

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242994
Site Address:	Highwood House, Church Lane, Arborfield, Wokingham, RG2 9JA
Expiry Date:	27 January 2025
Site Visit Date:	1 October 2024
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached outbuilding.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Countryside
Scale and Location of Development Proposals

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 CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
242112	Householder application for the proposed erection of a detached outbuilding.	Approved: October 2024
100740	Proposed erection of detached two storey double garage with living accommodation over.	Approved: May 2010
090790	Proposed erection of 2 x 2 storey front extensions, single storey rear extension with balcony above, front porch extension, conversion of garage to habitable room and erection of detached double garage.	Approved: August 2009

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection
WBC CIL – No comments

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Arborfield & Newland Parish Council	No objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One objection letter received raising the following concerns: - The visual impact from the neighbouring property will be worse. - The building line of the lane will be changed. - A precedent will be in place that will take away from the countryside feel of the lane.

APPRAISAL

Context: The application site is a substantial plot located along Church Lane and is occupied by a large, detached dwelling. The site is enclosed by mature hedgerows and trees along all boundaries.

This application seeks permission for the erection of a large outbuilding, to be sited towards the southeastern corner of the host dwelling. The outbuilding would facilitate the creation of a pool, gym, sauna, bar and related amenities.

It should be noted that this application follows the approval of application 242112, which comprised a fundamentally similar development as currently proposed, however, was of a larger size than that proposed in this application.

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 in the countryside and is therefore to be considered under Policy CP11 of the adopted Core Strategy, which seeks to control development outside defined settlement boundaries. Relevant to this scheme, CP11 not permit development outside of development limits unless it falls within the exemption criteria below:

- It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.
- It does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.

As discussed above, the outbuilding as proposed is of a smaller scale than that which obtained approval through application 242112. Notwithstanding, the notable scale of the proposed development is still noted, extending approximately 19.3 metres from the southside of the host dwelling, with a width of approximately 11 metres, and a height of approximately 4 metres.

As was acknowledged through the previously approved application, the size of the outbuilding is reflective of the multiple uses that it accommodates, which in other circumstances, might be accommodated through a number of individual outbuildings.

The building has been positioned as closely to the existing built form as possible, thus limiting the spread of development within the countryside. Furthermore, given the size of the site and host property, the outbuilding would be clearly subservient to its surroundings and is therefore not considered to be of an inappropriate scale.

Overall, the additional bulk from the proposed development would not harm the countryside and the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy CP11 in this respect.

Character of the Area: The prominent characteristics of the surrounding area have not been altered since the approval of application 242112, nor has the proposal significantly changed, aside from the reduction in scale as discussed. As such, the conclusions drawn previously on the developments impact largely remain the same.

The site is well screened from public vantage points due to the presence of a well-established vegetative boundary across the front of the site. The presence of the existing double garage would also screen the proposals permeability from Church Lane, with the outbuilding being sited to the rear of the garage. With a combination of these factors, the proposal would have limited bearing on the wider character of the area.

Further to the above, the position of the outbuilding to the rear of the host dwelling and garage ensures that it would not significantly alter the extent of built form as seen across the width of the site. It would go deeper into the rear of the site than the host dwelling, however, due to the significant depth of the rear amenity space serving Highwood House, the proposal would not be synonymous with overdevelopment.

Despite the countryside setting, aerial images show that there are outbuildings located in the rear gardens of several neighbouring properties within Church Lane, which now form part of the prevailing pattern of development within the locality. The majority of the rear garden would remain free from built form such that the spacious character of the application site would be maintained.

The Borough Design Guide emphasises the importance of extensions and additions to be well considered and complement the existing building, either by adopting its style, or by a carefully considered contrast. In this instance, the latter is relevant, as the modern style of the outbuilding is a notable contrast to the more traditional architecture of the host dwelling. Had the outbuilding sought to replicate the character of the existing property, this would have appeared as a bulky and unsightly addition to the site, whereas the large expanses of fenestration ensure that the outbuilding has a distinctive relationship with the dwelling, while retaining subordination through its relatively modest height.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area and is compliant with policies CP1 & CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Renewable Energy: The proposal includes the use of solar panels and air sourced heat pumps (ASHP). 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 relevant to this proposal and states that *“When determining planning applications for all forms of renewable and low carbon energy developments and their associated infrastructure, local planning authorities 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;*
- c) in the case of applications for the repowering and life-extension of existing renewable sites, give significant weight to the benefits of utilising an established site.”*

Overall, the principle of a small-scale renewable energy development is supported by local and national policy concerning sustainability.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking: The proposal is limited to ground floor works and therefore poses no overlooking concerns.

Loss of Light & Overbearing: The outbuilding would run parallel to a large extent of the shared boundary with Phyllena, however, due to the separation distance that would be present between the structure and the neighbouring site, this would offset any potential loss of light or overbearing impact.

Representation: A neighbouring resident has issued a letter of objection for the proposed development, primarily on the grounds of visual impact. This has been assessed in the proceeding sections of this report, and for the reasons set out, it is not considered to be a reason to refuse the application.

The resident also raised concern that the proposal could form a precedent for future development within the lane, impacting character. Each development proposal is assessed on its own merits and the council cannot consider potential future development in the appraisal of a planning application.

Landscape and Trees: No objection has been raised by WBC Landscape & Trees to the development.

Drainage: WBC Drainage have requested a drainage strategy to demonstrate how surface water will be managed, ensuring post-development runoff does not exceed pre-development levels. The development is proposed in Flood Zone 1 and such details were not required through the previous application. As such, the request is considered unreasonable in this site-specific circumstance.

Ecology: The site was assessed as having potential to support great crested newts and therefore the precautionary method working statement will be conditioned as part of this permission, to prevent harm to a protected species, in line with local policies CP3, CP7 & TB23.

Conclusion: For all the above, the proposal is acceptable, and 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:	24 January 2025
Earliest date for decision:	23 December 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	24 January 2025