

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250396
Site Address:	Barn 1, Newlands Farm, Sindlesham Road, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9JH
Expiry Date:	31 July 2025
Site Visit Date:	4 April 2025
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed single storey side and rear extension, including a roof lantern.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Listed Building
Conservation Area
Contaminated Land Consultation Zones
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zones
Landscape Character Assessment
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
Thames Basin Heaths SPA Mitigation Zones

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 CP7 – Biodiversity 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 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 Newland Village Design Statement Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
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020975	Proposed conversion of redundant barns to 5 residential units plus erection of new garage for farmhouse.	Approved 07/07/2004
022196	Proposed conversion of 5 listed barns to 4 residential units and garages.	Approved 07/07/2004
050340	Proposed rebuilding of barn and use as 1 residential unit, conversion of 4 other barns to 3 residential units (amendment to planning consents F/2002/5813 & LB/2002/7840). Part retrospective.	Approved 01/02/2006
050341	Proposed rebuilding of barn and use as 1 residential unit, conversion of 4 other barns to 3 residential units (amendment to planning consents F/2002/5813 & LB/2002/7840). Part retrospective.	Approved 01/02/2006

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Built Heritage Officer – Objection and refusal recommended.
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to conditions.
WBC Ecology – Request further information prior to determination.

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL

Description of Development:

This application seeks permission to erect a single storey rear/side extension to the dwelling to provide a new kitchen/dining area and a utility room.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. 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 site is located outside of settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where it does not result in an inappropriate increase in scale, form or footprint of the original building. 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.

Impact on Designated Heritage Assets:

Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan outlines that the Council will conserve and seek to enhance the designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by supporting development proposals that will conserve the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets.

Paragraph 212 of the NPPF 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.

Additionally, paragraph 215 of the NPPF states that where a proposal would amount to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use.

This application proposes the alteration and extension of the Grade II listed 'Stable at Newland Farm', a brick and timber stable of the early 18th century, which has since been converted for domestic use. The stable building forms part of a well preserved, although no longer in agricultural use, 18th century farmstead – Newlands Farm.

The listed building draws its significance from a number of aspects – the context, association with the farmstead and village, the architectural and historic interest of which, crucially, the historic fabric and planform form part. It is these two latter elements which would be severely impacted by the proposals.

The proposal would result in a substantial loss of the historic fabric, with walling to the north and west removed. Additionally, there would be an impact on the plan form, and as a listed building, the plan form greatly contributes to its special interest – the ability to appreciate the historic structure as a fairly simple agricultural building, set within the farmstead complex would be eroded by the increased footprint of the proposed alterations.

In terms of the proposed design, the Council's Heritage Officer finds that the gable ended element would betray an authenticity of historic appearance. Additionally, the contemporary flat/crown roof would fail to respond and reflect the rural vernacular half-hipped roof form of the host, introducing a convoluted inauthentic appearance. These proposed extensions would seek to increase the sense of a 'domestic characteristic', thus eroding the rural/utilitarian interest of the agricultural barn and to the neighbouring, separately listed, barns on the site.

The Council's Heritage Officer finds that the proposals would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the identified heritage assets. As per paragraph 215 of the NPPF, the harm is to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Given the limited scale of the proposal and as it would only be providing more space for existing rooms and a small utility room, it is not deemed that there are any notable public benefits of the proposal that outweigh the harm to the designated heritage asset.

Through the loss of historic fabric and plan form, and inauthentically designed alterations, the proposals would fail to preserve the special interest of the listed building and the setting of other listed buildings. Therefore, the proposed development would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan. This forms the first reason for refusal.

Character of the Area:

The proposed single storey rear/side extension adheres to R16 design principle within the Borough Design Guide (BDG) in relation to separation distances as the proposal is set 1.4 metres from the boundary with the neighbouring property. However, the extensions would be visible from the public highway and there would undoubtedly be an adverse effect upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The spatial relationship between the stable and the separately listed barn immediately to the east would be affected. Through the form and massing, the proposals would erode this historic relationship, blurring the authentic plan of the farmstead. Whilst there are always unavoidable consequences of a conversion of an agricultural farmstead to residential use, these 'barn conversions' on the whole, have sought to minimise the sense of domesticity, thus retaining the spirit of the farmstead complex. It is this character which would be eroded by the proposals as presented in this application, thus adversely affecting this part of the conservation area. The proposal therefore fails to comply with Policies CP3 and CP11 of the Core Strategy, and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan. This also forms part of the first reason for refusal.

A large section of the existing hedge is proposed to be removed as part of this application and the retaining wall is proposed to be moved towards to the boundary. The existing hedge provides a natural green buffer along the site's boundary with Sindlesham Road. It is deemed that the removal of such a large section would have an unacceptable impact on the Character of the Area. Additionally, it is not demonstrated on the submitted plans that there would be other planting along the boundary or elsewhere on site to mitigate this loss. Regardless, there is no space between the retaining wall and the boundary to accommodate additional planting therefore this cannot be secured by condition. This would be contrary to Policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and Policy CC03 and the Managing Development Delivery local plan. This forms the second reason for refusal on this application.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed single storey rear/side extension is set 1.4 metres from the boundary with the neighbouring property and given the single storey nature there are no concerns on loss of light grounds. With regards to overlooking, no new windows are proposed on the side of the extension and therefore there are no concerns on overlooking grounds. To avoid being overbearing, guidance in the BDG states that the eaves height

of single storey extensions should not exceed 3 metres within 2 metres of a side boundary. In this instance, the proposal is set 1.4 metres from the boundary with the neighbouring property, but an eaves height of 2.7 metres shows compliance with this guidance relating to overbearing. Overall, the proposed extension poses no harm to neighbouring amenities.

Residential Amenity Space:

The proposal would not adversely harm the usability of the site's rear amenity space for current and future occupiers.

Ecology:

The application site is located within an area that holds the potential to support bat roosts. A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was submitted as part of this application. The PRA recorded low numbers of bat droppings at two locations on the building's exterior. The PRA finds that the property is considered to have the potential to support large numbers of small crevice-dwelling bats and as such, has been classified as a confirmed roost with high suitability. It was therefore recommended within the PRA that three dusk emergence survey visits should be undertaken.

Government Circular 06/05 states that:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted".

As there are no exceptional circumstances in this case, the recommended three dusk emergency surveys should be submitted prior to the determination of the application to ensure that there is no harm to protected species. The further surveys were requested however they have not been submitted. Therefore, there is a lack of ecological information which is required to determine the application and the proposal therefore conflicts with Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB23 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan. This forms the third reason for refusal of this application.

Conclusion:

Whilst the proposal has no impact on neighbouring amenities or the residential amenity space of the site, the potential impact on the historic fabric and plan form of the listed building is a strong enough reason to warrant refusal of the application. Additionally, the proposal has failed to demonstrate that protected species would not be adversely affected by the development proposed and the requested further dusk emergence surveys were not provided. This also forms a strong enough reason to warrant refusal of the application.

Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal.

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.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	30 July 2025
Earliest date for decision:	3 May 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	31 July 2025

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS
Insert where relevant