

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	243228
Site Address:	Reddam House, Bearwood Road, Sindlesham, Wokingham, RG41 5BG
Expiry Date:	11 July 2025
Site Visit Date:	22 January 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. two storey building to form a boarding house with associated plant equipment, landscaping, highway and other related works, following demolition of existing outbuildings.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Listed Building (Reddam House)
Conservation Area – Sindlesham
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development (Countryside)
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone – Red Risk Zone
Local Wildlife Site – Bearwood Estate
National Historic Park and Garden - Bearwood College
Tree Preservation Orders
SSSI Impact Risk Zone
Thames Basin Heath SPA Mitigation Zone – 5km Linear Mitigation Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements 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
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

	TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
153230	Application for advertisement consent for nonilluminated signage and flag posts. (Retrospective)	Approved 20/04/2017
202577	Application for Listed Building consent for the proposed removal of an internal wall on the second floor to open up the original corridor and archway, and internal alterations.	Approved 24/11/2020
212872	Application for the Listed Building consent for the proposed of the removal of internal walls and removal of toilets, building of new internal walls, plus existing plumbing to be extended out of the building and a new soil pipe to extend through existing external brick wall plus replacement casement windows and additional high level internal windows.	Approved 15/10/2021
221843	Full application for the proposed erection of a sports hall and new pool building following demolition of existing ancillary buildings. Creation of new landscaped permeable parking area on the site of an existing car park.	Approved 15/11/2023
222319	Application for listed building consent for the proposed erection of a sports hall and new pool building following demolition of existing ancillary buildings. Creation of new landscaped permeable parking area on the site of an existing car park.	Approved 13/04/2023
230915	Full application for the proposed erection of a maintenance shed following the demolition of 2 no. existing storage structures.	Approved 31/10/2023
241017	Full application for the proposed climbing frame.	Approved 27/06/2024
241018	Listed Building consent for the proposed climbing frame.	Approved 27/06/2024
241459	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 230915 dated 31/10/2023. Condition 7 relates to	Approved 06/08/2024

	submission of an Arboricultural Method Statement (relating to demolition).	
242158	Application to vary condition 11 and 12 of planning consent 221843 for the proposed erection of a sports hall and new pool building following demolition of existing ancillary buildings. Creation of new landscaped permeable parking area on the site of an existing car park. Condition 11 refers to sustainable design and construction, condition 12 refers to sustainability and climate change and the variation is to remove conditions 11 and 12.	Approved 06/01/2025

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services – No comments received
 WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
 WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Drainage – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Growth and Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
 WBC Economic Prosperity and Place – No comments received
 WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Health and Wellbeing – No comments received
 WBC Built Heritage Officer – No comments received
 WBC CIL – CIL commentary
 WBC Education – No comments received
 WBC Ecology – No comments received
 WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to condition(s)
 WBC Sports Development – No comments received

External

Historic England – Development leads to ‘less than substantial harm’ to the setting of Reddam House and the Bearwood College National Park and Garden
 Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue – Advisory commentary
 Berkshire Gardens Trust – Concerns regarding the proposals proximity to the Veteran Cedar Tree on site, plus general concerns regarding landscaping

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No objections
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The proposal site is located within the grounds of Reddam House School, Sindlesham, formerly known as Bearwood College, a Grade II* listed building. The wider site is a

registered park and garden and has several Listed Buildings within its grounds. It also forms part of the Sindlesham Conservation Area.

The Reddam estate is bound to the east and west by Bearwood Road and Mole Road respectively and to the south by Bearwood Lake and a Golf Course. Further to this, the site is located within the designated Countryside for policy assessment purposes.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed erection of 1 no. two storey building to form a boarding house with associated plant equipment, landscaping, highway and other related works, following demolition of the existing outbuildings on site. In total, the new boarding house would host circa 100 pupils and 2no. staff.

The new boarding house would be sited to the immediate east of Drake House, an existing boarding house building located to the eastern edge of the school's grounds. In doing so, the boarding house's siting would enclose an area of existing hardstanding and open grassland/trees to create a courtyard garden, to be used by the occupants of both the new boarding house and Drake House.

Existing buildings to be demolished consist of a small design centre building, classroom and medical centre buildings, whose services will be relocated elsewhere within the school's grounds. Several shipping containers to the rear (east) of Drake House would also be removed to facilitate the extension of an existing vehicular access to the north, connecting it to the cadet building in the south-west of the site.

Additional vehicle parking is also proposed on the northern edge of the site, adjacent to the access road. Immediately west of the new boarding house building also lies a Veteran Cedar Tree which has a Tree Protection Order.

Principle of Development:

Policy Context:

Core Strategy 2010:

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy seeks to ensure that that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs;
- People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services

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.

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not permit development outside of development limits unless it falls within the following exemption criteria:

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:
 - Bring about environmental improvements; or
 - Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
- a) 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.

Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDDLDP) 2014:

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:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan.

Paragraph 98 of the NPPF states that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community

Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that it is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

Local Plan Update:

The Council are also progressing with their Local Plan Update (LPU) which has progressed beyond the Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) stage, with representations received on the plan's legal compliance and soundness between 30 September and 13 November 2024.

The Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) consultation has now closed, and the Council have now analysed the representations received. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025.

As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including the examination hearings and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive.

LPU policies of particular relevance to the application are:

- SS1 (Sustainable development principles)
- SS2 (Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy)
- SS5 (Development in the Countryside)
- CE7 (Low carbon and renewable energy generation)

The Council however acknowledge that there are unresolved objections on substantive grounds pursuant of all the policies listed above except for CE7, meaning weight attracted to these policies is limited.

Assessment:

The site is in the Countryside where the restrictions of Core Strategy Policy CP11 are applicable. The main objective of this policy is to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. This policy states that development proposals outside of settlement limits will not normally be permitted unless they comply with a number of specific criteria. None of these criteria are strictly applicable to the proposal, however the policy does allow for 'Essential community facilities [which] cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the reuse/replacement of an existing building'. Whilst not classed as an essential community facility, it must be recognised the improvement and enlargement of education provision does have community benefits.

Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy aims to ensure that new development contributes to the formation of sustainable and inclusive communities through the provision of community facilities (including educational buildings).

The need for this building is to provide expanded and more up to date facilities at the school. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that great weight should be given to the need to create, expand or alter schools through decisions on applications (Officer emphasis). This objective does not differentiate between state or private schools and therefore the NPPF lends support to such proposals in principle.

In returning to Policy CP11, it is recognised that the proposal would result in significant new building outside of settlement limits, however this would be contained within an area of existing buildings i.e. on school grounds. Therefore, whilst not strictly qualifying for assessment under Policy CP11, the proposal would not fundamentally conflict with the policies overall aims, which are to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. The latter test will be considered later in this report.

Character of the Area/Heritage:

Policy Context:

Paragraph 187(b) of the NPPF requires that planning applications enhance the natural and local environment by ‘recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.’

Section 16 of the NPPF focuses on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 212 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

Paragraph 214 of the NPPF states that Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

Paragraph 215 states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Policy CP11 supports development in the countryside only where it maintains the high quality of the rural environment. Policy CP1(1) similarly 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).

Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan states that the Borough Council will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

- a) Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.
- b) Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

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).

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places 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;

Assessment:

The new boarding house would have a modern flat roof form, would be two stories in height and would have an L shaped form. As outlined above, its siting would enclose an existing area of grassland/trees creating a new courtyard garden, with winding natural paths, benches and communal meeting areas.

The elevational details of the building are both intricate and reflective of the red brick buildings in the school's grounds; stackbond brickwork with corbelling at the building's parapet is a welcome feature that adds texture to the walls and the smooth, pre-cast concrete headers combined with the vertical brick string courses break up and vary the elevational details, reflective of the more historic buildings to the west of the site.

Flat roof detailing allows for green roof elements which is also welcomed within this historic landscape and grounds. The use of sage green windows is also reflective of

the site's rural setting and would soften the appearance of the building within the landscape.

The western entrance to the building would be visually dominated by the existing Veteran Cedar Tree, with the surfacing around it adapted to improve its health and to create a common meeting area. The additional landscaping north of the steps into the building would further assist in assimilating the building into the surrounding landscape.

The proposal consists of a two storey, flat roofed, pavilion type building in a contemporary style. The buildings to the east of the main mansion house are characterised by a mix of building styles, appearing to have largely been constructed in the 20th century. They are often unattractive and out of place given the style of the Grade II* Listed mansion.

Given this, there is no objection to the construction of a contemporary building in this style, which is located in such a way as to not impose on the wider landscape or cause visual harm to the wider area. Its size is appreciable but would be enveloped by existing development and with the assistance of appropriate landscaping, would have an acceptable impact on the character of the school's grounds.

In terms of the wider historical landscape, the site is located within the Sindlesham Conservation Area and importantly, within the Bearwood College National Historic Park and Garden. In response to their consultations, both the Berkshire Gardens Trust and Historic England have raised concerns about the loss of tree stock to facilitate the development proposed and more generally that the development proposed results in some harm to the registered landscape through the introduction of a new building in an historically designed natural area. Further concerns also include the landscaping appearing too rectilinear, failing to reinforce historical qualities of the garden design.

Berkshire Gardens Trust have also raised concerns about the visual and technical relationships between the boarding house and the Veteran Cedar Tree adjacent to the boarding house. Whilst both concerns are noted and understood, WBC Landscape and Trees (as outlined below) have concluded that mitigation measures can adequately ensure the health of this tree is not affected long-term. In terms of the visual relationship, whilst it is acknowledged the proximity of the building and Cedar tree is close, the landscaping methods proposed ensure an adequate retention of open space for the tree and in doing so, would create a visual 'anchor' for the boarding house, giving the appearance of a building well embedded into its verdant surroundings.

It is important to note that Historic England did not list an explicit objection to the proposals, claiming that the location chosen for the building appears to be "the least harmful location for a new boarding building". The loss of tree stock on site is noted but this can be adequately mitigated through a thorough landscaping scheme and the area of land the building is to be sited on is generally underused and visually dominated by the existing hardstanding play area and internal vehicle roads.

A further addendum response was sent to Historic England on 26th February 2025 addressing their concerns initially raised. The Council did not receive a response to this and as such, the Council are proceeding on the basis Historic England have no further

objections to the proposals. No comments were received from the WBC Built Heritage Officer too, with the assumption being they have no objections to the proposals.

Within their response, Historic England make reference to paragraph 215 of the NPPF, assuming that the harm they consider to be caused only reaching 'less than substantial harm'. Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. In this instance, the public benefits of the proposals are notable in that they provide a notably expanded boarding scheme for pupils of the school. The land and buildings the boarding house would be sited on are also underused, ensuring that the proposed development secures optimum viable use.

Overall, with consideration for the public benefits of the proposals, the proposed development is considered to have an acceptable impact on the character of the area, Bearwood College, Sindlesham Conservation Area and the Bearwood College National Historic Park and Garden, subject to conditions requiring further details such as the building's materials and a hard and soft landscaping scheme accompanied by a management plan.

Landscape and Trees:

Landscape Character:

Policy TB21 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. Proposals should retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The site is located in Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Area L1 – 'Bearwood Wooded Sands and Gravel Hills' – a high quality landscape. The site is also located within the 'Bearwood and Barkham Valued Landscape' (See WBC Landscape Topic Paper 2020).

The Valued Landscape Attributes of LCA L1 are:

- ***Elevated wooded hills forming a backdrop to the wider landscape and western settlement edge of Wokingham. The wooded hills provide physical and visual separation between settlements, including Wokingham and Reading, and the future development at Aborfield Garrison (Arborfield SDL) to the south of the area.***
- ***Varied topography which forms an intricate range of landscape spaces and backdrops emphasised by the largely enclosed and wooded nature of the core of the area, with views out over farmland to the wider countryside.***
- ***Large expanses of mature mixed woodland which are designated as BAP priority habitats and LWS and provide important ecological habitats and a sense of place. Stands of Scots pine and beech woodlands on the hilltops provide characteristic landmark features.***

- ***Parkland landscape*** associated with the historic estate at Bearwood Park designated as a Registered Park and Garden which provides a cultural record of the past and layers of history within the landscape. The estate character lends homogeneity to much of the area.
- ***Peaceful secluded character*** with naturalistic qualities and experience of dark skies, largely unsettled and with limited access, which provides a rural retreat in close proximity to urban areas.

The Landscape Strategy for LCA L1 is to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and parkland character of the landscape and its biodiversity.

The key aspects to be actively managed are the mixed woodland and the features associated with the historic landscape. There are also opportunities to strengthen open water, woodland and remnant heathland habitats, and manage the exotic species including the locally distinctive Rhododendron Drive, which made include replacement by non-invasive species.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the unsettled character of the area.

Whilst the proposed boarding house would be a sizeable addition to the landscape, it would be well enveloped by existing built development and would utilise an area of land that is generally underused and visually dominated by the existing hardstanding play area and internal vehicle roads.

The design of the building itself is also considered to be a positive visual addition to the site, with its appearance enhancing the eastern side of the school's grounds as currently it is dominated by visually uninspiring, flat roofed buildings of 1960s construction. Further to this, the development would enclose an existing area of grassland/trees creating a new courtyard garden, with winding natural paths, benches and communal meeting areas. The additional landscaping north of the steps into the building would further assist in assimilating the building into the surrounding landscape.

The main development aim for the LCA is to conserve the unsettled character of the area. Considering the existing application site is already well 'settled' and the development would be enveloped within the existing school grounds; the development would adequately achieve this aim.

The overall strategy for the LCA is to conserve and enhance the existing wooded and parkland character of the landscape and its biodiversity. It is considered that the development adequately enhances the character of the school grounds and consequently the surrounding landscape; the wooded character of the LCA would be maintained through the retention of visually valuable trees and other vegetation, supplemented by additional planting provision secured via condition.

Arboricultural Matters:

This application is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statementr (WSP, December 2024).

Overall, WBC Landscape and Trees are satisfied that the proposed development would not cause any adverse harm to the trees on site, including the Veteran Atlas Cedar (TPO-1979-2024).

Several iterations of plans were received and reviewed throughout the application process to ensure the Veteran Atlas Cedar was not adversely harmed by the proposed development.

Whilst National standing guidance on Veteran Trees is to maintain at least a 15 metre buffer zone between development and the relevant tree, WBC Landscape and Trees understand this tree and the other trees within the site have been adversely affected by the historic installation of buildings and footpaths, and heavy footfall across the areas of soft landscaping which in combination have clearly amounted to a high level of compaction within the growing environment of the trees and multiple incursions into the combined root protection area of these trees from the built development.

The proposed landscaping scheme consciously incorporates a soft landscaped area around the RPA of the Atlas Cedar adjacent to the western entrance of the boarding house. Combined with the associated drainage scheme which would direct rainfall discharge from the building's canopy green roof now directed into the RPA of the Atlas Cedar, the proposed development would ultimately create an improved growing environment for the tree compared to the existing situation.

Overall, WBC Landscape and Trees raise no objections on arboricultural grounds. Compliance with the submitted arboricultural information will be secured via condition.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

The nearest residential property is located over 85 metres to the west. There are therefore no overlooking concerns resulting from the development proposed.

In terms of the relationship between the new boarding house and Drake House, a separation distance of at least 40 metres between any respective fenestration ensures no adverse overlooking opportunities onto one another.

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

As mentioned above, the distance between the proposed development and nearby residential properties ensures no adverse impacts on these grounds.

The relationship between the new boarding house and surrounding school buildings on site also ensures no adverse impacts onto them, regardless of the fact they are not used for residential purposes.

Noise:

Construction from development is highly unlikely to impact the amenities of surrounding residential properties due to the distances between them. However, to ensure no

adverse impacts, a construction hours and construction method statement will both be secured via condition.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Student numbers

The proposal will enable an additional 83 students to board at the school, which is across the proposed building and refurbishment of Drake House. There will be no overall increase in the number of students at the school. On that basis there is no significant traffic impact associated with the proposal and could potentially be a reduction due to less drop off/pick up vehicle movements.

Parking

The applicant has confirmed that there is very little car ownership amongst current students and the majority of students are below driving age. This is unlikely to alter significantly as a result of the additional students boarding at the school. The blue line ownership identified on plan provides sufficient area to accommodate any student parking and as this will be contained within the site, there will be no impact on the public highway. It is recommended that a School Travel Plan is produced (or current version updated) as part of this development and this shall also contain details on parking management.

Staff parking is to be relocated as part of the proposal and the level of parking is considered acceptable. The internal road layout has now been amended to ensure sufficient turning area behind the proposed parking spaces.

Cycle storage

Details of secure and covered cycle storage have now been indicated on the drawing. This consists of two covered shelters in appropriate locations, which can each accommodate up to 10 cycles.

Short-term cycle parking has also been indicated for staff/visitors adjacent to the proposed building and this is acceptable.

Construction method statement

A framework construction method statement has not been submitted. This will be required by condition should the application be approved.

Travel Plan

The submission of a new School Travel Plan (or updated version of the current STP) shall be secured by condition.

Ecology:

Bats and Birds:

This application is accompanied by both a preliminary ecological assessment (Ethos Environmental Planning, December 2024) and two follow-up emergence and tree survey reports (Ethos Environmental Planning, June 2025).

With regards to the demolition of the existing maintenance building on site, a single emergence survey was undertaken on the Maintenance Building on 3rd June 2024 and did not record any emerging bats or other use of the building by bats and concluded that this is unlikely to be a roost. It was noted that the damaged roof tiles, had a patch repair of roofing felt since last surveyed in December 2024.

A summary of the survey found very little bat activity with Soprano and Common pipistrelle bats only, with minimal foraging behaviour noted around the building and occasional commuting. It was concluded that the building is unlikely to support roosting bats and no further surveys were recommended on this building prior to its demolition.

Four trees with potential features for bats that could be impacted by the proposals had one initial climbing survey conducted. All features could be suitably accessed. Two of the trees were downgraded to PRF-I only or negligible (G5 and T21). The remaining two (T13 and T18) trees offered good PRF-m features however no evidence of bats was recorded.

Trees T13 and T18 had the subsequent second climb to assess the PRF-m features. T13 had one notable tear out/rot hole feature that extended 2m up the trunk but had a sludgy internal substance with the cavity and no signs of bats. Two other PRF-m features remained in the same condition and no signs of bats were recorded.

T18 offers a single PRF-m feature on a trunk that was fully investigated. The feature was in the same condition as survey 1 and no field signs of bats were recorded.

Overall, the maintenance building requires no further survey and is unlikely to support roosting bats. Onsite surveys found two trees offering PRF-m features which were surveyed on two occasions by tree climbing surveys. Given the overall bat activity onsite being low, and two negative surveys, the survey effort is proportionate and the recommended compensation features is adequate for the loss of onsite features.

In terms of recommended mitigation measures, a selection of both bird and bat boxes are recommended to be installed on trees on site. Further to this, tree removal timing is recommended to be outside of breeding bird season, which runs between March-end of August each year. Compliance with these measures will be secured via condition.

Great Crested Newts:

The application site falls within a red impact risk zone for great crested newts, indicating an area of highly suitable habitat and higher likelihood of great crested newt presence. There are seven ponds within 500m of the application site. Of these, three are clustered 100 – 150m south of the application site and one is approximately 250m west. There is a recent record of great crested newts approximately 250m from the red line boundary.

The applicant has supplied an ecological report (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Ethos Environmental Planning, dated December 2024) which states:

“Although the ponds south of the site may be suitable for GCN, it is considered unlikely that GCN are present on site due to the unsuitability of habitat, and higher quality habitat within woodland around the ponds. Therefore, GCN and other amphibians are assessed as likely to be absent from the site and are not considered further in this appraisal.”

Pond surveys for great crested newts have not been carried out, but this has been justified in the ecological report as the habitats reported within the site (closely mown amenity grassland and hardstanding) are unsuitable for great crested newts. Pond surveys should therefore not be necessary.

However, the site is within a red impact risk zone and great crested newts have recently been confirmed to be present within 250m of the site. In the absence of survey data, it should be assumed that they are also using the ponds to the south of the site. There is therefore a risk of individual great crested newts being harmed as a result of entering the site during the demolition and construction phases. For example, newts may become fatally trapped in excavations or take shelter in places like spoil / rubble piles which are then removed.

WBC Ecology Newts recommend that a Great Crested Newt Precautionary Working Methods Statement (GCNPWMS) is produced to safeguard individual great crested newts. This must be written by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted to the local planning authority for approval prior to determination or secured via a pre-commencement condition. The reasonable avoidance measures should aim to avoid and minimise risks to great crested newts. If a great crested newt is encountered at the site, all works will need to halt while advice is sought from a professional ecologist, and it may be necessary to obtain a site-based mitigation licence from Natural England before works can continue (District Licensing will not be an option at that stage).

The GCNPWMS will be secured via condition.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

As of 2nd April 2024, a 10% Biodiversity net gain (BNG) for minor developments is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This can be achieved through either on-site or off-site mitigation.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (“the biodiversity gain condition”).

"The biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition: once planning permission has been granted, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the planning authority before commencement of the development.

The habitat baseline for the existing site is 5.06 habitat units. The number of units required to achieve a 10% gain would be 5.57 habitat units. As per the conclusions of the report, this cannot be achieved through on-site mitigation and will have to be secured through off-site mitigation.

Final details of the BNG mitigation off-site will be secured within the Biodiversity Gain Plan, automatically applied to the permission if approved.

Flooding and Drainage:

General:

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1. WBC Drainage have no objections to the drainage strategy proposed but require further details on infiltration and groundwater monitoring. These details will be secured via condition.

Thames Water:

Following consultation with Thames Water, it was agreed between all parties that the proposed development could be adequately accommodated within the existing Thames Water network with regards to:

- Foul Water
- Surface Water Drainage
- Sewage Treatment Works

As such, Thames Water raise no objections to the proposed development.

Sustainable Construction:

In accordance with policy CC04 and CC05, the proposal has been designed to high sustainable credentials including energy efficiency measures include levels of insulation beyond Building Regulation requirements, low air tightness levels, efficient lighting as well as energy saving controls for space conditioning and lighting. The incorporation of renewable technologies will reduce CO2 emissions by a further 21%.

To ensure these sustainability methods are complied with, conditions will be imposed requiring Design State and Post Development Certificates achieved compliance with BREEAM (or equivalent) rating of 'Excellent' as a minimum, plus the submission of an energy strategy demonstrating that at least 10% of the reduction in carbon emissions will be achieved through renewable energy or low carbon technology.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposed development is considered to accord with the development plan and raises no adverse concerns on the relevant material grounds. Therefore, this application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

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

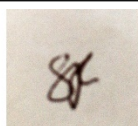
Conditions agreed: Yes

Recommendation: Approval

Date: 1 July 2025

Earliest date for decision: 17 March 2025

**Recommendation
agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)**



Date: 3.7.25