

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260751
Site Address:	Land and garages to the North East side of Headley Road, Woodley, Reading, RG5 4JG
Expiry Date:	13 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	7 May 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. 2 bedroom dwelling to include 3no. dormers, with garden and parking following demolition of existing garages.	

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 CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Woodley Design Statement

NO RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to a condition
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to a condition
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection raised

WBC CIL – CIL liable development
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Waste Services – No comments
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments

REPRESENTATIONS

Woodley Town Council	Objection on the grounds that the proposed plans leave insufficient turning space for vehicles to access the three garages to the rear of properties 153-157 Headley Road East
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	7 objection letters received, primarily objecting to the development on the following grounds: • constrained access and highway safety including emergency access/turning; • existing and worsened parking pressure and displacement (including alleged inaccuracies in the parking baseline); • overlooking and loss of privacy; • loss of light; • construction disturbance and safety; • impacts on access/manoeuvring to privately owned garages; and • design/scale/materials and character impacts. A further 3 letters have been submitted by residents, largely in support of the proposal

APPRAISAL

Context: The application site is 563sqm in size and currently serves as the rear parking area for the dwellinghouses that face onto Headley Road to the immediate west. The site is accessed via a narrow vehicular access road off of the adjacent roundabout, with 2no.garage blocks being sited adjacent to its northern boundary made of up of 7no. single garages. The land is almost entirely laid with hardstanding.

The character of the area is varied. The adjacent roundabout being home to a mix of both residential and commercial units, while immediately east of the application site is a large industrial unit and parking area, separated by fencing and a row of large

coniferous trees.

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the eastern sited garage block, to be replaced by a 2-bedroom detached dwelling, the creation of private amenity space and with associated changes to parking and landscaping.

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 within settlement limits, in the Major Development Location of Woodley, and as such, development in this location is acceptable providing that it complies with wider principles contained within the development plan. The Council's Core Strategy divides each of the borough's settlements into one of the three categories identified in policy CP9. Major Development Locations are listed as those with the greatest range of facilities and services which also allow residents the greatest choice in modes to access them. The Council's spatial strategy for development seeks to focus new development within these locations.

Housing Land Supply Position

Paragraph 78 of the NPPF requires local authorities to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than 5 years old.

The supply of specific deliverable sites should include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market; or 20% where delivery was below 85% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

As of March 2025, the council can only demonstrate a deliverable housing land supply of 2.5 years against a Local Housing Need (LHN), which refers to the number of homes required in a specific local authority area to meet the projected demand for housing.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that where policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless:

- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Firstly, in considering i), it must be recognised that the proposed site is not located within any protected areas or assets of particular importance. Officers must therefore consider the application under ii) and determine whether there are any adverse impacts generated by the development that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.

This is referred to as the 'tilted balance', as harm and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted in favour of approval where the above applies. In acknowledging the requirements of paragraph 11(d)(ii) and the tilted balance being engaged, it is necessary to consider whether there are any circumstances which affect the weight that can be given to the supply of additional housing. This will inform the planning balance exercise carried out at the end of this report.

In this case, those development plan policies most important for determining the application insofar as they restrain additional housing delivery are afforded reduced weight by reason of the Council's housing land supply position. However, policies concerned with design quality, residential amenity, highway safety, drainage, trees and biodiversity remain material and continue to attract weight according to their consistency with the Framework.

Sustainability of Location

Policies CP1, CP6 and CP9 of the CS permit development where it is based on sustainable credentials in terms of access to local facilities and services and the promotion of sustainable transport. Expanding on this, paragraph 4.57 in the Core Strategy aims to prevent the proliferation of development in areas away from existing development limits as they are not generally well located for facilities and services and would lead to the increase in use of the private car.

The NPPF seeks to ensure the growth of sustainable transport in managing development and approval of planning applications. More specifically, it seeks to promote sustainable travel in decisions.

The site is located within a Major Development Location and is in close proximity to facilities, services, and public transport. From a sustainability perspective, it is within a suitable location and is acceptable in terms of the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Summary of Principle

The principle of the proposed development within the settlement boundary of Woodley is supported in principle by Policy CP9.

Character of the Area: Paragraph 124 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.

With regards to well-designed places, paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);

Policy CP1(1) 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.

The application site is located to the rear of existing residential development and currently accommodates a utilitarian block of garages, which, whilst serving a practical function, makes a negative contribution to the character and appearance of this area. By reason of its form, materials and condition, the garage block detracts from the quality of the immediate setting. As such, no objection is raised in principle to its demolition.

The proposed development would result in the removal of this unsightly structure and its replacement with a purpose-designed dwelling that has been informed by the constrained backland context of the site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal constitutes backland development, such development is not inherently unacceptable. The acceptability of proposals of this nature instead depends upon their design quality, relationship to surrounding development, and impact on the character of the area.

In this instance, the proposed dwelling would make an efficient and appropriate use of a previously developed parcel of land within the defined settlement. The scale, massing and footprint of the building have been carefully considered and are such that the dwelling would sit adequately within the plot without appearing over-dominant. Whilst a degree of spatial constraint is inevitable given the site's characteristics, the proposal is not considered to result in an unacceptably cramped form of development.

With regard to the design of the dwelling, the inclusion of dormer windows within the roof form allows for a steeply pitched roof, enabling accommodation at first-floor level without the introduction of an unduly bulky or visually intrusive second storey. This approach assists in maintaining a relatively subservient and discreet appearance appropriate to the backland setting. The proposed palette of materials gives the building a distinctive identity, which is considered acceptable in this location where its visual relationship with surrounding properties is limited. The use of modern materials, including dark brick, clay plain roof tiles, anthracite aluminium windows and doors, and stone detailing, would not give rise to concern, notwithstanding the contrast with some of the older nearby properties. The design of the rear-facing dormer is acknowledged to be a weaker element of the scheme; however, views of this elevation would be effectively nullified by the siting of the dwelling within the plot and is not considered to result in any harm. Overall, the dwelling appears as a simple, well-proportioned and well-designed building, which would contribute positively to its setting.

In respect of wider spatial and character considerations, the modest scale of the dwelling, together with its recessed position within the site, would significantly limit views of the development from Headley Road, thereby avoiding any appreciable impact on the street scene. When assessed against the prevailing pattern of development in the wider area, it is acknowledged that the proposal does not reflect the more typical arrangement of dwellings on individual plots with long rear gardens. However, the surrounding context is varied rather than uniform, with the site located in proximity to larger commercial and industrial buildings, as well as other examples of backland development to the north. In this site-specific context, it is not considered that the somewhat unusual layout would, in itself, justify the refusal of planning permission.

Overall, the proposal would represent a clear visual improvement to the site when compared to the existing garage block. By redeveloping previously developed land within the settlement boundary, the scheme would make a positive contribution through the efficient use of land and enhance the appearance of this backland area, whilst having a limited impact on the street scene of Headley Road and the wider residential environment. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies CP1 & CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Notwithstanding the above, it is important to acknowledge that the development is considered acceptable only because it represents a finely balanced form of development within a constrained backland context. Any further uncontrolled additions to the property would be likely to result in material harm to neighbouring amenity, the character of the area, and on occupants living conditions. Whilst it is acknowledged that the physical limitations of the site may restrict the scope for certain forms of permitted development, there remains potential for smaller-scale extensions, alterations or outbuildings to be constructed without the need for further planning permission. In the context of this proposal, even relatively modest additions could cumulatively result in an unacceptable intensification of the site, undermining the spatial relationships and design considerations which have led to the scheme being found acceptable in its current form. As such, it is considered both necessary and reasonable to remove permitted development rights to ensure that any future alterations are subject to appropriate planning control.

Residential Amenity:

Internal Amenity

Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. The 'Technical housing standards –nationally described space standards' defines that a two storey, two-bedroom dwelling should have a minimum gross internal area of 70 to 79 sqm. The property would have a GIA of approximately 91 sqm, thus exceeding the standard.

A dwelling should also accommodate for a minimum combined floor area of living, dining and kitchen space; 31sqm is advised for large dwellings according to the Borough Design Guide. The proposed dwelling would have a living, dining and kitchen space of approximately 48m², which would exceed the minimum standard.

The two bedrooms meet the minimum recommended floor space for twin/double bedrooms (11.5 sqm) as set out in the nationally described internal space standards.

All the habitable rooms would be served by appropriately sized fenestration and there is internal storage space, which is welcomed.

Overall, the internal living environment for the proposed dwelling is acceptable and accord with policy TB07 of the MDD Local Plan and the Nationally Described Space Standards.

External Amenity

The unique and constrained nature of the site has been acknowledged above. These spatial limitations have resulted in a layout whereby the dwelling would have very limited rear garden provision, with the majority of the private amenity space instead located to the side of the dwelling. This arrangement contrasts with the more typical pattern of development in the surrounding area, where properties generally benefit from deeper rear garden areas. However, the acceptability of the proposal must be considered in the context of the site's backland position and physical constraints, rather than through direct comparison with more conventional, street-facing plots. Within this context, the proposed layout represents a site-responsive solution. The submitted plans demonstrate that the external amenity space would be of a sufficient size, shape and accessibility to provide a usable and functional private outdoor area for future occupiers. The space would be capable of accommodating typical domestic activities, including sitting out, drying clothes and general recreational use. Whilst the configuration of the amenity area is unconventional, it is not considered to result in a substandard level of provision.

Notwithstanding the above, there also remains the matter of the fact that a large proportion of the designated private garden would be covered by the evergreen tree canopies, the impact of which being two-fold, with this likely to result in overshadowing of the amenity space, reducing its desirability, and also a greater pressure to prune the trees in the future. With regard to the latter, this has been addressed separately within the 'Landscape and Trees' section of this report. In considering the potential amenity impacts arising from the extent of tree cover, it is not uncommon for private amenity spaces within established residential environments to experience varying degrees of overshadowing from existing vegetation, particularly where mature trees are present along site boundaries. In this instance, whilst the level of shading would be greater than typically expected, the amenity space would nonetheless retain areas of usable outdoor space with adequate light and outlook, particularly towards the more open parts of the site. Overall, it is considered that acceptable external amenity space has been provided.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking

The proposed dwelling would be located within a constrained backland plot and would inevitably sit closer to some adjoining rear boundaries than is typical of conventional residential development. It is acknowledged that the front-facing windows of the dwelling would be in relatively close proximity to adjacent rear garden boundaries, however, the orientation and siting of the building are such that views from these

windows would be oblique rather than direct. Furthermore, the separation distance between the proposed windows and the rear elevations of closest dwellings would exceed 26 metres, which is sufficient to avoid an unacceptable level of overlooking in planning terms.

Given the angled relationship between the properties, the intervening built form, and the degree of separation involved, the proposal is not considered to result in a loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers.

Overbearing & Loss of Light

In terms of light and overbearing impacts, the modest height of the dwelling, together with its separation from neighbouring buildings, would ensure that overshadowing and enclosing effects are limited.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The Council's Highways Officer originally reviewed the application and requested further information prior to determination.

The initial response confirmed that the site benefits from an existing access onto Headley Road East and is located within a sustainable location with acceptable access to walking, cycling and public transport. It was further advised that the level of traffic generated by a single dwelling would be unlikely to result in a material impact on the wider highway network. However, concerns were raised in respect of a number of detailed matters, including:

- insufficient information regarding the existing parking arrangements and potential displacement of vehicles;
- the need to ensure adequate on-site parking provision and manoeuvring arrangements;
- substandard cycle store dimensions; and
- the refuse collection arrangements, where carrying distances exceeded recommended standards.

Following this, additional information and revised plans were submitted by the applicant, including changes to the site layout, which appropriately addressed these concerns. To the extent that concerns have also been raised regarding private access to or use of retained garages, those are not determinative planning considerations except insofar as they relate to the safe and practical operation of parking and turning. Those planning effects have been considered through the Highway Officer's assessment and are not considered to justify refusal.

Overall, subject to the imposition of conditions relating to parking and turning, cycle parking, and refuse collection arrangements, the Highways Officer has confirmed that the proposal is acceptable in highway safety terms.

Flooding and Drainage: The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and the proposal represents no additional flood risk. The Council's Flood Risk & Drainage Officer has therefore raised no objection in principle to the proposal, subject to drainage details being submitted to and approved in writing by the Council prior to commencement. This can be secured via condition.

Landscape and Trees: The Trees & Landscape Officer has issued an objection to the proposed development on three principal grounds; impact on character, inadequate living environment for future residents, and impact on the existing evergreen trees along the sites eastern boundary.

The first two matters have already been assessed at different sections within this report, where it was found there was insufficient justification to withhold planning permission on these grounds.

With regard to the impact on trees, it is important to note at the outset that there are no trees within or adjacent to the site that are subject to statutory protection. As such, whilst the trees remain a material consideration, the degree of protection afforded to them in planning terms is more limited and must be weighed proportionately.

The application is supported by a detailed arboricultural assessment, which has been prepared in accordance with BS5837:2012. This identifies that the development would necessitate the removal of a small number of Category C trees, which are explicitly defined as being of low quality or limited value, and concludes that their loss would not give rise to a significant impact on the local or wider landscape.

In respect of retained trees, the AIA confirms that:

- The proposed built form is positioned outside the root protection areas (RPAs) of retained trees;
- The development largely follows the footprint of the existing built form/hardstanding, thereby limiting additional incursion;
- Appropriate tree protection measures and construction methodologies are identified to ensure protection during demolition and construction;
- The retained trees are considered unlikely to result in significant post-development constraints, with only minor maintenance (such as limited pruning) potentially required.

Furthermore, the proposed site layout includes areas of soft landscaping replacing existing hard surfacing, which the AIA identifies as being beneficial to nearby trees in terms of rooting environment and long-term health.

In relation to the Officer's concerns regarding future pressure to prune or remove trees, the submitted evidence indicates that any such works would be minor in nature and not detrimental to tree health or amenity value, and would not be uncommon in a residential context where vegetation interfaces with built development. This is a matter that can reasonably be controlled through appropriate conditions, including the implementation of tree protection measures and adherence to the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the existing tree belt provides a degree of screening and visual amenity, the evidence demonstrates that the proposal has been designed to retain the majority of the tree cover, with impacts limited to lower quality specimens.

Overall, it is considered that sufficient mitigation has been provided through the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment and associated protection measures, and

that the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the health or wider amenity value of retained trees.

It is nevertheless acknowledged that some conflict arises with the objectives of development plan policies relating to trees, landscaping and living conditions by reason of the relationship between the proposed dwelling/garden and the retained eastern tree belt. In this case, that conflict is limited in degree because the most valuable screening trees are retained, the built form sits outside identified RPAs, and the resulting impacts can be managed through tree protection and landscaping controls. The Trees Officer's objection has therefore been given moderate weight, but not sufficient weight to justify refusal.

Ecology: The Council's Ecologist raises no objection subject to conditions, but has identified concerns regarding the completeness of the ecological submission, the BNG calculations and the treatment of existing vegetation, all of which must be addressed through the recommended planning controls.

It is important to consider the baseline characteristics of the site, which is clearly identified within the submitted Ecological Assessment as comprising predominantly hardstanding, a garage block and limited vegetation of relatively low ecological value. Despite the concerns of the Ecologist, the absence of priority habitat and the minimal extent of habitat impact being below the 25m² threshold, the proposal is correctly classified as de minimis and is therefore not subject to the statutory biodiversity gain condition.

Importantly, the Ecology Officer does not identify the presence of protected species or irreplaceable habitats within the site, nor is any such constraint evidenced within the submitted reports.

Furthermore, the Ecology Officer has set out a clear suite of conditions and mitigation measures, including the provision of biodiversity enhancements (such as bird and bat boxes), native planting, and the submission of a landscaping scheme, alongside tree protection measures and ecological safeguards during construction. These measures are considered both reasonable and proportionate to the nature and scale of the development, and would ensure that the proposal delivers a degree of ecological enhancement in accordance with development plan policies.

In this context, it is considered that the concerns raised are capable of being appropriately addressed through planning conditions, rather than representing fundamental constraints to development. Subject to the imposition of the recommended conditions, including biodiversity enhancement, landscaping, and tree protection measures, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan.

Accordingly, the ecological position is not 'no harm', but rather that any likely effects are limited in scale and can be satisfactorily mitigated and enhanced through condition.

Environmental Health: The site comprises previously developed (brownfield) land. While internal records do not identify any known land contamination associated with

the site, brownfield land is inherently at a greater risk of contamination due to past uses, ground disturbance and the potential presence of made ground.

The proposal involves excavation and groundworks associated with the construction of a new residential dwelling. As a result, the possibility of unsuspected contamination cannot be discounted. In view of this, and in line with standard Environmental Health practice, a precautionary approach is considered appropriate. A condition is therefore recommended requiring that, should any unexpected contamination be encountered during construction, works shall cease and the matter be reported to the Local Planning Authority, with appropriate assessment and remediation undertaken as necessary.

Conclusion: Paragraph 8 of the NPPF states that achieving sustainable development requires consideration of three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental.

The proposal would generate a modest level of employment during the construction phase, though this would be limited given the small scale of the development. Future occupants of the home would contribute to the local economy and help support nearby services. However, as the scheme comprises a single dwelling, the overall economic benefits would be limited.

Although the development would make only a modest contribution to the Council's overall housing supply, the creation of a single additional residential unit in an appropriate and sustainable location should nevertheless be afforded significant weight. This is particularly relevant in the context of the borough's acute shortfall in deliverable housing land. In this regard, the proposal would make a positive, albeit modest, contribution to meeting local housing needs.

Redevelopment of this brownfield site within an established settlement boundary would not give rise to adverse environmental impacts. Furthermore, landscaping measures can be appropriately secured, and the proposal would achieve compliance with relevant sustainability, energy efficiency and drainage requirements through submitted details and Building Regulations. As such, the environmental benefits are limited but positive.

The dwelling, although representing backland development, would visually enhance the existing plot, while having an acceptable impact on wider character. It would not give rise to unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenities and would utilise an existing access, with any highway safety issues being resolved through discussions with the Highways department and amended plans.

The site is also in a sustainable location for residential use, where future occupiers would not be overly dependent on the private car to meet day-to-day needs. This is afforded positive weight in the balance.

When considering the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, the proposal gives rise to some limited harm and policy tension, namely its backland form, the constrained nature of the garden environment, and the concerns raised in relation to retained boundary trees and ecological information. For the reasons set out above, those matters attract limited to moderate weight and, whether taken

individually or cumulatively, do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of an additional dwelling on previously developed land in this sustainable location at a time of substantial housing land supply shortfall.

The recommendation is for approval subject to the conditions set out in the draft decision notice, including conditions relating to approved plans, materials, parking/turning, cycle parking, refuse storage/collection, drainage, tree protection, landscaping and biodiversity enhancement, together with associated reasons.

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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:	8 July 2026
Earliest date for decision:	7 May 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	10/07/26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Major Development Location of Woodley*