHD1.

c) Principle of development under emerging/ consultative policy

The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the adopted Core Strategy and MDD local plans, is at Regulation 22 stage as it has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for examination. As per paragraph 49 of the NPPF:

Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and*
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*

As a whole, the LPU is still given limited weight, despite its advance stage of preparation. This is owing to unresolved objections to a great number of the policies contained within it. However, those policies highlighted in yellow in the policy table earlier in this report are those that have received less objection and therefore individually hold moderate weight in the determination of this application. All the others hold limited weight. The policies that hold moderate weight will feed into/ be considered in their relevant sections in this report. However, the focus remains on policies within the current adopted Development Plan.

d) Housing Land Supply

The Borough is currently unable to demonstrate the required 5 year housing land supply as directed by the NPPF. The borough's current land supply is 2.5 years. As a result, the current Local Plan is 'out of date' and therefore the tilted balance (as outlined in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF) is engaged. When the tilted balance is engaged, there is a presumption in favour of granting sustainable development unless *"any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination"*

The above encompasses other material considerations that will be discussed in this letter and paragraph 11(d) is required to be taken into consideration when making the overall planning balance.

Summary on Principle of Development

Overall, the proposal would see the replacement dwelling and as such, the proposal would not result in additional dwellings to contribute to the Borough's housing land supply. It will see a larger house within the borough which will contribute towards the housing stock of larger dwellings which referenced as being required by the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Plan. Officers do not consider the proposal accords with any exceptions outlined in policy CP11, however attention needs to turn as to whether the overall aims of the policy are also conflicted with. This judgement can only be made once the full assessment of the application has been carried out and will be concluded later in the report. Officers are also aware that the tilted balance is engaged, which again will be returned to at the end of the report.

Character of the Area:

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. Section 12 of the NPPF (2024) focuses on good design being a key aspect of sustainable development.

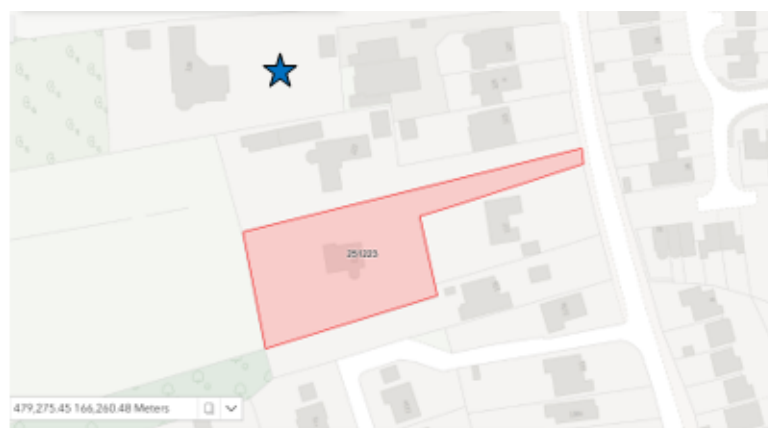
Siting and scale

Policy TB06 states that development should respect *“The relationship of the existing built form and spaces around buildings within the surrounding area” and should be a layout “integrates with the surrounding area with regard to the built up coverage of each plot, building line(s), rhythm of plot frontages, parking areas”*

In terms of siting, the existing dwelling is positioned in tandem behind 117 Nash Grove Lane. As such, it has no presence in the Nash Grove Lane street scene. The proposal would once again see a dwelling with limited presence from the street, however owing to its repositioning in relation to the access track, some more limited views of the dwelling would be visible. However, owing to its overall limited visibility (when assessed in the wider context) the increase in scale and footprint of the dwelling would not result in substantial adverse harm to the surrounding area. It is also noted that there are large dwellings in the vicinity, such as no. 123 which has an expansive footprint, and so this proposal's scale would not be 'alien' in terms of character and appearance.

The site as existing comprises of a number of outbuildings/ swimming pool in addition to the existing dwelling (although there is no record of some of their construction). These are scattered around the site. The proposal, whilst larger, would see the consolidation of built form to just the footprint of the new dwelling which is a benefit. It is noted that the footprint of the new dwelling is that where the existing pool/ outbuilding is and so these would have to be removed from site to make way for the proposal. However, the existing dwelling does not need to be demolished to make way for the built form, and so it will be conditioned that all outbuildings and the dwelling are on site are indeed demolished to ensure that a proliferation of development does not occur and the resultant materials removed from the site.

The siting of the proposed dwelling would be set further back into the residential plot. As existing, the dwelling is broadly in line with adjacent neighbour no. 123. However, when looking at the rhythm and siting of plots immediately surrounding the site, there is no complete uniform positioning, with varying setbacks from the street scene. The application site is below in red, and as can be seen no. 129 (starred) has a plot that is even further back than the application site.



The application will not see a change to the curtilage of the site; beyond the red line application site is land owned by the applicant but is not garden land. It is maintained in a different fashion (it is a paddock) rather than used for residential purposes. As such, although the dwelling would be positioned further back within the plot, it will not result in an extension of residential land beyond the existing defined residential boundaries. The shifting of built form within the established residential plot is deemed acceptable in light of the varied building line and nearby tandem development.

Detailed design and materials

The proposed dwelling would have a contemporary design with a varied roof form comprised of pitches and flat roofs. In light of the dwelling being set back from the street and as such not a prominent part of the street scene, a contemporary design can be justified without being of detriment to the character of the surrounding area. In terms of materials the dwelling would be partially clad in cedar aged wood panelling and brickwork would be Flemish Antique clay facing brick. These materials contribute to the contemporary design of the dwelling and are acceptable. It will be conditioned that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted materials schedule.

In terms of hard surfacing, the BDG (at RD8) states that *“Areas of hard-standing should be kept to a minimum and should be appropriate to a rural setting, for instance gravel or strips of brick paving, rather than large areas of concrete block paving.”* The driveway will be finished in permeable gravel which is appropriate in this countryside context.

In summary, owing to the site’s relatively discreet location, set back from the road, and the variously designed dwellings in the vicinity, the proposed contemporary designed dwelling is acceptable in visual terms, and its siting and layout also not at odds with the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore justifiable in relation to policy CP3 of the Core Strategy and TB06 of the MDD.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Future Occupiers

Policy R17 of the Borough Design Guide outlines the internal space standards for different sized residential dwellings. However, these standards do not go beyond 4 bedroom dwellings. As such, the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards have been referred to. For a 5 bedroom house, the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards 110 – 128 sqm depending on number of bed spaces. The proposed dwellings would well exceed these minimum standards and so future occupiers should enjoy a good standard of living accommodation. All habitable rooms would be served by windows and would receive a suitable level of natural light and outlook. As such, the dwellings as shown would result in a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.

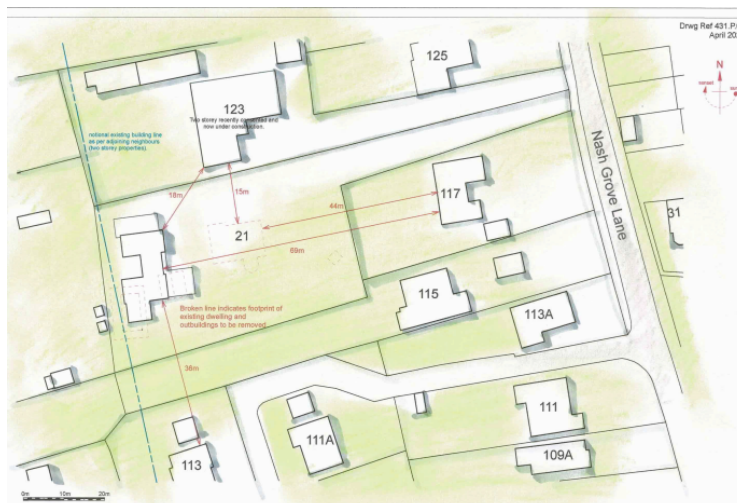
Existing occupiers

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should not have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide outlines the separation distances required to maintain privacy and limit sense of enclosure.

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD aims to protect sunlight and daylight to existing properties, with no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.

The closest neighbouring properties to the proposed dwelling are those as shown below.



Owing to the siting of the proposed dwelling, there would only be a direct side on/ rear on relationship with no. 113 and 117 Nash Grove Lane. With no. 113, there would be a separation distance of 32m which is sufficient. The side elevation of the dwelling, facing no. 113 would see 1 bathroom window and one walk in wardrobe window at first floor (which are non habitable rooms). Given the separation distance, it is not considered necessary to condition that these are obscurely glazed. At ground floor level, there is a bedroom and gym window would face this neighbour. However, these would face onto boundary treatment and would not result in overlooking or loss of privacy.

There would also be a separation distance of approx. 69m between the front of the proposed dwelling and the rear of no. 117. There is no set separation distance in the Borough Design Guide for this specific relationship however 69m is considered sufficient for maintaining privacy and not resulting in overbearing impacts.

In terms of the relationship with no. 123, the proposed dwelling and this neighbouring dwelling would not have a direct relationship. Rather, the dwelling would be positioned directly adjacent to this neighbouring property's garden. There would be one first floor window positioned approx. 9m off the boundary. It will be conditioned that this window is obscurely glazed in the interests of privacy due to being a closer distance but again is to serve a non-habitable room. It has already been indicated on the plans that this window would be obscurely glazed.

There would be a separation distance of 5m at ground floor with the boundary. In light of boundary treatment, the development at ground floor level would be partially

obscured and so would not result in a loss of privacy or overlooking. As such, the proposal will not result in long reaching views over the rear amenity space of no 123 and at first floor level would be set off the boundary so as to not result in substantial overbearing effects or the neighbour's garden feeling 'hemmed in'. It will be conditioned that no further windows can be installed on the first-floor side elevation facing no 123 (northern elevation) without planning permission from the Local Planning Authority, in light of maintaining privacy for this neighbour.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy seeks to manage travel demand with sustainable travel modes, appropriate vehicle parking and minimisation of traffic impacts and highway safety concerns. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan set out the minimum parking requirements for development proposals. Policy CP9 states that the scale of development must reflect the existing and proposed levels of facilities, services and accessibility at or in the location. Policy C5 of the LPU states that development proposals should provide and retain vehicle parking (including motorcycles) and cycle parking that caters for the needs of all users (including people with disabilities and visitors) that is appropriate to the location and the scale of development.

Access

The existing site access via Nash Grove Lane will be retained. A 3m wide gate will be installed, set back 6m from the edge of the carriageway, which is acceptable. The building footprint will be set back, resulting in an enlarged driveway, which is expected to have no negative impact on the manoeuvring of emergency and servicing vehicles.

Vehicle and Cycle Parking

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Urban location will require three driveway parking for each dwelling within the red line boundary. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. The minimum sizes of a single garage for parking are 6m x 3m.

The driveway will have ample spaces for more than three parking, which is acceptable.

In terms of cycle parking, according to the WBC Parking Standards, three cycle parking allocations will be required per dwelling with 6+ habitable rooms which is the case here.

During the course of the application, the double garage was reduced to a single garage to ensure there is sufficient room for cycle parking to be provided within the garage. WBC Highways confirmed that no highway conditions are required. Owing to the access being unchanged and the site being sizeable for parking and not limited to specified or constrained parking spaces, this is considered reasonable.

Refuse Collection Strategy:

Policy CC04 states that all development, including conversions, alterations and extensions shall incorporate suitable waste management facilities, including on-site recycling.

The applicant confirms that the existing refuse collection servicing will be retained,

which is acceptable

Amenity Space:

Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide SPD advises a minimum depth of 11m for rear gardens and a 1m setback from the site boundary to allow access thereto. It should receive direct sunlight and be capable of accommodating play, clothes drying and storage.

The primary amenity space for the proposed dwelling is located to the front of the property. To the rear of the dwelling is a paddock which is not included in the red line boundary and is not included within the curtilage of the residential plot. As such, this is not proposed to be used as amenity space.

Whilst the residential amenity space is located to the front of the dwelling, it is sizable, a fairly regular shape, and it would be private owing to the site being set down a private driveway, away from Nash Grove Lane. As such, it would meet policy requirements

Environmental Health:

Policy CP1, specifically criterion 8, states that development should “*Avoid areas where pollution (including noise) may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers*”. Policy HC5 of the LPU states that Development proposals will only be supported where it can be demonstrated that individually, or cumulatively in combination with other schemes, they do not have an unacceptable impact, either during the construction phase, or when completed, on:

- a) Human health, well-being or safety;
- b) Residential and public amenity;
- c) The quality of land, including soils and the subsurface;
- d) Air and Water quality (including surface water and groundwater); and
- e) Other sensitive receptors, including the natural environment.

Noise

Policy CC06 of the MDD states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed) from noise impacts.

The site is not recorded as being on contaminated land or similar environmental constraints. In terms of noise, there are sensitive receptors around the site in the form of other residential dwellings. Given the proposal is for a replacement dwelling, it would not result in a dissimilar amount of noise to the existing dwelling as it would not result in an intensity of development on the site in terms of dwelling numbers. The surrounding area also does not pose concerns in terms of noise impacts for future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. No objections were raised by WBC Environmental Health.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy, amongst other matters, seeks to ensure proposals have provision of adequate drainage and avoid increasing risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater).

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan indicates that all sources of flood risk should be taken into consideration and that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided.

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which has a low probability of flooding. Furthermore, as a residential dwelling already exists on the site, it would not be introducing a new or more vulnerable type of development to the land.

In terms of drainage, the WBC Drainage officer has reviewed the proposal. It is noted that the application form states that surface water will be managed via soakaways while foul water will discharge into an existing foul sewer, as it does in the existing dwelling setup.

The design and access statement states that the highest point of the site occurs in the south-eastern corner (57.74mAOD) which then falls steadily to 56.74mAOD, north-east. There is also a gentle west to east fall.

It is noted that surface water and foul water drainage plans have been provided but as details to accompany the plans have not been provided, as such a condition will be secured to provide full details of the drainage system have been provided.

Landscape and Trees:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the proposal's impact and relationship with landscape character.

R14 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires well-designed hard and soft landscaping that complements housing.

The site is within countryside and is on a plot set back from Nash Grove Lane and is visually contained by trees within the site and woodland to the west between the adjacent paddock and Rooks Nest Farm. The site already contains an existing dwelling, garage and other structures which will be demolished and replaced with a new larger dwelling to the west of the existing bungalow.

The Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment 2019 identifies the area in which the site is located as being within the Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands (M1) character area. This is a landscape in good condition and characterised by mixed woodland, woodland clearings and low density settlement patterns. In terms of development, the aim of the landscape strategy is to conserve and enhance the rural setting and gaps between settlements and maintain the low-density domestic character of development.

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Opus Architecture and Design has been provided with the application. It is agreed by the WBC Tree and Landscape Officer that the significance of the visual effects of the proposed dwelling will be minor adverse, and the landscape effects will also be minor / negligible. The limited effects are due to a combination of the retention of the majority of the existing vegetation

around the site, being a replacement dwelling within a large plot with proposed additional planting. The associated Landscape Strategy produced for the site indicates retention of the majority of the existing trees within the site supplemented with new tree and hedge planting. This will help further mitigate the increased size of the dwelling in this countryside location.

Regarding trees, an Arboricultural Report including a Tree Protection Plan by Mark Welby Consulting Arborists dated 29th July 2025 has recently been submitted to accompany the application. The WBC Tree and Landscape Officer has no objection to the information provided within the report which indicates 5 trees to be removed (three of which are small category C garden trees and one category U tree). The proposed dwelling will be constructed outside the root protection areas (RPA) of the trees to be retained apart from the integral garage; however this will be constructed in the same location as the existing garage and requires specialist foundations as detailed in the Arboricultural Report. A specific condition will need to be included requiring specialist information on this foundation design.

The Landscape Strategy drawing doesn't identify any possible fencing between the red line boundary of the site and the adjacent paddock and it should be noted that the dwelling curtilage should remain within the red line and should not extend into the paddock which has rural type characteristics. No patio area is shown on this drawing either. If the application is approved, a landscape condition will need to be included to provide further details on the planting as well as hard landscaping around the dwelling in accordance with Local Plan policy CC03.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been submitted to support the application. It concluded that there are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded. More specifically:

Bats

The site is located in an area where there is bat roost habitat suitability. As this proposal involves the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings, any evidence of bats within these buildings needs to be determined. The PEA concluded that there was no evidence of bats in the buildings and there are negligible roosting opportunities too.

Great Crested Newts

The development falls within the red impact risk zone for great crested newts (GCN). Impact risk zones have been derived through advanced modelling to create a species distribution map which predicts likely presence. In the red impact zone, there is highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of great crested newt presence. There are 18 ponds within 500m of the development proposal, 6 of which are situated within 250m

of the proposed development. The majority of these ponds are located to the east of the site. There is only limited connectivity between the application site and nearby ponds because of substantial existing built development. There are many records of great crested newts in this area, the nearest of which are within 250m of the proposed development and date to 2021.

The applicant has supplied a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA; AA Environmental Ltd, April 2025). WBC Ecology (Newts) were satisfied that the PEA demonstrates that the habitats within the application site are of relatively low value to GCN and there are substantial barriers to newt dispersal between the nearest ponds (and GCN records) and the application site. Namely, the residential areas along Waverly Way, Nash Grove Lane, and Gilbert Way include a high density of unsuitable/low-suitability habitats and physical barriers such as buildings, brick walls, and close-boarded fencing. Given the above factors, the risk of impacts on great crested newts and/or their habitats is considered to be low.

An informative will be attached to the decision notice reminding the applicant that it is an offence to deliberately disturb, injure or kill a great crested newt, as per the advice from NatureSpace (Ecology Newts).

In the absence of contrary comments made by the WBC Ecologist, Officers accept the findings of the PEA and do not consider the proposal would result in adverse harm to protected species.

Biodiversity Net Gain

From April 2024, a mandatory biodiversity net gain of 10% is applicable on all minor development, unless exempt.

In this case, the applicant claims that the development is exempt via a self-build exemption. In order to qualify for this exemption, the following 3 criteria are applicable. The development should:

- *consists of no more than 9 dwellings;*
- *is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and*
- *consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015. This definition covers development where local planning authorities are satisfied that individuals have had the primary input into the final design and layout of a house to be occupied as homes for themselves.*

A condition will be applied to ensure the development is carried out as self-build, as described. This is to ensure eligibility for exemption from the biodiversity net gain requirements under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Furthermore, a condition will be attached to secure biodiversity enhancements in the form of bat and bird boxes on the new dwelling.

Thames Basin Heaths

Policy CP8 of the Core Strategy states that development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection

Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

The site is located within the 5km zone from the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA). The Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area is an internationally important habitat that is home to 3 rare species of ground nesting birds - the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar, and Woodlark. To protect these, the government has designated the Thames Basin Heaths as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the European Commission Birds Directive and placed mitigation zones around the heaths to lessen the impact of human activity on them. The Appropriate Assessment needs to be passed to ensure that development would not have adverse impact on the TBH SPA.

Mitigation proposed is for residential development (located within the 5km and 7km buffer zones) to contribute towards Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace which aims to direct residents away from the SPA and rather into the SANG, thereby reducing footfall and pressure on the SPA.

SANGs are new or existing open spaces designed to attract visitors away from the SPA by providing an enjoyable natural environment for recreation. The expectation is that by providing these alternative areas for outdoor recreation, there will not be an increase in recreation pressure on the SPA as new households can use the SANG instead of the protected heathland. SANGs are high quality open space that will remain in perpetuity.

Within the subtext of Policy CP8 (para 4.49 i) a)) it states that dwellinghouses and other residential development will need to provide avoidance and mitigation measures where the proposal involves the provision of one or more net additional residential units and is within 5km of the SPA.

In this case, whilst the site is within 5km of the SPA, it will not result in a net increase of residential dwellings and so is not liable to contribute towards mitigation for the SPA in the form of SANG/ SAMM contributions under policy CP8 of the Core Strategy and thus the Appropriate Assessment is therefore not needing to be carried out.

Building Sustainability:

Policy CC04 outlines that in respect of new homes, the follow should be achieved:

- a) Seeking to achieve the requirements of the full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4;*
- b) Meet internal potable water consumption targets of 105 litres or less per person per day (as part of the requirement to meet full Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4).*

It should be noted that the above policy is out of date and were written before the Council's declared Climate Emergency. For this reason, the Council produced a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (2022) which outlines what is expected of development proposals in light of the climate emergency.

In relation to policy requirements outlined in CC04, it should be noted that the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 has now been withdrawn, and now applicants must meet

the interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations) of a minimum 31% reduction in emissions, in line with the CCIPPS. This will be secured via condition.

With regards to water consumption, measures for internal water use for each dwelling at a standard of less than 110 litres per person per day is required. This water consumption standard to comply with the CCIPPS, which is a higher standard than that outlined in CC04 because Wokingham Borough is situated within part of the country classified as an area of serious water stress. This will be conditioned.

The proposed plans also show the incorporation of solar panels which is a form of decentralised energy. This form of energy is only explicitly required on major schemes (as dictated by policy CC05) however Officers note this as a positive element of the scheme. It is also acknowledged that the total demolition of the existing dwelling is not sustainable in terms of materials, however in the absence of policy direction to prevent total demolition, officers are unable to resist the scheme on this basis.

Planning Balance/ Conclusion

In the absence of a 5 year housing land supply. Paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of granting permission would need to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF outlines that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives: social, economic and environmental.

There would be several social and economic benefits of the scheme; namely the provision of providing a new dwelling and the residents of the dwelling contributing towards the local economy. However, given this would be a replacement dwelling, there would not be an overall net increase in dwellings for the housing stock, but there would be a dwelling of a larger scale that could be utilised by families. There would be economic benefits through the construction phase of the development. At this stage, it is unknown whether there would be environmental benefits.

These benefits then have to be weighed against any disbenefits of the scheme

The site is located outside of defined settlement limits in the Wokingham countryside. It would not meet any of the exceptions for development; as discussed, Officers do not consider exception 5 of CP11 would apply. However, attention does need to turn to the overall aims of policy CP11. As discussed earlier in the report, it needs to be established as to whether the proposal would 'maintain the quality of the environment' (which is one of the overall aims) however assessing this comprises of a number of material considerations; those discussed throughout this report.

Owing to the acceptable design, siting and massing of the dwelling, alleviated by the plot's positioning set back from Nash Grove Lane, it would not substantially harm the character and appearance of the countryside. There are examples of large scale

dwellings in this ‘backland’ arrangement adjacent to the site. As such, on balance, whilst in footprint and volumetric terms the development is substantial, it would still maintain the quality of the environment to a degree that does not result in an overall policy conflict. As a result, there is also not a substantially harmful policy conflict with policy AHD1 of the FDNP due to the alignment of this policy with CP11. The development complies in all other senses in terms of material considerations and so will not degrade the quality of the environment, substantially, by other means.

This, in combination with the tilted balance, leans towards the benefits of the proposal outweighing the harms identified; as in this case the harms are not significant or demonstrable to ‘tilt’ the balance to a refusal.

The recommendation is therefore to grant planning permission.

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 – all pre-commencement conditions agreed

Recommendation:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Materials as specified
4. Self build
5. Biodiversity enhancements
6. Future home standard
7. Water consumption
8. Landscaping
9. Retention of trees
10. Protection of trees
11. Foundation design
12. Drainage details
13. Demolition of existing buildings

	14. Removal of demolition materials 15. First floor northern side window to be obscurely glazed as indicated 16. No additional side openings at first floor level on northern side elevation
Date:	26 August 2025
Earliest date for decision:	17 June 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	26/08/25

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Affordable Housing Thresholds | Total count: 4

#	NAME
1	Outside Development Locations
2	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
3	Within Modest or Limited Development Locations
4	Within All Development Locations

Scale and Location of Development Proposals | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	NAME
1	Countryside	Countryside
2	Modest Development Locations	Finchampstead North

Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Special Protection Area Linear Mitigation Zone	5km Linear Mitigation Zone

Public Rights of Way within Wokingham Borough Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	CONSULT	STATUS
1	Public Rights of Way in Wokingham Borough	Public Rights of Way Officer, Green Infrastructure Team	Byway open to all traffic

Major Nuclear Sites Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	PLANNING_NOTE
1	Consultation Zone - Major Nuclear Site	AWE: 12km Zone	This is the 12km Zone. A circular zone of 12km radius around all nuclear sites, for certain types of significant development due to the potential for such developments to pose an external hazard to sites.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Farnborough Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT_WHEN
1	Aerodrome Safeguarding: Farnborough Consultation Zone	Consultation zone 3	All buildings, structures, etc. Exceeding 90m

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Gatwick Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Description
1	Please consult London Gatwick on the following: All buildings, structures & works exceeding 300 m AGL.

Aerodrome Safeguarding: Heathrow Consultation Zone | Total count: 1

#	Height Band	Wind Turbine	Aviation
1	All works exceeding 150 metres (492.1 feet)	YES	YES

Submitted Sites Live | Total count: 1

#	SITE_REF	LUPP	ADDRESS
1	5FI027	Housing (C3 Planning Use Class). Pitches for Gypsy and Travellers and plots for Travelling Show People.	Land lying to the rear of 115 - 137 Nash Grove Lane

Risk of Flooding from Surface Water | Total count: 2

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME
1	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent
2	Environment Agency Surface Water Flood Zones	1 in 1000 year risk extent

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability | Total count: 11

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	US989	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
2	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	US990	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

3	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UT989	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
4	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UT990	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
5	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UU989	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
6	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UU990	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
7	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UV991	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
8	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UW989	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
9	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UW990	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
10	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UX988	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team
11	Bat survey required for planning applications that involve roof modification or demolition.	UX989	Ecology Officer, Green Infrastructure Team

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Red	For Householder applications check HH Layer. Consult NatureSpace for all other types of development

Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zones - Minor | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT
1	Great Crested Newt Impact Risk Zone	Red	Consult NatureSpace for any minor development that intersects a red or amber zone in this layer

SSSI Impact Risk Zones | Total count: 1

#	IRZURL
1	https://irz.geodata.org.uk/IRZ/step2.html?irzcode=0101000322302-es=11401&location=479935,165401%20(IRZ%20polygon%20centre)

Water Utility Consultation Zones | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	FEATURE_NAME	CONSULT_WHEN
1	Water Utility Consultation Zone	South East Water Supply Area	New dwellings

Landscape Character Assessment 2019 | Total count: 1

#	FEATURE_TYPE	Name
1	Landscape Character Assessment 2019	Finchampstead Forested and Settled Sands

Wards | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Finchampstead Ward	0 m

Parishes | Total count: 1

#	NAME	Closest Approximate Distance
1	Finchampstead CP	0 m