



UR ARCHITECTS

20 Pitts Lane, Earley, RG6 1BT

Planning Statement

31st July 2026

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1.0 Introduction

This Planning Statement has been prepared by UR Architects on behalf of Mr Z Khan to support a full planning application at 20 Pitts Lane, Earley, Reading, RG6 1BT.

The application proposes the demolition of the former Gospel Hall building and the erection of 1no. detached dwelling (Use Class C3), together with a detached double garage, car parking, cycle storage, a new boundary wall and gates, and associated hard and soft landscaping.

This Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Design & Access Statement, which describes the design evolution of the scheme, and with the following submission documents:

- A-L-001 D – Proposed Site Plan
- A-L-100 D – Proposed Ground & First Floor Plan
- A-L-101 C – Proposed Second & Roof Plan
- A-L-102 C – Proposed Garage Building Plans
- A-L-200 C – Existing Location & Gospel Hall Plans
- A-L-201 C – Proposed House Elevations
- A-L-202 – Proposed Street / Boundary Wall Elevation
- Design & Access Statement (ref. 0101-260731-20 Pitts Lane-Design & Access Statement)
- Preliminary Roost Assessment, GS Ecology (ref. ECO4046)
- Bat Survey Report, GS Ecology (ref. ECO4046b, July 2026)

This Statement sets out the planning policy context for the proposal and demonstrates that the scheme accords with the adopted Wokingham Borough Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and that it represents sustainable development for which the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement, prepared to address the mandatory BNG requirements of the Environment Act 2021 and the validation requirements of Wokingham Borough Council, is provided at Section 6.0 of this Statement.



Aerial view of site and context with 20 Pitts Lane outlined in red

2.1 Site Location and Description

The application site is located midway along Pitts Lane (B3350), a residential road in Earley, within the administrative area of Wokingham Borough Council. The site lies east of the A3290, south of London Road, and backs onto a green urban corridor adjacent which is part of the school grounds.

The site comprises a detached, two storey former gospel hall set to the middle of the plot, with a driveway and hardstanding car parking, and front and rear garden areas. Pitts Lane is characterised by long, linear residential plots with dwellings generally set forward towards the road frontage.

The site frontage was historically constrained by an electricity pylon, which was removed in 2020, opening up the front of the site. The site lies within Flood Zone 1, at the lowest risk of flooding, and is not subject to any heritage designations.



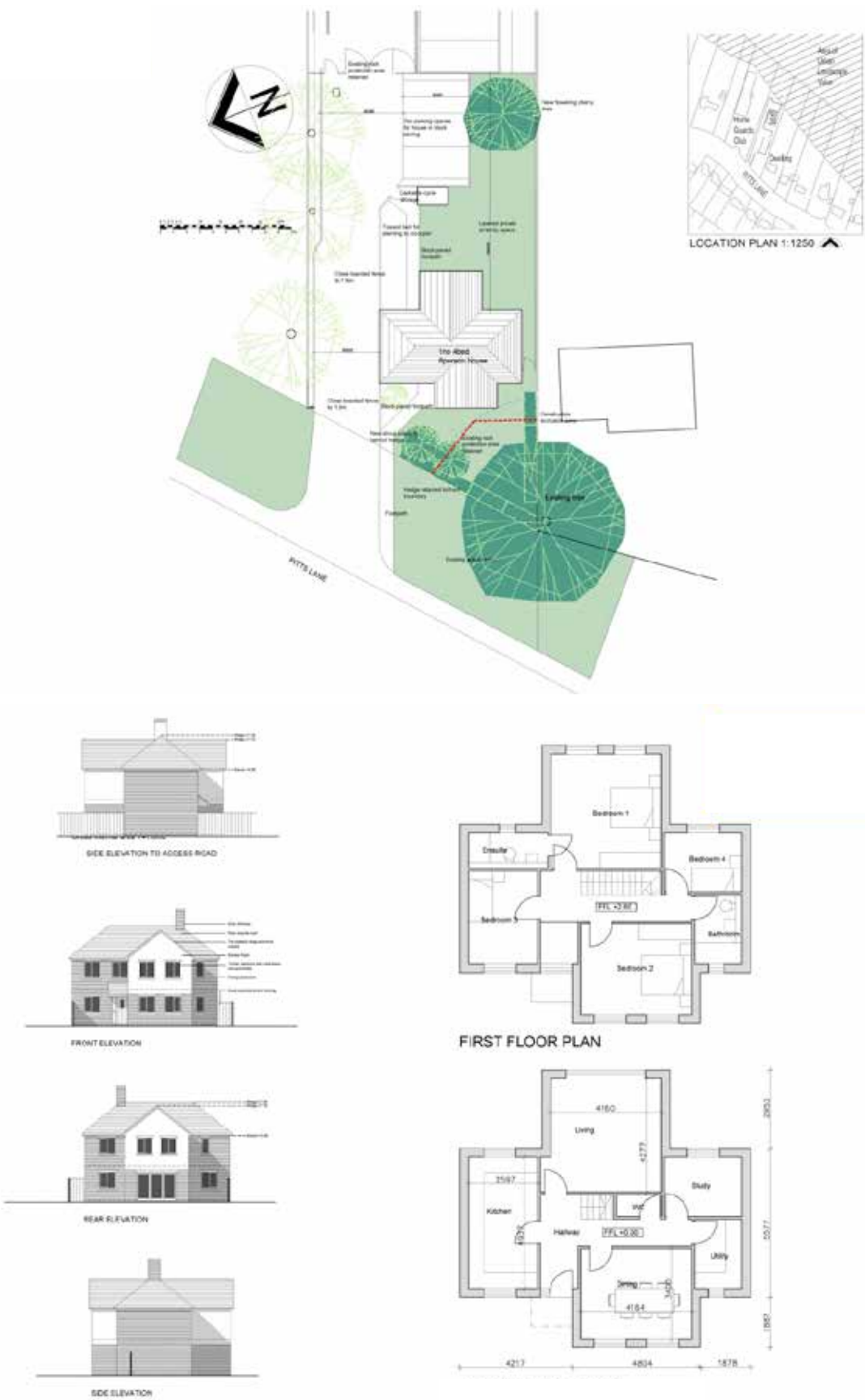
Existing site photos of 20 Pitts Lane

2.2 Relevant Planning History

The principle of a dwelling on this site is established. Outline planning permission for one dwelling was granted under reference 201370, and approval of reserved matters followed under reference 231648. The present application follows on from, and is consistent with, that planning history: it seeks to deliver the residential redevelopment of the site that the Council has already accepted in principle and in reserved matters.

The full planning history of the site, including the appeal relating to the Gospel Hall, is as follows:

|        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |            |         |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| 080705 | Proposed demolition of existing residential bungalow and the erection of a two storey building with Gospel Hall on ground floor and caretakers flat on first floor with associated car parking facilities.                       | 20/06/2008 | Approve |
| 200564 | Full planning application for the proposed first floor extension to the Gospel Hall. Access to the first floor via external stairs also changes to car parking and landscaping.                                                  | 22/05/2020 | Approve |
| 081250 | Application for submission of details to comply with the following conditions . Cond.2- Proposed planting scheme, Cond.3- Proposed fencing, Cond.4- Details of materials                                                         | 16/10/2008 | Approve |
| 200563 | Outline application for the proposed erection of 2No 4-bed dwellings (Use Class C3) with access, layout and scale to be considered following removal of electricity pylon.                                                       |            |         |
| 231648 | Application for the approval of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning consent 201370 for the erection of 1No. dwelling with access, layout and scale to be determined. Appearance and Landscaping to be considered only. | 23/08/2023 | Approve |
| 201370 | Outline application for the erection of 1 no. dwelling (Use Class C3) with access, layout and scale to be determined.                                                                                                            | 10/09/2020 | Approve |



| WBC Planning Reference | Planning Description                                                                                                                        | Planning Decision | Planning Status                                |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 060711                 | Proposed erection of a single storey gospel hall and detached caretakers dwelling. Demolition of existing dwelling.                         | 01/03/2006        | Refused                                        |
| 071169                 | Proposed demolition of existing residential bungalow and the erection of a single storey Gospel Hall with associated car parking facilities | 01/08/2007        | Refused                                        |
| APP/ X0360/A/          | Proposed demolition of existing residential bungalow and the erection of a single storey Gospel Hall with associated car parking facilities | 17/06/2008        | Appeal allowed for planning application 071169 |

Plans of proposed 4 bedroom house granted under planning reference 201370



No.22 Earley Home Guard Club (outlier in mainly residential context)



No.18 Pitts Lane (Neighbouring Property)



No.26 Pitts Lane (Large Detached House Neighbouring Property)



No.16 Pitts Lane (Neighbouring Property Recently Extended)



No.36 Pitts Lane (Context Large Detached House)



No.27, 29, 31 and recently extended no. 33 Pitts Lane (Opposite Context)



No.105 Pitts Lane (Varying Architectural Style in Local Context)

2.3 Local Character

Pitts Lane is residential in character, comprising predominantly two storey detached and semi-detached dwellings. There is no single uniformity of style along the lane; the street scene displays a variety of gables, facing brickwork, render, chimneys and roof forms. The former hall, set deep within its plot behind an open hardstanding, sits at odds with this prevailing residential grain.

3.1 The Development Plan

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The adopted Development Plan for Wokingham Borough comprises the Core Strategy (adopted January 2010) and the Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted February 2014). The policies of most relevance to this proposal are:

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- CP7 – Biodiversity
- CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP17 – Housing Delivery
- CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- CC02 – Development Limits
- CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC07 – Parking
- CC09 / CC10 – Development and Flood Risk / Sustainable Drainage
- TB07 – Internal Space Standards
- TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value
- TB23 – Biodiversity and Development

The site lies within the development limits of Earley, identified in the Core Strategy as a major development location. The Site of Urban Landscape Value designation (Policy TB22) extends only into the rear portion of the site, which is retained as soft landscaped garden under this proposal. There is no made Neighbourhood Plan for Earley.

3.2 Planning Constraints

There are several relevant Wokingham Borough Council planning constraints for this site including:

- Major Development Location
- Southern Gas High Pressure Pipe (along western frontage)
- Major Accident Hazard Area
- Potentially contaminated land consultation zone
- Groundwater zone 3
- Flood zone 1
- Bat roost consultation zone



### **3.2 Emerging Local Plan Update**

The Council submitted the Local Plan Update (2023–2040) for examination in February 2025, with Part 2 hearings commencing in March 2026. As the plan has not yet been adopted, its policies can be afforded only limited weight at this time. In any event, the emerging plan maintains the strategy of directing development to sustainable locations within existing settlements such as Earley, with which this proposal is consistent.

### **3.3 National Planning Policy Framework**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) is a significant material consideration. At its heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11), which for decision-taking means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

Chapter 11 of the NPPF requires that planning decisions promote the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes (paragraph 124) and gives substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes. Chapter 12 seeks to achieve well-designed places, requiring development to function well, be visually attractive, be sympathetic to local character, and provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

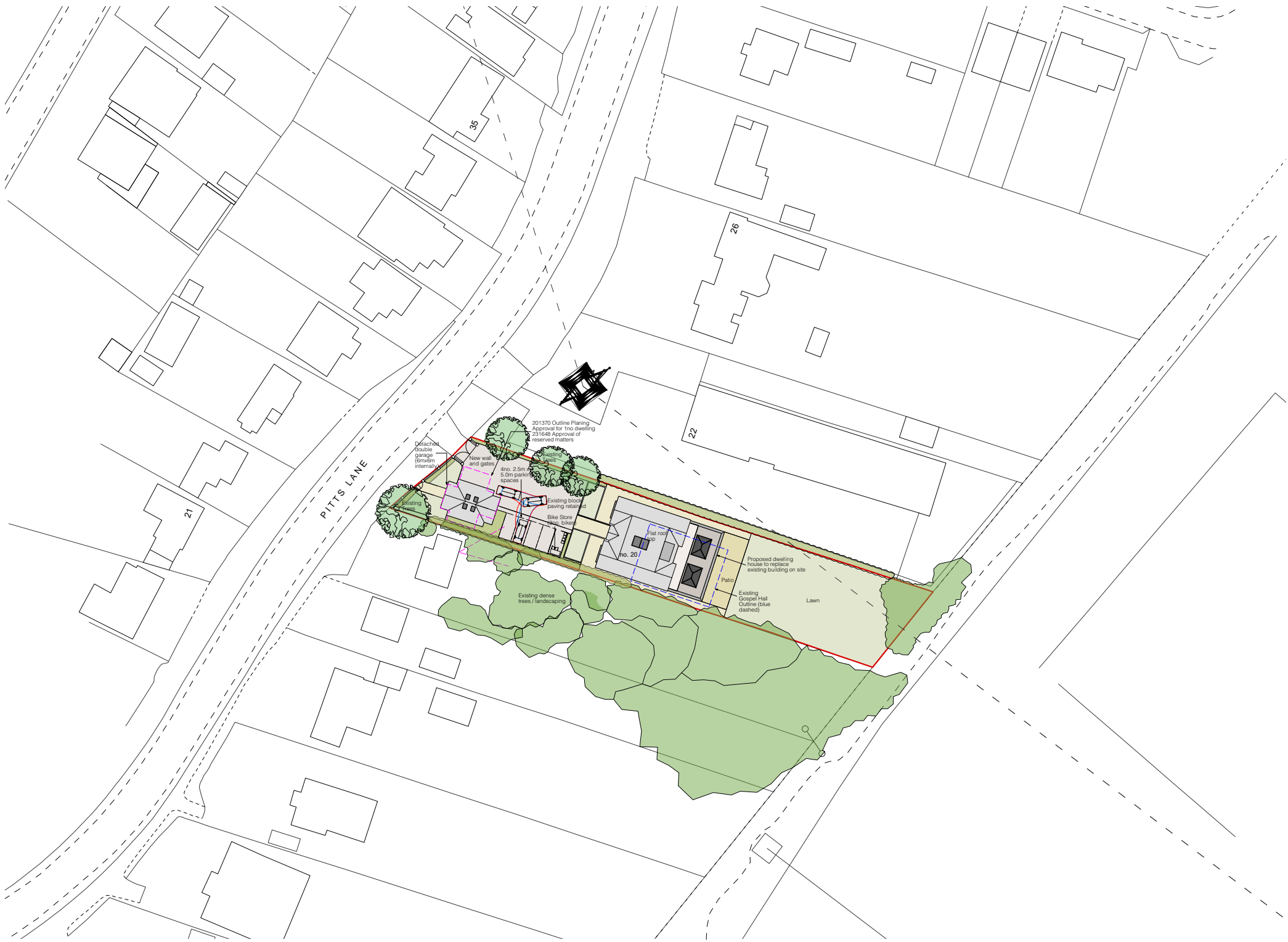
The Government published a consultation draft of a revised NPPF in December 2025; as a consultation document it carries limited weight, but its direction of travel reinforces the presumption in favour of suitably located, sustainable development such as this proposal.

4.0 The Proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the former gospel hall and the erection of a single detached family dwelling with accommodation arranged over three floors. The ground floor provides open plan kitchen, dining and living accommodation, a front reception, guest bedroom, prayer room and a gym and wellness suite; the first floor provides three bedrooms; and the second floor, set within the roof form, provides two further bedrooms.

A detached double garage (6m x 6m internally) with a games room over is proposed towards the site frontage, together with 4no. parking spaces (2.5m x 5.0m), a covered cycle store for 3no. bicycles, and a new boundary wall and gates to the Pitts Lane frontage.

The proposed materials draw from the established local palette: facing London stock brickwork, stone cladding, render, concrete roof tiles and PPC aluminium windows and doors, with obscure glazing to side-facing windows. The existing site access from Pitts Lane is retained, as are the existing trees and the dense boundary landscaping, supplemented by front and rear lawns and a rear patio.



Proposed Site Plan in context

5.1 The Principle of Development

The site lies within the development limits of Earley, a major development location, where new residential development is acceptable in principle in accordance with Policies CC01, CC02 and CP9. The site is previously developed land in a sustainable urban location, with good access to local shops, schools, employment and public transport connections along London Road and to Reading and the University.

Critically, the principle of a dwelling on this site is already established through the grant of outline permission 201370 and the approval of reserved matters 231648. This application delivers the residential redevelopment of the site that the Council has accepted, making full and efficient use of previously developed land in accordance with paragraph 124 of the NPPF, which is a core objective of national policy.

5.2 The Former Community Building

The building on site is a former gospel hall which no longer operates as an active community facility. The residential use of the site has been accepted by the Council through the planning history set out above, and the replacement of a redundant building with a high quality family home represents the optimal use of the site. In these circumstances there is no conflict with the objectives of Policy CP3 in respect of community facilities, and the proposal accords with the NPPF objective of making effective use of land within settlements

5.3 Character, Design and the Street Scene

The proposed dwelling has been designed to respond positively to the varied residential character of Pitts Lane. As set out in the Design & Access Statement, the scheme employs gables, facing brickwork, reconstituted stone and traditional roof forms that reflect elements found in the immediate context, with the second floor accommodation contained within the roof to control the massing of the building.

The replacement of the utilitarian hall and open hardstanding with a well-proportioned family dwelling, new boundary wall and gates, and retained and enhanced landscaping will deliver a positive enhancement to the street scene and the character of the area, in accordance with Policies CP1 and CP3, MDD Policy CC03, and Chapter 12 of the NPPF. The rear portion of the site, within the Site of Urban Landscape Value (Policy TB22), is retained as soft landscaped garden and is unaffected by built development.

5.4 Residential Amenity

The dwelling is positioned within the established building envelope of the site, set well away from the shared boundaries with neighbouring dwellings. Side-facing windows are obscure glazed to prevent overlooking, and the design ensures appropriate separation distances such that there is no unacceptable loss of privacy, light or outlook to any neighbouring property, in accordance with Policy CP3.

The replacement of the former assembly use with a single family dwelling will also materially reduce the intensity of activity, comings and goings, and associated parking demand on the site, to the benefit of neighbouring residential amenity.

5.5 Access, Parking and Highways

The existing vehicular access from Pitts Lane is retained. The proposal provides 4no. off-street parking spaces in addition to the detached double garage, together with secure cycle storage for 3no. bicycles. This provision exceeds the standards of Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan. A single dwelling will generate materially fewer vehicular movements than the former community hall use, and there is therefore no adverse highway impact.



Precedent images of planting

5.6 Ecology and Biodiversity

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (April 2026) and a dusk emergence survey (June 2026) have been undertaken by GS Ecology. The building was assessed as having low potential to host a bat roost; no bats emerged from, or went to roost in, the building during the emergence survey. The reports conclude that the building does not currently host a bat roost and that there are no bat-related constraints to the proposed works, with no requirement for further survey provided works commence by May 2028.

The retained trees, hedging and dense boundary landscaping safeguard the ecological value of the site edges, and biodiversity enhancements such as integrated bat and bird boxes can be secured by condition, delivering a net benefit in accordance with Policies CP7 and TB23 and Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

5.7 Trees and Landscaping

The existing trees on the site are retained, including the frontage tree and the dense tree and landscape belt to the boundaries. The landscaping proposals provide front and rear lawns, a rear patio and retained block paving, softening the appearance of the development and providing generous private amenity space for future occupiers, in accordance with Policy CC03.



Initial artist impression aerial view of concept for proposed house

### **5.8 Flood Risk and Drainage**

The site lies wholly within Flood Zone 1, the area at lowest risk of flooding, and is sequentially preferable for residential development. Foul drainage will connect to the existing site services, and surface water will be managed through sustainable drainage measures where practicable, in accordance with Policies CC09 and CC10.

### **5.9 Sustainable Design and Construction**

The dwelling will be constructed to current Building Regulations standards, adopting a fabric-first approach to energy efficiency, with the opportunity for renewable technologies, in accordance with Policy CC04 and the climate change objectives of the NPPF. The redevelopment of previously developed land in an accessible urban location is itself an inherently sustainable form of development.

### **5.10 Housing Delivery**

The proposal will make a positive, windfall contribution to housing delivery and housing mix in the Borough (Policy CP17), providing a high quality family home in a sustainable location and supporting the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes.

6.1 Statutory and Policy Framework

Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021) imposes a general biodiversity gain condition on planning permissions, requiring development to deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, measured using the statutory biodiversity metric, secured and maintained for a minimum of 30 years. Mandatory BNG has applied to minor applications, such as the present proposal, since 2 April 2024.

Wokingham Borough Council requires applications to be supported by information on the existing biodiversity of the site (the baseline), a completed statutory biodiversity metric calculation prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist where BNG applies, and a plan demonstrating how at least a 10% improvement will be delivered, monitored and maintained, secured by planning condition or legal agreement. This approach reflects Core Strategy Policy CP7, MDD Policy TB23 and Chapter 15 of the NPPF, which require development to deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity.

6.2 Site Baseline

The ecological baseline of the site is limited. The developable area comprises the former gospel hall building and its sealed hardstanding driveway and car parking, which hold negligible biodiversity value, together with areas of regularly mown amenity grassland of low distinctiveness. The principal ecological interest of the site lies at its edges: the species-rich roadside hedge, the existing trees, and the dense tree and landscape belt to the boundaries, all of which are retained under this proposal. The previous ecological reporting for the site identified no priority (BAP) habitats within the plot, and the 2026 Preliminary Roost Assessment and Bat Survey by GS Ecology confirm no protected species constraints.

6.3 Application of the BNG Framework and Exemptions

The statutory framework includes exemptions from mandatory BNG, including the de minimis exemption (development impacting less than 25sqm of on-site habitat and less than 5m of hedgerow) and, at the time of writing, an exemption for small-scale self-build and custom housebuilding (no more than 9 dwellings on a site of less than 0.5 hectares). As a single, custom-designed family dwelling, the proposal is capable of falling within the self-build and custom housebuilding exemption, subject to confirmation of the applicant’s status under the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

The Government confirmed on 15 April 2026, in its response to the consultation on improving the implementation of BNG, that a new area-based exemption will be introduced for development on sites of 0.2 hectares or below (subject to a carve-out where priority habitats are affected), with the self-build and custom-build exemption removed at the same time. These changes are expected to take effect from late July 2026. No priority habitats are present on this site, and accordingly, the application red line area is 0.166 hectares which is below the 0.2 hecatares threshold. Therefore, at the point of determination, the development is expected to be exempt from mandatory BNG under the new provisions.

6.4 BNG Delivery Strategy

Notwithstanding the availability of exemptions, the proposal has been designed to deliver a demonstrable enhancement to the biodiversity of the site. The new dwelling and garage are concentrated on the footprint of the existing building and sealed hardstanding, which have negligible baseline value, while the habitats of greatest value - the roadside hedge, existing trees and dense boundary landscape belt - are all retained. The landscape proposals then add new front and rear lawns, shrub and planting beds and new tree planting, such that the post-development habitat value of the site will exceed the baseline.

The following enhancement measures are proposed, and can be secured by an appropriately worded planning condition:

- Retention and protection of the species-rich roadside hedge, existing trees and boundary landscape belt;
- New native and flowering tree planting within the front and rear gardens;
- New shrub and herbaceous planting beds and areas of lawn in place of existing hardstanding;
- Integrated bat roost features and bird nesting boxes on the new dwelling and garage;
- Hedgehog-friendly boundary treatments (ground-level gaps in new fencing and gates);
- Sensitive, downward-directed external lighting to safeguard commuting and foraging bats.

6.5 Recommendation

It is recommended that the site area within the application red line is confirmed on submission. If the site area is 0.2 hectares or below and the application is determined once the new area-based exemption is in force (expected late July 2026), the development will be exempt from mandatory BNG and this Statement, together with the ecological reports and landscape proposals, will satisfy the Council’s validation requirements. If the application is determined before that date, it is recommended that the applicant either confirms eligibility for the self-build and custom housebuilding exemption, or commissions the project ecologist to complete the statutory biodiversity metric to formally demonstrate a minimum 10% net gain on site, secured through a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan over 30 years.

In either scenario, the enhancement measures set out at Section 6.4 will be delivered, ensuring that the development achieves a genuine net gain for biodiversity in accordance with Policies CP7 and TB23, the Environment Act 2021 and Chapter 15 of the NPPF.

7.0 Conclusion

The principle of the residential redevelopment of this site is firmly established through outline permission 201370 and reserved matters approval 231648. This application delivers that accepted redevelopment through the replacement of a redundant former gospel hall with a single, high quality family dwelling.

The proposal accords with the Development Plan read as a whole: it is located within the development limits of Earley in a sustainable, major development location (Policies CC01, CC02, CP1 and CP9); it will enhance the character and appearance of the street scene (Policies CP1, CP3 and CC03); it safeguards neighbouring amenity (Policy CP3); it provides parking and cycle storage in excess of adopted standards (Policy CC07); it raises no ecological, arboricultural or flood risk constraints (Policies CP7, TB23, CC09 and CC10); and it leaves the Site of Urban Landscape Value at the rear of the site undeveloped (Policy TB22).

The scheme makes effective use of previously developed land within a settlement, a matter to which the NPPF attaches substantial weight, and delivers social benefits through the provision of a family home, environmental benefits through landscaping and biodiversity enhancement, and economic benefits through construction activity and household spending. The Biodiversity Net Gain Statement at Section 6.0 demonstrates that the scheme retains the habitats of greatest value, concentrates development on sealed surfaces of negligible ecological value, and delivers a genuine net gain for biodiversity in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and the Council’s requirements.

The proposal therefore constitutes sustainable development. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11 of the NPPF, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted without delay.

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