

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251318
Site Address:	Hatchgate End, Hatch Gate Lane, Cockpole Green, Wargrave, RG10 8NE
Expiry Date:	9 September 2025
Site Visit Date:	20 June 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. 5 bedroom dwelling and the change of use of agricultural land to a domestic solar array following demolition of the existing dwelling.	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt
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 TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS5 – Development in the countryside

Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS6 – Development in the Green Belt CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
223792	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. five bedroom detached dwelling with attached carport, gates and associated works including boreholes following demolition of the existing dwelling and change of use of agricultural land for siting of solar panels.	Refused – 28/04/2023 Dismissed at Appeal – 12/04/2024
213050	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of an outbuilding with 2 no. rooflights to house an indoor pool and gym, and a single storey rear extension to garage.	Approved – 05/11/2021
201922	Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for use of agricultural land as residential garden and use of buildings as a single dwelling house.	Approved – 27/10/2020
200591	Proposed Lawful Development Certificate for the erection of 2 no. two storey front extensions, 2 no. single storey side extensions, a two-storey rear extension and 2 no. single storey incidental outbuildings (triple garage/garden store and summer house/pool)	Refused – 01/05/2020
192214	Proposed Lawful Development Certificate for the erection of: two storey front extensions single storey side extensions two storey rear extension 2no single storey incidental outbuildings (triple garage/garden store & summer house/pool)	Refused – 14/10/2019

190757	Application for the prior approval for 2 proposed larger home extensions which would extend beyond the rear wall of the original house by 8m for which the maximum height would be 4m and the maximum height of the eaves 3m.	Deemed Consent 26/04/2019	–
182314	Householder application for proposed erection of two storey front extensions and first floor rear to dwelling, following demolition of existing two storey rear element and bay window.	Conditionally Approved 15/11/2018	–
F/1996/63798	Double garage with studio over and link to dwelling	Refused 20/06/1996	–
34238	Barn and stables (on the paddock to the rear of the residential curtilage)	C/A 22/11/1989	–
32737	Change of use of agricultural land to the rear of the dwelling to garden	Refused 10/05/1989	–
06734	Garage, workshop, laundry, greenhouse and lobby	C/A 25/08/1977	–

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health: No objection
WBC Drainage: No objection subject to condition
WBC Highways: No objection subject to condition
WBC Landscape and Trees: No objection subject to conditions
WBC CIL: Advice regarding CIL matters
WBC Ecology Newts: No objection
WBC Ecology: No objection subject to conditions
WBC Cleaner and Greener: No comments received

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd: No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Wargrave Parish Council raised no objections.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site comprises a detached two storey residential property with a detached three bay car port and associated residential land to the front and a large paddock area to the rear, located at the junction between Hatch Gate Lane and Crazies Hill in Cockpole Green. The site fronts onto and is accessed from Hatch Gate Lane which also marks the borough boundary.

The existing house comprises of red brick and tiles and was originally constructed as semi-detached building comprising two dwellings. Council's records show that the building was constructed sometime after 1933 but before 1947. Currently the dwelling is used as a single-family home, confirmed as lawful under a certificate of lawfulness (ref. 201922). The original property benefits from a detached garage a recently constructed large outbuilding to the rear of the site under permitted development, confirmed as lawful under a certificate of lawfulness (Ref. 213050). The site is within the Green Belt and Countryside.

Proposal:

This application proposes the erection of a two storey, detached five bedroom dwelling following the demolition of the existing dwelling, and the change of use of agricultural land for siting of solar panels. The replacement dwelling would be sited back from the exiting front building line with a traditional brick-built design that relates to the existing dwelling.

The change of use of a segment of agricultural land to the west of the dwelling, which is owned by the applicants but falls outside of the residential curtilage of Hatchgate End, would accommodate the installation of an array of 42no. solar panels for the personal generation of electricity. The array would have a maximum height of approximately 3.85m from ground level and a total footprint of approximately 48sqm.

The proposed scheme follows a previous application (ref 223792) which was refused for the following reason:

- 1. The proposed replacement dwelling would be materially larger than the existing dwelling and would introduce built-up volume 98% over and above the size of the existing property. This would constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt and by definition, cause harm to the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal has failed to demonstrate very special circumstances that exist to outweigh the harm to the openness of the Green Belt. By reason of its bulk, scale, mass, design and hardstanding, the proposal will result in urbanisation and encroachment into Green Belt land and the countryside that will have harmful impact on the rural character of the area. The proposal is in contrary to Section 12 and 13 of the NPPF, Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3, CP11 and CP12, MDD Local Plan policies CC02, CC03, TB01, and TB21 and recommendations contained in the Borough Design Guide.*

The application was subsequently dismissed at appeal (ref APP/X0360/W/23/3328838), with the Inspector concluding that the proposal would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt, harm the visual openness of the Green Belt, its design, including mock Tudor detailing, would look highly incongruous and out of place with its surrounds, and the claimed fallback position would be less harmful than the proposal. On balance, it was viewed that the benefits of the scheme did not clearly outweigh the harm, and that no very special circumstances existed to justify approval.

Principle of Development (Development within the Green Belt and Countryside):

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 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 application site is located within designated Green Belt and outside of settlement limits in the open Countryside. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts with national policies for the protection of Green Belt land covered by Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that, "The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves 5 purposes, the one most relevant to this proposal is, "(c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment".

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that, *"Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances."* When considering any planning application, LPAs must ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. These principles are reflected in Core Strategy policy CP12 and MDD Local Plan policy TB01.

Replacement Dwelling

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of eight exceptions applies, including: d) *"the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces"*. The replacement dwelling would not introduce a change of use of the site and therefore could be acceptable in principle if it is not materially larger than the one it replaces. Similar principles regarding replacement buildings are reflected in Core Strategy policy CP12 and MDD Local Plan policy TB01.

As the site is located outside of settlement limits, Core Strategy policy CP11 is also relevant which states that development will not normally be permitted unless it meets certain exception criteria. In the case of a replacement dwelling, a proposal must bring about environmental improvements or not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

Following the refusal of application ref 223792, and the subsequent appeal decision on the grounds of excessive scale in terms of volume and built form, the current proposal has been revised to reduce its overall bulk and footprint. Notably, the total width of the replacement building has been reduced to a very similar scale of the existing dwelling, while the ridgeline has also been reduced so it will not encroach the total height of the existing.

The submitted Design & Access Statement details previous disagreement between the Council and the Applicant on the total volume of the original and existing (in-situ) dwelling. Ultimately, it is the size of an existing building to be replaced which NPPF paragraph 154(d) is concerned with however the volume of the original dwelling should inform the assessment of whether the replacement would be ‘materially larger’.

Volume calculations have been submitted as part of the application. Following an assessment of these, the submitted plans and the site’s planning history including the appeal decision the agreed volume calculations are summarised below:

- **Original Dwelling – 779m³**
- **Proposed Dwelling – 1051m³**
- **Cumulative Increase – 34.9%**

The above calculations demonstrate that the proposal would result in an increase in volume of **34.9%** over and above the size of the existing dwelling. The increase in built form on the site following the development would be significantly less than the refused scheme, which proposed a cumulative increase of **98% (1542m³)**.

Whilst the replacement building would be quantitatively larger in volume, it would not be qualitatively larger in terms of its overall appearance or impact on the openness of the Green Belt. This is in part due to the design of the building which retains cottage style characteristics and the front profile of the existing dwelling. This conclusion is set out further in the following section.

Impact on Openness

MDD Local Plan policy TB01 states that development proposals will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt. This is consistent with Section 13 of the NPPF. There is no definition of openness in the NPPF, however in Green Belt context it is generally held to refer to freedom from, or the absence of development. Development does not necessarily need to be visible in order to harm the openness of the Green Belt.

In *Turner v SSCLG [2016] EWCA Civ 466* it was established that the concept of ‘openness’ is capable of having both a spatial and visual dimension and that the decision maker should consider how the visual effect of the development would bear on whether the development would preserve the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, current Planning Practice Guidance sets out what factors can be taken into account when considering the impact on openness, including the visual impact of the proposal as well as its volume (Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 64-013-20250225 Revision date: 27/02/2025).

The site lies at the end of a linear form of development fronting Hatchgate End which back onto open countryside to the south-west. In dismissing the recently refused application at appeal (ref 223792), the Inspector concluded that there would be adverse harm to the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt:

“The proposed dwelling would be considerably larger than the existing building. In particular, the increase in width and depth would be substantial. As such, the

development would result in harm to spatial openness. In addition, the appeal site is in a reasonably prominent position fronting onto a road. From the public highway it would be seen as a much imposing and bulky structure than the existing building. Therefore, there would also be harm to visual openness.”
(Paragraph 7)

With the previous scheme there was also concern with the encroachment of the gap between the development and the site’s immediate neighbour to the north-west (No.3 Hatchgate Cottages), as well as the re-siting of the dwelling further back from the highway coupled with its larger depth and the increase in hardstanding to the front. Below is a comparison of the current proposal with the scheme refused under 223792 (all measurements are approximate).



Total width	24.3m	18.7m
Total depth	13.6m	15.2m
Set back from existing front building line	7.6m	5.55m
Distance from rear boundary	23.6m	26m

The difference between the schemes is clear when comparing their width and separation from the side boundary (flanking No.3 adjacent). The set back of the current proposal retains the existing gap between the properties and subsequently the spaciousness of the plot at its north-western. Although the total depth is larger under the current proposal, this is due to the single storey rear element with the main two storey dwelling in line with the neighbouring properties. Moreover, the proposal is set further back from the rear boundary of the plot, resulting in more spaciousness to the rear when compared to the previous scheme.

Although the proposal is sited back from the existing front building line, the reduction of hardstanding at the front is a significant improvement from the previous scheme with the enhanced frontage contributing positively to the spaciousness of the plot when viewed from the street scene. This is largely as a result of the removal of the parking

area sited towards the north-western boundary and there would be an overall reduction of hardstanding following the development (excluding the dwelling and retained outbuildings).

While the proposal would be sited more centrally within the plot, it would not result in the degradation of spaciousness at its south-eastern end due to the presence of the existing outbuildings which are retained. The proposal would also not encroach the existing roofline, further mitigating its visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The appearance of the replacement dwelling would also be in keeping with the existing in terms of external materials and architectural features. This is discussed in more detail in the 'Landscape and Character of the Area' section of the report.

Overall, while the proposal would be larger than the existing dwelling, it would not have a significant spatial or visual impact on the Green Belt for the reasons outlined above. There are considerable improvements when compared to the previous scheme particularly in respect of the spaciousness of the plot retained at its frontage and north-western end.

It is therefore considered that the increase in built form would not have an adverse spatial or visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with the aims of MDD Local Plan policy TB01. The proposed replacement dwelling is therefore acceptable in principle, subject to other material considerations.

Renewable Energy

This application also proposes the installation of 42no. ground mounted Photovoltaic Solar Panels within a singular solar array. The array would be sited outside of the residential curtilage of Hatchgate End, within a segment of agricultural land to the west which falls within the applicant's ownership.

The principle of renewable energy infrastructure is strongly supported in the Local Development Plan and the NPPF. Wokingham Borough Council declared a climate emergency in July 2019 which commits it to playing as full a role as possible in reducing our carbon footprint to be net carbon zero by 2030.

MDD Local Plan policy CC05 states *"Local opportunities to contribute towards decentralised energy supply from renewable and low-carbon technologies will be encouraged"*. Additionally, part 3 of the policy states *"Proposal for renewable energy and decentralised energy works, including wind turbines, must demonstrate that:*

- a) They are appropriate in scale, location and technology type;*
- b) Are compatible with the surrounding area, including the impact of noise and odour;*
- c) Do not have a damaging impact on the local topography and landscape;*
- d) There is no significant impact upon heritage assets, including views important to their setting".*

Section 14 of the NPPF refers to meeting the challenge of climate change and paragraph 161 states that the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. Paragraph 168 is also relevant to this proposal and states that when assessing all forms of renewable and low carbon energy projects, LPAs should:

- a) not require applicants to demonstrate the overall need for renewable or low carbon energy, and give significant weight to the benefits associated with renewable and low carbon energy generation and the proposal's contribution to a net zero future;
- b) recognise that small-scale and community-led projects provide a valuable contribution to cutting greenhouse gas emissions

Overall, the principle of a small-scale renewable energy development is supported by local and national policy concerning sustainability, subject to its impacts being acceptable.

Impact on Green Belt & Countryside

The development plan does not allocate sites or identify suitable areas for the provision of renewable and low carbon energy. Each application for renewable energy use needs to be assessed on its merits against the development plan as a whole and impact on the landscape.

The site is located outside the settlement boundary and in designated Countryside. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not ordinarily permit development of development limits apart from the exceptions set out in the policy. The proposal would not fall within any of these exceptions and as such is contrary to this policy. Additionally, as the proposal would result in the installation of new built form outside of the residential curtilage of Hatchgate End, the proposal would fail to meet any of the exceptions under paragraph 154 of the NPPF and as such is inappropriate development and is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt by definition.

However, as set out above, MDD Local Plan policy CC05 and section 14 of the NPPF does not preclude renewable energy provision within the Green Belt and countryside if the impacts of such proposals are, or can be made, acceptable.

Although the proposed solar array would be located on a greenfield outside of the residential curtilage of Hatchgate End, due to its fairly modest scale it is considered that the proposal would have minimal visual and spatial impact. As the proposal is for the domestic generation of electricity only, the built form proposed is restricted to the solar array only with no other paraphernalia, such as generators or a substation, which is associated with larger scale, commercial renewable energy projects.

The proposal is well sited in respect of its corner location which would not disrupt the existing field boundaries. The proposal would be well set back from public vantage points including the public footpath circa. 125m to the south-west and well screened by the mature hedgerow adjacent to the north-west. There are also opportunities to further mitigate the visual and spatial impact of the proposal with enhanced soft landscaping. This is discussed in further detail in the 'Landscape and Character of the Area' section of the report.

Paragraph 160 of the NPPF acknowledges that when located in the Green Belt, elements of many renewable energy projects will comprise inappropriate development. In such cases developers will need to demonstrate very special circumstances if

projects are to proceed. Such very special circumstances may include the wider environmental benefits associated with the increased production of energy from renewable sources.

When considering its benefits, the proposed solar array would significantly support the sustainability credentials of the scheme as a whole with reduced carbon emissions following the occupation of the replacement dwelling. The proposal is also supported by section 14 of the NPPF and MDD Local Plan policy CC05 which acknowledge that small-scale initiatives, including this element of the proposal, support the transition to a low carbon future.

On balance, while the proposed solar array would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and countryside, contrary to paragraph 154 of the NPPF and Core Strategy policy CP11, it is supported by section 14 of the NPPF and MDD Local Plan policy CC05 and would improve the environmental impact of the scheme as a whole. Moreover, it is considered that its siting and scale is appropriate for its intended function and would ensure minimal impact on the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt. It is therefore concluded that 'very special circumstances' exist which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness. The proposal therefore accords with paragraph 153 of the NPPF and is acceptable in this instance, subject to there being an acceptable impact on all other material considerations.

Landscape and Character of the Area:

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high-quality design. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

The site is located on the edge of Wokingham Borough within the small hamlet of Cockpole Green and within close proximity to the slightly larger hamlet of Crazies Hill. The site lies at the south-western end of a linear form of development fronting Hatchgate End and overlooks Cockpole Green which contributes significantly to the site's traditional rural setting and verdant landscape character.

The small area of housing facing the open green space has the character of a small rural village green settlement. The existing built form within the immediate surroundings is interspersed with significant landscaping in the form of mature trees and hedges. Mature trees on and adjacent to the site's front boundary contribute significantly to the site's setting and partially screen the site's frontage from the street scene.

In terms of design, there is a simple and modest continuity along this small ribbon of rural development, especially when viewed from Cockpole Green, with properties having a cottage appearance with some Arts and Craft features which reflect rural housing that is typical of the early-mid 20th century. These features include simple hipped and half hipped roof forms, brick detailing under the eaves, simple gable motifs, unique brick and tile lintel and sill details, and chimneys. Despite being a detached

dwelling (albeit originally a pair of semis), the existing property exhibits these characteristics which visually ties it in with the row of semis to the north-west.

In contrast to the previous scheme, which proposed a mock Tudor design, the current proposal would relate well with the overall style of the immediate street scene including a gabled front porch, brick detailing under the eaves, chimney and traditional brick and tile design. The proposal is well designed in this respect. The replacement dwelling would assimilate well with the rural small village green setting despite the increase in massing, while the enhanced soft landscaping at its frontage would further soften the visual impact of the scheme. The indicated external materials are also largely in keeping with the existing, a condition requiring full details to be agreed prior to commencement is recommended to ensure a coherent street character.

As discussed above, the proposal is well sited and would appear in line with the neighbouring row of semis to the north-west despite its further set back from the front boundary. Its increased depth would not significantly encroach the rear building line of the immediate neighbour (No.3 Hatchgate Cottages) while its increased bulk is also mitigated by its similar width to the existing dwelling, with the additional bulk at the rear mitigated by its single storey nature. The height of the replacement dwelling would also respect the existing roofline which is a further improvement from the previous scheme. Overall, while a change to the street scene, the proposal would not disrupt the ribbon of rural development or introduce an adverse visual impact on the street scene.

Landscape Character

MDD Local Plan Policy TB21 requires consideration of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment. Proposals must retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape. The site is located in Area E1: 'Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau of the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (WBCLA) (2019).

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

The Council's Landscape Consultant has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection to the replacement dwelling, concluding that it would have a neutral impact on the verdant landscape character particularly as the proposal would not result in the loss of trees or noticeably alter the character of Cockpole Green. To ensure compliance with policy CC03 and ensure no harm to the existing trees during the development, an Arboricultural Method Statement has been submitted in support of the application. This has been accepted by the Council's Senior Landscape Officer, strict compliance with the statement during the building works is secured via condition.

While the Landscape Consultant acknowledges that the proposed solar array is not a typical feature within the rural landscape of the area, it would not be sited in a prominent location, and its impact would be mitigated to a degree by the existing boundary planting and its temporary nature. There is potential for users of the public footpath to the south-west of the site to view the solar array, although there is intervening

vegetation which would restrict a clear view. This visual effect would likely be Minor, Adverse and Temporary. No adverse visual impact has been identified from other potential public vantage points including from the neighbouring properties.

To mitigate this identified adverse visual effect, an area of woodland planting adjacent near the west corner of the field is recommended. A condition requiring the submission final landscaping scheme, which will include additional planting to mitigate the visual impact of the solar array, to the Council prior to the commencement of the development has been agreed by the applicant. Furthermore, to ensure that the solar array does not become a permanent feature in the landscape a condition is recommended which requires it to be removed from the site following the cessation of its use.

Subject to final details on landscaping and external materials being agreed via condition, the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the visual amenity of the street scene and the character of the area in accordance with Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3. The proposed replacement dwelling also responds appropriately to the verdant landscape character with sufficient mitigations to offset the temporary affect from the solar array secured via conditions in accordance with MDD Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking: All primary windows serving the development would be orientated towards the centre of the elongated plot, inflicting oblique views to neighbours which would not be a change from the existing relationship.

The proposal includes a first floor balcony facing the rear boundary of the plot. However, as it would be set in from the rear building line at first floor level any potential direct views onto adjoining private amenity space would be fully obscured. 2no. first floor windows are proposed on the side elevation facing No.3 Hatchgate Cottages; however, these would serve non-habitable rooms (en-suites) so would not introduce any direct overlooking opportunities into the adjoining property.

Loss of Light and Overbearing: Due to the separation distance of circa. 10m from the closest neighbouring property (No.3 Hatchgate Cottages) there are no concerns in respect of potential loss of light or overbearing impact.

Overall, any potential impact on neighbouring amenity in respect of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impact would be sufficiently mitigated, preventing any adverse harm as a result of the development. The proposal complies with Core Strategy policy CP3 in this respect.

Residential Amenity:

Internal Amenity: The proposed internal floor area would well exceed National Space Standards for a 5 bed, 8 person, two storey dwelling (128sqm). Each bedroom exceeds the national standards for a double (11.5sqm) and sufficient storage and living space is proposed. Additionally, the proposed fenestration would allow sufficient daylight into all habitable rooms. Therefore, the level of internal amenity as proposed is acceptable.

External Amenity: The proposal would not affect the site's existing, deep rear garden space which well exceeds the Borough Design Guide's minimum depth of 11m for rear garden spaces. Therefore, the level of external amenity as proposed is acceptable.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Core Strategy policy CP6 concerns issues relating to highway safety and access. MDD Local Plan policy CC07 requires developments to deliver an appropriate level of off-street parking.

The proposal would utilise the site's existing vehicular and pedestrian accesses off Hatchgate Lane with no changes proposed to the existing parking provision. The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection, noting the existing accesses and parking will remain acceptable, and there is sufficient scope to provide suitable cycle storage and an EV charging point within the site.

Flooding and Drainage:

Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. The site and access thereto is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal represents no additional flood risk or vulnerability. It is therefore acceptable in terms of Policy CC09.

Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow. The proposal will result in additional impermeable surface within the site, to ensure there is no additional risk of surface water run off the Council's Drainage Officer has recommended the submission of a drainage strategy to be submitted to the Council for approval prior to commencement. This has been agreed by the applicant.

Ecology:

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF is clear that new development should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by minimising impact on and providing net gains for biodiversity. 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.

The site is located within an area where bat roosts have previously been identified. A bat survey report submitted as part of the previous application (ref 223792) concluded that the existing dwelling hosts a day roost. An up-to-date survey report (Arbtech, 13 June 2024) has been submitted in support of the current proposal which concludes that there is still evidence of this roost within the roof space. As such, an ESPL application to Natural England would be required to legally permit the proposed works.

The Council's Ecology Officer has reviewed the proposal and raised no objection subject to proof of the granted ESPL being submitted to the Council and the works being carried out in accordance with the recommended mitigations set out in the submitted survey report. This is secured via conditions.

The Officer has raised concern with some of the recommended enhancement measures, and as such has recommended that a condition which strictly requires compliance with some of the measures and not those which are not suitable for long-eared bats. The applicant has also agreed to submit an external lighting strategy which expands upon the recommendations of the survey report prior to commencement of the development.

Subject to these conditions, the proposal would maintain and enhance the natural environment with no adverse impacts on protected species identified in accordance with the NPPF and policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is now mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the proposed development meets the exception criteria set out in paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 and The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024.

Section 8(1) of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 states that development which:

- a) consists of no more than 9 dwellings;
 - b) is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares; and
 - c) consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding
- is exempt from the mandatory BNG requirement of 10% post development. This application meets this exemption and a 10% BNG is therefore not required in this instance.

Conclusion:

Overall, the proposal would represent an appropriate outcome for the site with the improvements to the scheme, particularly in terms of the reduction in size and bulk of the replacement dwelling, sufficiently overcoming the reason for refusing the previous application with the development now constituting not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Subject to compliance with the recommended conditions, no adverse impact on other material considerations has been identified. As such, the application is recommended for **approval**.

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:	Approve
Date:	4 September 2025
Earliest date for decision:	29 August 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	08.09.2025

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Metropolitan Green Belt
- Designated Countryside
- Adjoins the Borough Boundary
- Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Ground Water Zones
- Landfill Gas Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area E1: Remenham Arable Chalk Plateau
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones
- JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas