

PLANNING REF : 252407
PROPERTY ADDRESS : 1 North Court
: The Ridges, Wokingham
: RG40 3SJ
SUBMITTED BY : Mr David Paton
DATE SUBMITTED : 21/11/2025

COMMENTS:

As a resident owner of an apartment at North Court I should like to object to this Planning Application 252407

In summary, I believe it would -

- have an overbearing impact in an area which has been never been built on before

- impact on highway safety and traffic

- have an extremely negative effect in what can be classed as a Heritage site

- be introducing a modern contemporary build on a site which currently features only 3 buildings, all of which have retained elements from the history of the estate and hence would be completely out of character and therefore unsuitable

- breach both local and Wokingham Borough Development plans

- be at complete odds with previous planning decisions

- have an impact on local wildlife

- have the potential to create environmental impacts as little is known about the proposed plans for waste and foul water

- have potential to be split into two self-contained properties in future.

Overbearing

The proposed build is planned to be on a parcel of land visible from North Court main house land. The area is currently fairly open as some trees and vegetation have been cleared but a new two storey building would be overbearing in the context of its position in an a long

established country estate, particularly when its raised elevation to North Court Farm is considered.

Parking, Highway Safety and Traffic Impact

The proposed build has provision for 5+ vehicles on site, with a double garage, three designated parking spaces, more space for vehicles on the drive, and a large store which seems a similar size to another double garage. This does not seem to support the initial application which mentions a net gain of only one vehicle. On the basis it is a 4 bedroom home there is also the increase in vehicle traffic on a daily basis from service and deliveries to consider. These currently account for an already significant amount of movements each day in and out of the North Court estate. The impact on traffic is therefore likely to increase exponentially.

In terms of Highway safety the North Court entrance sits at the start and end of a 50mph limit and vehicles are frequently observed quickly accelerating or going faster than the limit. This can make entry or exit from the drive somewhat hazardous and great care is needed. We have previously highlighted the regularity of vehicle accidents which take place at the old war memorial junction which is around 100m from the North Court entrance. At the time of writing this we have had three in the last 9 days (10Nov, 18Nov and 19Nov) which all required emergency services attendance, with the most recent yesterday resulting in an overturned car after collision with

another vehicle. Adding further unnecessary traffic to the immediate vicinity would be a concern.

The application suggests there are other options for transport than the car, however this is incorrect as of the two bus services they mention one operates once a day during school days only and the other operates one service a week on a Tuesday.

It also mentions walking to access services, but there are no services locally to walk to, other than a public house or a primary school. Walking locally brings highway safety for a pedestrian into the

equation, as there is only one pavement to use which runs west directly across the road from NC exit. This involves crossing the 50mph limit road and then walking past the aforementioned accident blackspot (where vehicles have previously mounted the pavement). The single available pavement is extremely narrow due to encroaching and overhanging vegetation and for some distance is so narrow that people cannot walk side by side or pass without stepping on the road. This pedestrian safety issue also contributes to cars being used for virtually every journey.

Vehicles are therefore absolutely necessary when living at North Court and should this be approved it would just unnecessarily increase vehicles in the North Court locale.

Heritage

The proposed build is a build on a parcel of land on a countryside estate which has local importance, having initially in the 1850's been home to the grandson of John Walter, the founder of The Times newspaper. This family has more than a passing association with Wokingham, as they were known to have financed St Paul's Church in Wokingham, St Catherine's Church in Bearwood and were strong advocates for education, leading to the establishment of The Walter Infant school and indeed the Finchampstead Primary School, which is the local primary school to North Court

The next owner was General Sir John Watson who won a Victoria Cross and his banner hangs in Finchampstead Church.

During the Second World War North Court was a secret outpost of the RAF and had police guarding the gates at all times.

In 1948 Catherine Bramwell-Booth granddaughter of the founder of The Salvation Army moved to a North Court not too dissimilar in structure to that today as it featured the main house and two cottages. She and her sisters (who also lived at North Court) remained there until her death in 1987 and they are now buried in Finchampstead Churchyard.

The North Court estate therefore has valuable heritage worth protecting, with very strong links to Finchampstead, Wokingham and the armed forces. A further building on the estate, particularly in a modern contemporary style would be grossly detrimental to that heritage.

Design, Appearance and Materials

The design of the build is not in keeping with the North Court estate and it therefore does not meet the requirements of Paragraph 131 of the NPPT (National Planning Policy Framework) which encourages

innovative designs as long as they fit with the overall form and layout of their surroundings. North Court estate, while having had a main house and two 'cottages' for many years has been redeveloped this century with a new main house, but built on the footprint of the

original and with a Planning insistence that it paid more than a nod to the style of the original Victorian build. The Lodge was redeveloped recently by comparison but it too had to comply with rules regarding the original footprint and be built in a similar style to the original.

North Court has therefore managed to retain the feel of a Victorian country estate.

The proposed build is a new development in a 'modern contemporary style' rather than a redevelopment and has nothing whatsoever in common with other buildings on North Court

If I may borrow Mr Jones the current applicant's words from his own objection to the Lodge redevelopment - "the proposed build is not subservient to the location ..the buildings and gardens were designed to complement each other . North Court is very much as it was designed to be, a beautiful Victorian estate".

The Lodge was redeveloped in a style sympathetic with the estate so I would suggest those words above could now be more accurately applied to his own proposed new build.

Local and National Planning Policy

The proposed build is not in line with either the FNDP (Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan) nor the Wokingham Borough Core

Strategy Development Plan.

The FNDP states that development of private residential gardens will only be supported if the development makes a contribution to the character of the area in terms of build form, space and integrating well. This proposed build does not comply with these conditions Wokingham's Core Strategy document relating to CP11 states that proposals in the countryside (North Court is classed as being in the countryside) outside development limits will not normally be permitted except when certain criteria are met. These criteria are primarily

focussed on restricting development, except for -

Sustainable rural enterprise or countryside recreation

Residential extension

Replacement dwellings

Essential Community Services

Again this proposed build fails to satisfy any of these conditions so is not in line with planning policy

Previous Planning Decisions

As mentioned previously there are other examples of redevelopment being allowed in the North Court estate.

Firstly after a fire involving the original Manor House, permission was granted to redevelop the site, but only on condition the new building sat on the original footprint and was built with a design sympathetic to its Victorian predecessor.

Similarly after lying derelict for several years, The Lodge was redeveloped with its footprint related to the original building, some original features re-used and a design that was not out of place with both its surroundings and the original building.

I understand the applicant Mr Jones, when seeking to extend his own current property (The Coach House) some years ago, also had to comply with planning rules sympathetic to the history and heritage of the North Court Estate.

These scenarios featured redevelopment of existing buildings on their original footprint and in a style in keeping with the estate rather

than this application which is for a completely new build in a 'modern contemporary style'.

Wildlife and ecological impacts

North Court currently enjoys a wide variety of wildlife which freely roam and nest on the estate. These on a daily basis include roe deer, muntjak deer, foxes, rabbits, red kites and even a pea hen which took up residence for a while some years ago. As mentioned these animals and birds are seen enjoying the estate on a daily basis and a large new build would undoubtedly impact their current habitat.

Environmental impacts

While there are ways to mitigate the environmental impact of new homes, invariably there will be some, and in this case it will be exacerbated by the provision for several cars. The site also seems to abut the local farmland and a small stream. Any drainage or soakaway needs to be considerate of this. There seems to be little information available at present regarding how foul waste and other services will be handled by the build and clearly while this information is unavailable one can only surmise as to any environmental impact.

Potential to convert to two properties at a later date?

I am intrigued by the plans for the building, with three potential bedrooms on the first floor and similar on the ground floor, multiple 'reception' rooms and a very large seemingly out of context store area on the ground floor which perhaps could have the potential to be converted to a similar kitchen, come living area as per the first floor. It could be viewed this plan may have been proposed with a view to converting to two separate properties (ground and first floor) in future. While this is currently just conjecture on my part, if this potential was utilised it would be to the further erosion of the heritage of North Court Estate, well beyond what the current proposed build would offer.

Conclusion

My list of objections is not exclusive, but sufficient for me to know that this proposed build does not comply with planning policy, does not fit in with the heritage, building style or open areas of North Court, and seems quite unnecessary when there are currently several similar size/valued houses in the immediate local area which have remained on the market for some time.

I therefore strongly object to this application