

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251580
Site Address:	Land to the north of 6 Woodlands Avenue, Woodley, Reading, RG5 3HJ
Expiry Date:	12 August 2025
Site Visit Date:	23 July 2025
Proposal: Permission in principle application for residential development (including demolition of an existing bin store) comprising the erection of a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 dwellings.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements 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 CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB20 – Service Arrangements and Deliveries for Employment and Retail Use TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM11 - Water Resources

	DM12 - Sustainable Transport Movements DM15 - Site History
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS10 – Meeting our housing needs CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE3 – Environmental standards for residential development C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging H1 – Housing mix, density and standards H3 – Affordable housing H4 – Exception sites H6 – Self-build and custom build H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
222354	Outline application with some matters reserved for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling with access off Lytham Road. (Access to be considered).	Withdrawn 18 May 2023
232172	Householder application for proposed insertion of 1 no. front dormer and 1 no. side dormer (6 Woodlands Avenue Woodley Wokingham RG5 3HJ)	Approved 30 October 2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health – No comments received WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditons

WBC Highways – No objection however further detail on the rights of access of the shared drive to the public highway is required at Technical Details stage. WBC Landscape and Trees – No comments received WBC CIL - The proposed development will be liable for CIL as it involves the creation of 1 or more new dwelling WBC Ecology – No comments received WBC Waste Services – No comments received WBC Cleaner and Greener - No comments received
External
Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Woodley Town Council	No objection but some concerns with access and parking as the site can only accommodate 2 properties.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	Objection: • Insufficient parking as property owners usually have more than 1 car. • Concerns regarding construction management for lorries and safe access and noise • Parking arrangement unrealistic • TPO trees restrict the development to 2 dwellings • New access needs to be relocated to alleviate traffic entering/exiting • Bike shed is for new residents not existing • Removal of existing bike shed to accommodate the proposal. • Emergency exits from existing properties are blocked • Loss of privacy due to overlooking windows to rear garden at 6 Woodlands Ave • Bin store will attract rodents

APPRAISAL

Introduction:

The permission in principle (“PiP”) consent route separates the consideration of matters of principle for the proposed development from the technical details of the development. The scope of a permission in principle application is limited to location, land use and amount of development (stage 1). Other matters are considered at the technical details consent stage (stage 2).

The PPG advises that the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Whether permission in principle should be granted should bear in mind the effects of the proposal’s location, land use and amount of development on material considerations that are required to be considered.

Proposal:

In this case, the PiP application is seeking permission for the erection of between 2no. and 4no. dwellings on the application site.

Site Description:

The site comprises former residential garden but since the erection of the adjoining properties around 2008 the site has been fenced off from any residential property. There is no planning history or enforcement history indicating any change of use of the land from residential garden. The site does not appear to be actively used and comprises an overground grassland with brambles. There is a storage container within the site.

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 and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. 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.

Housing Land Supply:

The NPPF (Dec 2024) at paragraph 78 requires LPAs to identify 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 latest published Five-Year Housing Land Supply Statement (at 31st March 2025) shows the Council is currently only able to demonstrate 2.5 years' worth of deliverable sites. Subsequently, those policies relating specifically to housing delivery in the borough's Core Strategy and MDD LP (and any made Neighbourhood Plans) are currently considered to be out of date. This does not mean they have no weight but is dependant on their consistency with the NPPF.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means 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), the site is not located within a protected area or relate to an asset of particular importance which provides a strong reason for refusing the development. In considering ii), officers must assess as part of an application whether there are any adverse impacts generated by the development that 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. This is referred to as the 'tilted balance,' as harm and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted according to paragraph 11(d)(ii).

In acknowledging the requirements of paragraph 11(d)(ii) and the titled 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.

An underlying reason in the context of Wokingham Borough is the historic oversupply of housing against both the requirement set in the Core Strategy local plan and the scale of local housing need as calculated by the previous standard method which remains a key contributing factor to the current lack of the required deliverable housing land supply and this will be considered in the planning balance section at the end of the report.

Having established the tilted balance is engaged, Paragraph 11d(ii) requires the proposal to be considered against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.

Emerging Local Plan Update:

The Local Plan Update (LPU), the plan which will supersede the Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan, was published in October 2024 (Regulation 19 Proposed Submission Plan). It was subsequently submitted for examination on 28 February 2025. The LPU sets out the development strategy and proposed site allocations to meet housing needs to 2040.

Weight to be attributed to the emerging policy is informed by paragraph 49 of the NPPF 2024. This advises that weight can be applied according to the plan's stage of preparation, the extent to which there are unresolved objections, and the degree of consistency with the NPPF. However due to outstanding representations as a whole, those policies relevant to the location of housing within the LPU are afforded limited weight.

The site was not put forward as a Submitted Site for housing in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) (2021) which considered the broad

suitability, availability and achievability of land promoted across the borough.

Principle Summary:

The site is acceptable in principle, subject to all other material considerations. Officers acknowledge the titled balance is engaged, as per paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF which will be weighed up in this report.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on character and appearance of the area:

Section 12 of the NPPF 'Achieving well-designed places', reinforces the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development, by ensuring the creation of inclusive and high-quality places. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF includes the need for new design to function well and add to the quality of the surrounding area, establish a strong sense of place, and respond to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

The Government's National Design Guide 2019 (NDG) is clear that well-designed places contribute to local distinctiveness. This may include introducing built form and appearance that adds new character and difference to places.

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. R9 and NR5 of the Borough Design Guide SPD note that height, bulk and massing should respond to the local context and the prevailing heights in the area.

The site is located within the heart of Woodley Town Centre and therefore is surrounded by extensive 20th century buildings. Lytham Road is a residential street on the west side however the east side of the road is the service areas of the retail and commercial units in Woodley Town Centre. The properties along Woodlands Avenue which back onto the site are predominantly bungalows, some of which have dormers/habitable rooms in the roof. The adjoining properties under the 2003 permission (ref: F/2003/0844) are 1.5 storeys in height. Overall, there is little architectural uniformity in this part of the Town Centre, nor any prevailing vernacular which must be replicated.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to impact on neighbouring amenity:

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development shall be without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users.

The nearest neighbours to the property are 4 Woodlands Avenue (25m long rear garden) and 1-17 Lytham Road (1-3 being the properties abutting the site 1.5m from the indicative new property). 1 – 17 Lytham Road are located within the red line of the application site.

The site is entirely surrounded by residential uses, the principle of this land use changing is acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity. The proposal is for a maximum of 4 dwellings, the amount of development and intensity of the land use is not considered to result in substantial harm to neighbours in terms of increased noise from domestic life.

The final layout would be subject to technical detail consent where further assessment in relation to neighbouring amenity would be carried out (in terms of the positioning of the dwellings in relation to neighbouring outlook, light etc).

The neighbours have raised concerns, however are located sufficient distances away from the site. The WBC Design Guide requirements regarding neighbour amenity, separation distances and privacy can be met at technical details stage limiting concerns on neighbouring amenity and any further impact could be mitigated through careful internal arrangements/window placements and any landscaping details at technical details stage.

It is considered that the principle of the development as proposed in relation to neighbours is acceptable for permission in principle stage.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the highway network:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems, along with providing for sustainable forms of transport.

Policy CC07 states that sufficient parking shall be provided as part of development proposals.

WBC Highways did not raise any concerns regarding the location and amount of development on the highway network, in principle, nor was an objection raised on the sustainability of the location.

Highway considerations would also be reviewed at technical details stage once the layout finalised. Recommendations include a sustainability assessment, swept path analysis, and a demonstration that acceptable visibility splays from the proposed access onto the highway can be achieved.

Other highways matters:

The cycle store from approved application F/2003/0844 (granted on appeal APP/X0360/A/04/1156266) is proposed to be removed to accommodate this proposal. The cycle store details submitted at technical details stage will need to accommodate the lost cycle parking (referred to in the description as "bin store").

The proposed development may also require concurrent amendments to be made via a Section 73 application to the planning permission F/2003/0844 (to ensure that the requirements of the planning conditions of this application are still met in perpetuity particularly in relation to access, parking and turning and cycle storage and landscaping/boundary treatments).

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to flood risk:

Policy CC09 of the MDD states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding.

The application site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest risk of flooding. There is no incompatibility between the proposed location, use and amount of development and flood risk. The Drainage Officer has requested further information including a detailed drainage strategy, however, this is not applicable at this stage. Full drainage details and a flood risk assessment would be required at technical consent stage.

Location, land use and amount of development in relation to the impact on the natural environment (trees and ecology):

Policy CC03 of the MDD states that development shall protect existing trees and hedges and incorporate high quality landscaping.

There are two trees protected by Tree Protection Orders on the boundary of the site. and a further TPO tree within the rear garden 8 Woodlands Avenue. These are protected by TPO-1902-2022 and the roots and canopy overhang the site. There are concerns over the potential impact of the development on the longevity of these trees. However, as the final layout of the development and scale of the development is unknown at this stage (it is a matter for technical details stage) this could have the potential to be mitigated/not cause any adverse impact. The trees are not directly within the site itself or within the area that the indicative property is being built. Notwithstanding this, their proximity to the proposed built form is important and there may be an impact on these trees.

It is not clear at this stage as to whether trees would need to be felled/lopped or otherwise as the layout is not finalised. Officers do not see there to be sufficient grounds to conclude that a scheme is categorically unacceptable due to the loss of TPO trees, due to the relationship of the development to the surrounding trees. The presence of the TPO trees may mean that the maximum proposed dwellings (4) is not feasible however, as the application is 2-4 the lower number of dwellings is more than likely to be possible.

A detailed arboricultural report and arboricultural impact assessment would be needed at technical details stage. Additionally, a construction method statement showing the mitigation and may be required to measures including tree protection measures, soil management, and any other steps to avoid damage to root zones or canopies to ensure the TPO trees are protected in perpetuity.

All species of bats receive special protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or

recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

The site is not identified as a bat suitability area, nor are there any significant water bodies nearby that may be inhabited by Great Crested Newts.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is not a requirement at the PIP stage, as this stage is limited to consideration of the location, land use, and amount of development only. Matters relating to biodiversity, including potential impacts on ecology and the requirement to demonstrate a minimum 10% net gain, will be fully assessed at the Technical Details Consent stage. At that stage, the applicant will need to submit the necessary ecological assessments and biodiversity metric calculations to demonstrate how the proposals will achieve the required net gain. If required, mitigation and enhancement measures will be secured via planning conditions or S106 agreement.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area:

Policy CP8 states that residential development proposals located within 5 km of the Thames Basin Heaths SPA must demonstrate that appropriate mitigation measures are in place to avoid adverse impacts on the SPA.

The application site is located outside the 5km and 5-7km linear mitigation zone for the Special Protection Area of the Thames Basin Heaths. As such, the need for an appropriate assessment is not required.

Conclusion:

The statutory starting point for determination is the development plan. The site lies within the settlement and is acceptable in principle. The Council's lack of a 5-year housing land supply triggers the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11 of the NPPF. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Here, the benefits – including the delivery of 2-4 dwellings in a sustainable, connected location – outweigh the limited harms relating to the visual impact of a currently undeveloped site with adjacent TPO trees. This harm would be limited and could be mitigated by careful design at technical details stage. Therefore, Permission in Principle 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:	Not required
Recommendation:	
Date:	23 July 2025
Earliest date for decision:	30 July 2025

Recommendation agreed by:	
(Authorised Officer)	
Date:	11.08.25