

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
242066	14/11/2025	Wokingham CP	Wescott Ward

Applicant	Klara Ascot Ltd
Site Address	Ascot House, Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NW
Proposal	Full application for the proposed raising and modification of the roof of the existing building plus the erection of an extension to form additional first, second and third floor accommodation in order to create 10 no. additional dwellings with car parking, cycle parking, refuse stores, landscaping and associated works.
Type	Full Application
Officer	Benjamin Hindle
Reason for determination by committee	Major application

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday 12 th November 2025
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place

RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL subject to conditions, informatives and the following planning obligations: Affordable Housing Contribution – A Contribution in lieu of £22,781 towards the creation of affordable housing in the borough. My Journey/ Travel Plan - Contribution of £612 per dwelling towards MyJourney or Travel Plan to be provided. Employment and Skills Plan – Employment and Skills Plan or in lieu contribution to be agreed and provided. Biodiversity Net Gain – Monitoring of the LEMP to ensure the BNG objectives are met over a 30-year period. OR; That the committee delegate to the Head of the Head of Development Management to REFUSE full planning permission if the legal agreement is not completed within six months of the date of this resolution (unless officers on behalf of the Head of Development Management agree to a later date for completion of the legal agreement).
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SUMMARY

The site is located within the major development location of Wokingham, within the designated Town Centre which has benefitted from recent regeneration to reflect its high-quality services and infrastructure. Ascot House was once a commercial office building which was converted to residential use under 2no. prior approval applications referenced 211148 and 212322.

The application seeks full planning permission for the construction of 10 apartments utilising the airspace above Ascot House. The apartments are inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's renowned 'Robie House' form and recessed elevations. This forms a contemporary architectural style but incorporates materials such as red brick and clay tiles to respect the existing building, but provide a more modern take on design to reflect recent developments within and adjacent to the town centre.

Extending this building to provide a more efficient use of the site for residential purposes in a highly sustainable location is accepted in principle subject to careful consideration of other material factors. The National Planning Policy Framework affords a presumption in favour of the efficient use of land, as well as best utilising previously developed land which the proposal achieves.

Given the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the presumption in favour of sustainable development under paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged. This proposal directly contributes to meeting the borough's acute housing need while utilising a site well-located within defined settlement boundaries, compliant with the spatial strategy within the development plan both current, as well as that anticipated in the future. Development of the site as proposed reflects the Council's ambitions on developing highly sustainable brownfield sites.

The scheme has been carefully designed to respect and enhance the character of the existing building given its location on a nodal point, as well as Finchampstead Road, Kendrick Close and Norton Road, accounting for the significant drop in land levels evidenced from north to south. The sloping roof form proposed and decreased height to the rear visually and spatially grade form down from the high-rise buildings on the edge of the formalised town centre to the semi-suburban form to the south and east. Elevations are well composed, which in combination with using the roof void to provide further accommodation marks a strong but courteous design response which limits bulk and mass.

Officers recognise that the proposed extensions do result in a building that would be larger in height than nearby houses along Kendrick Close and further afield within Carey Road which reflect the more suburban form to the east. However, there is a levels drop between Norton Road and the site which results in a similar scale of development directly facing it. The site given its prominent nodal location equally must respond to the larger buildings off the Finchampstead Road roundabout such as the Premier Inn and Carnival Pool, which is characterised by an increase in height bordering the highway. This creates a 'stepping down', or grading effect which is appropriate in townscape and design terms. This furthermore strengthens this informal gateway location to the Town Centre. The design approach complies with both the Borough Design Guide and Wokingham Town Centre SPD in this respect.

The development includes a balanced mix of 1- and 2-bedroom units, reflecting local housing needs, particularly within urban locations as identified in the Berkshire SHMA. A Financial Viability Appraisal (FVA) demonstrated that on-site provision of affordable

housing would be unviable due to the cost of development which is greater than standard construction considering the utilisation of airspace. However, further to third party review and negotiation, a financial contribution of £22,781 towards affordable housing has been secured through a Section 106 agreement. Whilst modest, this is often a reality for smaller housebuilders, particularly when utilising previously developed land and non-standard methods of construction (airspace development) which features higher set up costs than greenfield sites.

Whilst it is noted that the site in part achieves separation distances below that advocated by the borough design guide, it is acknowledged that shortfalls can be accommodated when having due regard to the prevailing character of urban settings. The BDG states “*Schemes in more urban settings or with a more intimate character will often require a tighter, more compact layout.*” Notwithstanding the limited shortfalls in separation distance, the layout and use of recessed floors/ balconies served by privacy screens have been designed to avoid detrimental overbearing impacts, overshadowing, and overlooking. All proposed apartments meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and provide well-considered layouts that offer natural light, ventilation, and sufficient storage space.

External amenity space is provided through integrated balconies which provide adequate outlook and are of sufficient scale. It is further noted the site is in close walkable proximity to Elms Field. The design and orientation of buildings also ensure acceptable levels of daylight and passive solar gain, supporting environmental performance as outlined within the submitted sustainability statement.

An ecological survey confirmed that the site holds negligible existing ecological value bar urban trees on its periphery. Nevertheless, the development will deliver a biodiversity net gain including a new diversified planting scheme including ‘good quality trees’ among other enhancements. Although a small number of low-moderate quality trees will be lost, this is mitigated by new native planting secured by planning condition. A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will guide ongoing maintenance which will be monitored over a 30-year period within the S106 agreement to ensure a lasting positive effect.

Access is via the existing entry point off Finchampstead Road, which is adequate for both vehicles and pedestrians. A total of 38 parking spaces, including EV charging bays and visitor spaces, meets the parking standards within Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan at a ratio of 1.1 space per unit (relatively high for town centre standards). Cycle parking is further provided in secure enclosures, which provides opportunities for active transport within this highly sustainable location.

The site is located in a highly sustainable area for growth, close to highly frequent and convenient public transport services as well as strong active transport infrastructure networks, which connect the site to the rest of the borough as well as major service centres such as Reading and London. Walking and cycling opportunities further provide access to key amenities such as shops, schools, and healthcare facilities which are also well established and abundant in the locale.

The proposal exceeds the minimum 10% carbon emissions reduction required by CC05 of the MDD Local Plan, achieving an aspirational 52% reduction through renewable energy measures including rooftop solar panels and hot water heat pumps. These

features contribute to the borough's broader climate resilience objectives and align with the Council's Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement.

In addition to the secured affordable housing contribution, the development secures planning obligations for a MyJourney contribution (£612 per unit) or the submission of a travel plan, an Employment and Skills Plan (or contribution) and biodiversity monitoring. These obligations will be formalised through a Section 106 agreement.

The proposal represents well-designed, sustainable, residential development that effectively reuses underutilised land and airspace within a defined major settlement which has capacity to grow. The development is compliant with the development plan and national policy when read as a whole and brings substantial benefits including (but not limited to) housing delivery, ecological enhancements, and enhanced sustainability.

While there are disbenefits to the proposal, such as the perception of overlooking and degree of overbearing to neighbours at Kendrick Close, these are not considered to significantly or demonstrably outweigh the scheme's overall benefits which is a key test as per paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions and the satisfactory completion of a legal agreement.

PLANNING STATUS

Major Development Location
Green Route
Previously Developed Land
Wokingham Town Centre
7km Thames Basin Heath Mitigation Zone
Holme Green Pastoral Sandy Lowland
Bat Roost Suitability
Affordable Housing Thresholds

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
193408	Prior approval submission for proposed conversion of office building (Use Class B1(a)) to 20 no. residential units (Use Class C3).	Prior approval refusal – 10/02/2020
200534	Prior approval submission for proposed conversion of office building (Use Class B1(a)) to 20 no. residential units (Use Class C3).	Prior approval, approval – 01/04/2020
203094	Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use from office (Use Class B1(a)) to 21no. residential units (Use Class C3).	Prior approval, approval – 18/12/2020
210998	Prior approval submission for proposed conversion of office	Prior approval refusal – 10/05/2021

	building (Use Class E(i)) to 24 no. residential units (Use Class C3).	
211148	Prior approval submission for proposed conversion of office building (Use Class E(i)) to 21 no. residential units (Use Class C3).	Prior approval, approval – 27/04/2021
211020	Full application for the proposed external façade works comprising of replacement of existing pitched roof with a flat roof and brick parapet, replacement of existing windows with new windows and integrated perforated panels, removal of existing entrance canopy and creation of new recessed entrance, plus the construction of a lightwell to existing basement level, external cycle and bin store, and associated works.	Approved - 08/06/2021
212322	Prior approval submission for the change of use of the basement level of Ascot House, from office use (Class B1(a) to residential use (Class C3), comprising of 3no. dwellings.	Prior approval, approval – 25/08/2021
213400	Full application for the proposed erection of a part two storey, part 4 storey side and upward extension, to create 19 no. dwellings, plus associated parking and additional works.	Withdrawn – 01/03/2022

SUMMARY INFORMATION

For Residential

Site Area	0.25 Hectares
Existing units	24
Proposed units	10
Existing density – dwellings/hectare	96
Proposed density - dwellings/hectare	136
Number of affordable units proposed	0 (contribution in lieu secured)
Previous land use	C3 Residential Apartments

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

WBC Built Heritage	No objection
WBC Ecology	No comments received
WBC Highways	No objection subject to conditions and planning obligation
WBC Affordable Housing	Comments provided
WBC Trees and Landscape	No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage	No objection
WBC Environmental Health	No objection subject to conditions
Crime Prevention and Design	Advice provided

Thames Water	No objection
WBC Public Rights of Way	No comments received
WBC Community Safety	No comments received
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue	Advice provided
WBC CIL	Advice provided
SSEN	Advice provided
SSE Power Distribution	Advice provided
Fulcrum Pipelines	Advice provided
Southern Gas Networks	Advice provided
WBC Policy	No comments received
WBC Property Services	No comments received
WBC Green Infrastructure	No comments received
WBC Economic Development	No comments received
WBC Health and Wellbeing	No comments received
WBC Community Safety	No comments received
WBC Education	No comments received
WBC Cleaner and Greener	No comments received
BOB ICB NHS	No comments received
WBC Ecology Newts	No comments received
WBC Sustainability	No comments received
WBC Sports Development	No comments received
Berks, Bucks and Oxon WLT	No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council:

Wokingham Town Council made the following observations which can be summarised as follows:

- Harm to neighbouring amenity (*Officer note: This is assessed within the 'neighbouring amenity' section of this report*).
- Harm to the character and appearance of the area (*Officer note: this is addressed within the 'character and appearance' section of this report*).
- Conflict with CP9 of the Core Strategy (*Officer note: the proposal accords with CP9, which relates to the spatial strategy, not character and appearance*).
- Conflict with CP11 of the Core Strategy (*Officer note: the proposal is not located within the countryside, thus CP11 is irrelevant*).
- No provision of a lift, accessibility issues for young families, the elderly and disabled (*Officer note: This is assessed within the 'accessibility section of this report*).
- Lacking affordable housing (*Officer note: Viability is a material consideration, and a contribution in lieu has been secured*).
- Inadequate parking provision (*Officer note: WBC Highways raise no objection to the development, and view the parking provision as sufficient*).

- The development is not an allocated, or draft allocated site (*Officer note: whilst this observation is true, this does not constitute reason for objection*).

Local Members:

Cllr Rob Comber objected to the application, making the following comments:

- No provision of a lift, accessibility issues for young families, the elderly and disabled (*Officer note: This is assessed within the 'accessibility section of this report*).
- Lacking affordable housing (*Officer note: Viability is a material consideration, and a contribution in lieu has been secured*).
- Inadequate parking provision (*Officer note: WBC Highways raise no objection to the development, and view the parking provision as sufficient*).
- Lack of parking management (*Officer note: A parking management plan has been secured by planning condition*).
- Lack of electric vehicle parking (*Officer note: Building regulations Part S secures minimum EVC parking. A planning condition has also been secured to provide this on site for future residents*).
- Harm to neighbouring amenity (*Officer note: This is assessed within the 'neighbouring amenity' section of this report*).
- Typographical error within the Daylight and Sunlight Report (*Officer note: This has been addressed by the applicant as a typo, and has since been corrected*).
- Wokingham's Development Plan remains in date (*Officer note: Whilst the Development Plan lapses in 2026, the titled balance is currently engaged which can reduce weight afforded to policy conflict. In this instance, the proposal is policy compliant*).
- Prior approval granted on the basis of lower height (*Officer note: This is incorrect, the proposal complied with the relevant considerations within the GPDO and was approved on this basis*).
- Lack of community engagement.

Cllr Chris Cooke objected to the application, making the following comments (as summarised):

- The development is not an allocated, or draft allocated site (*Officer note: whilst this observation is true, this does not constitute reason for objection*).
- Harm to neighbouring amenity (*Officer note: This is assessed within the 'neighbouring amenity' section of this report*).
- Harm to the character and appearance of the area (*Officer note: this is addressed within the 'character and appearance' section of this report*).
- Failure to comply with previously imposed conditions/ obligations (*Officer note: this is not material to the determination of this application*).
- Environmental health harms (noise/ pollution) (*Officer note: No objections have been received by WBC Environmental Health*).
- Inadequate parking provision (*Officer note: WBC Highways raise no objection to the development, and view the parking provision as sufficient*).
- Lack of parking management (*Officer note: A parking management plan has been secured by planning condition*).

- Lack of electric vehicle parking (*Officer note: Building regulations Part S secures minimum EVC parking. A planning condition has also been secured to provide this on site for future residents*).
- Insufficient amenity space (*Officer note: the balconies proposed, in combination with easy access to greenspace is sufficient within an urban location*).
- Lack of community engagement.

Neighbours:

Over the course of the consideration of the application, two separate consultations were issued to 152 residents. The comments received within each period (of which reduce as amendments were secured by officers) are broken down as follows:

Within the initial consultation dated 21/10/2024, 28 objections were received by residents on the following grounds:

- Harm to the character of the area from bulk and mass
- Impact to neighbouring amenity (overlooking/ overbearing/ loss of light)
- Harm to the environment
- Disturbance during construction (*Officer note: a construction method statement to minimise disruption has been secured by planning condition*).
- Incorrect labelling of dwellings along Carey Road within the overshadowing assessment (*Officer note: the assessment concludes limited harm will arise from the proposal. Considering the distance to Carey Road, the proposal would have no impact on daylight/ sunlight*).
- Highway impact due to inadequate parking (*Officer note: WBC Highways raise no objection to the development, and parking is in accordance with Town Centre standards*).
- Harm to air quality from congestion (*Officer note: WBC Highways raise no objection on traffic generation from the development, given its modest scale*).
- Misrepresented parking provision (*Officer note: No objection has been received from WBC Highways on parking grounds*).
- Reduced light to kitchen window of No.14 Ascot House (*Officer note: A kitchen is not a habitable room*).
- Overlooking to Longmoor House (*Officer note: the proposal retains policy compliant separation distances to Longmoor House, in accordance with the BDG notwithstanding the site's location within an urban area*).
- Psychological impact from perceived overlooking/ overbearing.
- Poor management of existing apartments (*Officer note: this is not a material planning consideration*).
- Lack of public consultation in advance of submission.
- Concerns with the quality of construction of existing building (*Officer note: this is not a material planning consideration*).
- Overlooking to balcony of flat 23.
- Existing bin store is hazardous and poorly maintained (*Officer note: this is not a material planning consideration*).
- Structural integrity of the existing building (*Officer note: construction specification is not a material planning consideration, nor does approval override the need for safe construction within the building regulations process*).

Further to the receipt of revised plans reducing the scale of the proposal, providing additional information on daylight/ sunlight and clarity on highways matters, a re-consultation was issued on 17/03/2025. 16 repeat objections were received in this time which did not introduce further matters of objection.

PLANNING POLICY		
National Policy	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
	NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
	NDG	National Design Guide
Adopted Core Strategy DPD 2010	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
Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014	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 (from all sources)
	CC10	Sustainable Drainage
	TB05	Housing Mix
	TB07	Internal Space standards
	TB12	Employment Skills Plan
	TB21	Landscape Character
	TB23	Biodiversity and Development
Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) / other		Wokingham Borough Design Guide
		Wokingham Town Centre SPD
		Affordable Housing SPD
Local Plan Update	SS1	Sustainable development principles

	SS2	Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy
	C4	Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way
	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
	HC1	Promoting healthy communities
	HC4	Open spaces, sports, recreation and play facilities
	HC5	Environmental protection
	HC6	Air pollution and air quality
	HC7	Light pollution
	HC8	Noise pollution
	HC9	Contaminated land and water
	HC10	Odour, fumes and dust

PLANNING ISSUES

The main matters to be considered are:

- Description of Development
- Site and its Surroundings
- Principle of Development
- Affordable Housing
- Character of the Area
- Landscape Character and Trees
- Drainage
- Locational Sustainability
- Highways
- Neighbouring Amenity
- Accessibility
- Internal Amenity
- Environmental Health
- Sustainability
- Heritage and Conservation
- Ecology
- Infrastructure
- Employment Development
- Planning Balance

Description of Development

1.0 This submission seeks planning permission for the proposed addition of 10no. residential

units above the implemented prior approval schemes (211148 and 212322). Given development proposed within the roof space, the extensions are considered to be 1.5 and 2.5 stories respectively, although visually they appear as 1 and 2 stories.

- 1.1 The proposals comprise of 2x1 bedroom apartments and 8x2 bedroom apartments. Overall, the Ascot House site (including the recent prior approvals) would result in a total of 34 x C3 residential apartment units (of which tenure is explained within the body of this report).

Site and its surroundings

- 2.0 The application site is located within Wokingham Town Centre boundary area with the recently completed Elms Field and Carnival Pool developments (including Premier Inn) to the north and west of the site separated by Finchampstead Road and Denmark Street. The site area spans circa 0.25 Hectares.
- 2.1 The site itself lays at a prime nodal point on Finchampstead Road, Wellington Road and Denmark Street. Recent development at Elms Field has introduced several developments including the 4/5 storey Premier Inn Hotel and replacement Carnival Pool mixed use building. Accordingly, particularly given its lower land levels, the limited height of the existing building appears out of odds with this.
- 2.2 Notwithstanding the height of adjoining buildings within the nodal corner, there is a much finer urban grain to the north, east & south of the application site predominantly characterised by 2, 2.5 and 3 storey residential development as well as other commercial/converted commercial apartments units of parallel scale to the proposal. These create a hardened boundary along Finchampstead Road which visually delineates the end of the urban town centre, and start of suburban Wokingham.
- 2.3 Ascot House was previously an office building that has benefitted from various alterations under the prior approval mechanism to facilitate its conversion to residential. Along with the use itself, the form has been altered to habit residential use with façade and roof alterations approved under application 211020.
- 2.4 Internally, as existing, Ascot House comprises of 24 apartment units spread over a basement floor, ground floor and first floor with internal hallways/staircases expected with an apartment block. Parking is provided to the north and south of the apartment building comprising of 24 spaces (1 parking space per dwelling).



Fig 1. Aerial view of site (Yellow) with adjoining buildings and trees (Google Maps 2024)

Principle of Development

Principle of development under the development plan

- 3.0 Section 38(6) of The Planning and compulsory purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (CS), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) and Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) (2023) which are read alongside the NPPF.
- 3.1 The MDD Local Plan policy CC01 (and eLP policy SS1) 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.
- 3.2 Core Strategy (CS), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) Policy CC02 of the MDD Local Plan (and eLP policy SS2) sets out the development limits for each settlement as defined on the policies map. Policy CP9 of the CS sets out that development proposals located within development limits will be acceptable in principle, having regard to service provisions associated with the major, modest and limited categories. Policy SS3 of the eLP bolsters this outlining settlement hierarchy in major development locations.
- 3.3 The application site is sustainably located within a major development location and within a settlement boundary; as such, the principle of the development is acceptable providing it complies with local and national policy and there are no other material considerations which dictate otherwise as per the planning law referred to above (S38(6)).
- 3.4 CS policy CP3 states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, as layout, built form height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of a high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Principle of development under the emerging local plan (eLP)

- 3.5 A Revised Growth Strategy for the local plan was consulted on between 21 November 2021 and 24 January 2022, which proposed an alternative strategy for delivering growth in the borough due to the complexities regarding the deliverability of Grazeley garden town and following legislative changes to the emergency planning requirements around AWE Burghfield.
- 3.6 The site does not form a draft allocation for residential development, however, in the context of the borough's overarching need for housing above and beyond what the eLP will achieve, windfall sites such as the proposal and those allocated in combination with demonstrably contribute to meeting housing need targets.
- 3.7 In considering the weight to be given to Wokingham Borough Council's emerging Local Plan Update (LPU), it is necessary to refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024), Paragraph 49 states that decision-makers may give weight to emerging policies according to:

- The stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given);
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan with the NPPF (the closer the policies are to the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Stage of Preparation

- 3.8 Regulation 19 version of the LPU was published and subject to consultation in September-November 2024. The Regulation 22 plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in February 2025, and two Planning Inspectors have been appointed to examine (EiP) the plan. The examination of the local plan is ongoing, and the council responded to initial questions and requests from the Inspectors in May 2025, with Hearings occurring in November with a nominated inspector.
- 3.9 As seen in High Court judgements, even when an emerging plan is at an advanced stage, it may still attract limited weight if further consultation and modifications are required, and the Inspector has yet to issue a final report. Wokingham's LPU has several stages yet to be completed, including and the examination hearings (shortly to be complete) and main modifications stages, which restricts the weight that can currently be afforded to non-substantive.

Unresolved Objections

- 3.10 The plan has been submitted with an accompanying Regulation 22 Consultation Statement. Appendix 15 to the Regulation 22 Consultation Statement sets out the main issues raised in representations to each policy and area of the LPU Proposed Submission Plan and the council's response. This can be used to understand the scale of objections and so inform the weight that might be applied. These vary across policies and thus as relevant, LPU policies and their relevant weight are explained throughout this report.

Consistency with the NPPF

- 3.11 Although Officers are confident that the emerging LPU, and its policies align with the NPPF, the degree of consistency has not yet been tested through examination and cannot be guaranteed. As per other cases, consistency with the NPPF is only one factor, and its relative importance depends on the extent to which the LPU impacts the planning balance in decision-making.
- 3.12 LPU Policy SS2 Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy is relevant to this application and it placed the appeal site within settlement limits. LPU Policy SS2 states that:
- “The distribution of growth will be based on the following actions; Making the most efficient use of available and suitable previously developed land within defined settlements; The sustainable extension of defined major and modest settlements;”*
- 3.13 The Council however, acknowledge that at this stage, there are unresolved objections on substantive grounds pursuant to LPU policy SS2 (detailed within the regulation 22

document) and as such limited in favour of the scheme should be afforded.

- 3.14 Whilst afforded limited weight at this time, the proposal complies with SS2 of the LPU.
- 3.15 LPU Policy SS3 Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements outlines *“Within major and modest settlements, development proposals in addition to those specifically identified as allocations or areas of change in this plan, will be supported in principle.”*
- 3.16 Whilst afforded limited weight at this time, as SS3 is directly linked to the provisions of SS2, the proposal complies with SS3 of the LPU, and thus echoes the anticipated spatial strategy both currently and pursuant to the eLP.
- 3.17 Therefore in summary, considering the eLP’s stage of preparation, in advance of any Examination in Public, those relevant policies related to the emerging spatial strategy are not considered to hold substantive weight at this current time.

Joint Minerals and Waste Plan

- 3.17 Paragraph 222 of the NPPF states that: *“It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that the country needs. Since minerals are a finite natural resource, and can only be worked where they are found, best use needs to be made of them to secure their long-term conservation.”*
- 3.18 Paragraph 225 clarifies this further by stating: *“Local planning authorities should not normally permit other development proposals in Mineral Safeguarding Areas if it might constrain potential future use for mineral working.”*
- 3.19 The Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) was adopted by Wokingham Borough Council on 19 January 2023. The Joint Plan identifies site allocations and extensions to help provide a future supply of sand and gravel extraction. However, despite these allocations, there remains a shortfall of supply during the plan period. The policy response to address the shortfall is the identification of a ‘Minerals Safeguarding Area’ (MSA), where Policy M2 of the plan applies, and also an ‘Area of Search’ where Policy M4 applies. This approach is to demonstrate the potential for, in effect, windfall provision within the Plan area.
- 3.20 The site is outside of the defined MSA, and does not involve any excavation of ground material. Accordingly, there is no requirement to assess mineral extraction and preservation.

Housing land supply position and the ‘tilted balance’:

- 3.21 The Council currently accepts that its demonstrable housing land supply is less than five years, with the most recent housing land supply study concluding a deliverable supply of 2.5 years (31 March 2025). Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that where a local authority unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, the most important policies relating to the application may be viewed as being out of date, thus engaging the tilted balance as per paragraph 11(d).
- 3.22 The tilted balance qualifies that unless there are specific policies in the NPPF protecting the land subject to the application, that permission should be granted unless the 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.

Wokingham Town Centre:

- 3.23 Core Strategy CP14 outlines that Wokingham as a major town centre in Berkshire is considered suitable for growth. Proposals should retain and enhance the historic market town character of Wokingham and maintain its position in the Berkshire retail hierarchy by: 4) ensuring development cumulatively provides and maintains b) housing h) appropriate car parking to facilitate a viable and sustainable town centre; i) enhanced environmental and design quality.
- 3.24 The proposed use of the site is residential (CP14 4(B)), provides appropriate parking (CP14 4(H)) and enhances the existing environmental and design quality (CP14(I)). Therefore, Officers conclude that the proposal complies with CP14 of the Core Strategy.
- 3.25 Furthermore, whilst of limited weight at this stage Policy ER8 of the eLP states *“Development proposals within or in proximity to Wokingham town centre should promote and enhance its role, vitality and viability. Development proposals should retain and enhance the historic market town character and support its role by: Providing and maintaining complementary town centre uses (including offices and residential) within the defined town centre boundary”* The site and proposals strongly contribute to this objective.

Previously developed land/ Efficient use of land:

- 3.26 Paragraph 125(c) of the NPPF outlines that planning decisions should *“give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs”*.
- 3.27 Paragraph 129 builds on this, in stating planning decisions should *“support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account: a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it.”*
- 3.28 Whilst of limited weight at this stage, Policy H1 of the eLP provides the LPA’s anticipated direction of travel with respect to efficient uses of land. It states *“Development proposals should optimise density, make efficient use of land and achieve high quality design, that responds to the size, location, opportunities and constraints of the site, and is appropriate to the character and amenity of the area. Development proposals within the defined town and district centres and in urban locations with a good standard of accessibility to public transport will be expected to achieve higher densities as appropriate.”* The proposal increases density within a defined urban town centre location, that is highly sustainable. The development complies with this policy.
- 3.29 As above, the Council are currently unable to demonstrate an adequate 5 year housing land supply and therefore the necessity of additional homes within the borough are considered to be meet the NPPFs objective of significantly boosting the supply of new homes. Furthermore, the site presents the opportunity to provide the optimum use of the land, in extending an existing residential use on previously developed land within a major centre within the borough where the spatial strategy seeks to focus development. This is achieved through extension upwards which is appropriate for the site’s location (to be discussed within the ‘character’ section below).

Housing Mix:

- 3.30 Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy requires an appropriate mix of dwelling types, tenures and sizes so that the housing needs of the community are met. Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan requires an appropriate housing mix which reflects a balance between the underlying character of the area and both the current and projected needs of households.
- 3.31 The Berkshire (including South Bucks) Strategic Housing Market Assessment (February 2016) identified future housing need for the Wokingham Borough. Table 107 (on page 295) identifies the following:

No of beds	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4+ bed	Total
Dwellings required	934	3488	5605	2862	12889
	7.2%	27.1%	43.5%	22.2%	100%
Subject application	2	8	0	0	10
	0.2%	0.2%	0	0	0.09%

- 3.32 The intent of Council's policies are to provide a mix of accommodation to cater for the varied needs of the community and to ensure that it is provided where it is needed. It must take account of a variety of living arrangements including but not limited to families, extended families, couples, single parents and first home-owners.
- 3.33 Whilst the most needed types of dwelling are not provided through this application, it is considered that given the site's location within a town centre location, the housing mix put forward is acceptable and optimum. This is particularly considering the likely occupiers of the site being those looking to downsize but remain in Wokingham, single professionals with a need to be within commutable distance to London and younger families priced out of larger homes within the borough which can have their locational needs met.

Conclusion of principle of development:

- 3.34 The application proposal is located in settlement limits, within the major development location of Wokingham where the Core Strategy seeks to deliver efficient, sustainable development. The site is highly sustainably located and supports the re-use of an existing, previously developed residential site, making the most efficient use of the land available and appropriately increasing density within an urban area. The proposal supports the aims of the spatial strategy and complies with the Development Plan as a whole in this respect as well as accords with the provisions of the emerging Local Plan.
- 3.35 By virtue of the council's current housing land supply position, the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF at paragraph 11 is now engaged in the decision-making process, whereas paragraph 14 is not. Accordingly, an assessment will need to be made of whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole (the tilted balance).

Affordable Housing

- 4.0 MDD Local Plan policy TB05 (Housing Mix) requires that residential development should provide an appropriate density and mix of accommodation reflecting the character of the

area assessed on a site-by-site basis and reflecting the Council's Housing Strategy and Affordable Housing SPD. The MDD Local Plan and Affordable Housing SPD suggest a guide mix, to be considered in conjunction with the latest information from the Housing Register.

- 4.1 Turning to affordable housing provision, CP5 of the Core Strategy sets out affordable housing thresholds within the borough. This outlines that given the site is located within the designated countryside on a greenfield site, a minimum of 20% of the total number of units (net) should be provided as affordable housing. In the context of this proposal, this equates to 2 dwellings of the proposed 10 dwellings.
- 4.2 Following the submission of a Financial Viability Assessment (FVA) by the applicant, WBC commissioned an independent viability review prepared by Kempton Carr Croft. Further to an instructed re-view, the consultants of both the Council and applicant are in agreement that a modest contribution can be paid towards off-site affordable housing provision. This figure further to viability considerations is £22,781 which satisfies the Core Strategy and accompanying Affordable Housing SPD in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance.
- 4.3 In assessing the submitted FVA, the Council's valuers have taken full consideration of RICS Guidance Note – Assessing viability in planning under the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Policy Guidance for Viability (NPPG) and RICS Professional Statement Financial viability in planning: conduct and reporting. Account been taken specifically of the effect that planning obligations and other requirements have on the viability of the proposed development, whilst maintaining an appropriate Site Value for the landowner and a market risk adjusted return (17.5%) to the developer in delivering the project. This return is consistent with the 15%-20% contained within the NPPG (middle ground).
- 4.4 Council's valuers concluded that by deducting the costs of the development from the Gross Development Value and then assessing the resulting Residual Land Value against the Benchmark Land Value, the proposed scheme would be marginally in surplus. Hence, as above, whilst the proposed scheme is not currently in a position to provide affordable housing on site, it is in a position to make a modest contribution in lieu. As the guidance within the NPPG has been followed in full when reaching this conclusion, no objections can be reasonably raised in this respect.

Character of the area

- 5.0 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that permission will be granted for developments that maintain and enhance the quality of the environment and encompasses sustainable values.
- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 H1 of the eLP states *“All new development must be of high-quality design to endure over the lifetime of the development and create a strong sense of place.”*, outlining design guidance criteria including respecting the character of the area, creating a positive sense of place, creating accessible development and optimises use of land with higher densities focused within town centres.
- 5.3 Design Principle R9 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide states as follows:

Buildings taller than their surroundings may only be acceptable where they are sited:

- on major routes, where the scale and significance of the street warrants additional height;
- in landmark locations;
- fronting onto major green open spaces within built up areas (see Section 8: Rural & Settlement Edge);
- fronting key urban public spaces within larger schemes;
- in settlement centres where there are already other appropriate examples; and
- in local Borough centres, particularly with a mixed-use ground floor

- 5.4 It is noted that although there are some taller (originally commercial) buildings on Finchampstead Road, the grain, scale and character of the development to the east of this road is generally more 'suburban residential' than 'town centre'. This said, comparative form of greater than, or equal too height, bulk and mass running along the 'spine' of Finchampstead Road is illustrated below in blue:



Figure 2: Urban form map, Finchampstead Road and beyond.

- 5.5 Section 9.4 of the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD states that *“building heights in the town centre are consistently two and three storey and there is a strong consistency of street enclosure.”* This is echoed by 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.
- 5.6 Though it is acknowledged that the proposal exceeds the advised 3 storey vernacular in part (when accounting for the basement floor, which does not give the perception of an additional floor), paragraph 9.4.2 of the Wokingham Town Centre Masterplan SPD affords that *“in certain locations it may be suitable to introduce additional height”* The exceptions for this approach are as follows: *“1. create visual enclosure and strong urban edge to major areas of public open space, 2. to address changes in level and 3. to create local landmarks.”* The proposal would further add to the consistency of street enclosure along Finchampstead Road and respect the bulk and mass directly adjacent which informs the local context in

character terms.

- 5.7 Whilst the application site is not suitably located to act as a local landmark, considering the feature of the Premier Inn 4/5 storey building directly adjacent, the proposal is subject to notably lower ground than Denmark street by virtue of significant level change and therefore, the proposed increase in building height for Ascot House in this location is acceptable. It is further noted that the basement floor as existing is not overtly appreciable from the street scene and therefore the form would resemble one of 3 stories in compliance with section 9.4 of the Wokingham Town Centre SPD, particularly considering use of the roof void to provide accommodation. As shown by the illustrative visuals, the proposal would lead to a positive design feature in the context of its location and subserviently increase height without detriment to the character of the area.
- 5.8 It is appreciated that the site is located at higher land levels than dwellings along Carey Road (dropping circa 0.8 metres across the site), and by the same virtue of interacting with large buildings equally interacts with modest family dwellings to the east and south and the site in this respect would to some degree be prominent in its surroundings. This said, given the separation distances away from dwellings along Carey Road, and the fact that clear views are interrupted by Kendrick Close, the residual appearance which currently obliquely covers the Premier Inn would be extended to include the application site. Thus, the adjoining dwellings already feature a relationship with adjoining larger buildings which informs their identity. The proposal does not stand at odds with this.
- 5.9 To address the relationships between the application site and adjoining suburban form, the applicant has prepared a series of CGI's which demonstrate the site's larger, but not inappropriate connection to Finchampstead Road and the surrounding dwellings, an example of which is shown below in figure 3:



Figure 3: extract from TVIA, proposed western elevation

Density:

- 5.10 Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan require an appropriate dwelling density and R10 of the Borough Design Guide SPD seeks to ensure

that the development achieves an appropriate density in relation to local character.

- 5.11 The existing density of the site considering the 24 units approved under the prior approval mechanism is 96 D/P/H. The addition of 10 further apartment units (excluding the single dwelling fronting Finchampstead Road) results in a density per hectare of 136 D/P/H, a modest increase that in Town Centre terms is acceptable and best makes use of the previously developed land. By means of comparison, application referenced 230881 to 19-21 Market Place as approved by Members features a 150 D/P/H density (60 units over a 0.5 HA site area). Given the site is located amongst more general market housing, combined with the larger landmark buildings of higher density, this middle ground is considered appropriate.
- 5.12 The increase in density facilitated by the proposed 1.5 and 2.5 storey upwards extensions, though resulting in higher form than the adjacent residential dwellings which sit at Finchampstead Road, Kendrick Close, Carey Road and marginally above the dwellings along Norton Road (other than directly facing, where they are of similar height). Whilst density is just one indicator in overall design and not determinative in isolation, the proposal is not considered inappropriate for the intended location and nature as apartments and therefore is considered to be acceptable.

Building line:

- 5.13 R7 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires a consistent building line relative to existing buildings, the proposal does not seek to amend the existing building line due to the extension being solely related to the roof. There is no objection in this regard.

Outbuildings:

- 5.14 R20 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires consideration of external elements including the bin and cycle storage to avoid proliferation of clutter.
- 5.15 The application site features covered cycle and bin store, which are delivered in an efficient and visually acceptable manner.

Design:

- 5.16 Section 5.5 of the Wokingham Town Centre SPD states that new development in the town centre will achieve the highest quality of architecture, urban design and environmentally responsible design to protect and enhance the quality and character of the town centre. In order to achieve this, the SPD outlines 4 requirements as follows, 3 of which are relevant to the proposal:
- Deliver high quality design responses which provide a new benchmark in design and are built to adapt to change.
 - High quality urban design which ensures all buildings have a clear relationship with the public realm, including provision of entrances, mix of uses and overlooking of streets and spaces.
 - Sustainable design including incorporation of renewable energy technologies and improved on site.

- 5.17 RD6 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states the elevations are to be well composed, proportioned and detailed and RD7 requires that materials, colours and details respond to the distinctive elements of the locality. The proposal has indicated to feature matching materials to maintain the existing vernacular. Further, the proposed design responds positively to the bulk and mass of the form, breaking this up horizontally via the continued provision of render in between the more traditional brickwork.
- 5.18 R8 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that corner buildings should have positive elevations to both street frontages. Though the proposal does not form a landmark in this nodal location, the design responds well to the character of the existing building which in turn creates a positive impression on the street scene. This is achieved by positively responding to the site's nodal location through an increase in height, strengthening the periphery border of Finchampstead Road and clearly demarking where the more urban form of the Town Centre ends, and suburban Wokingham begins.
- 5.19 R11 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that housing ensure a coherent street character, including materials and colour, RD6 states the elevations are to be well composed. It is reasonable to conclude that the proposals accord with the material and rough form of the surrounding vernacular, whilst proposing points of interest i.e. extended roof form inspired by Robie House. This is reflective of the modern office to residential development lining Finchampstead Road, which the site most strongly visually and spatially correlates with. Furthermore, the elevational detail proposed aligns with the former character of the building pre-fascia amendments (from slope to flat roof). In this respect, the proposal compliment's the building's initial and evolving built form.
- 5.20 Paragraph 139 of the NPPF states that permission should be refused where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development.
- 5.21 The rationale for the design has been explained to formulate around the Frank Lloyd Wright Robie House style of architecture that responds positively to the existing flat roof form and surrounding vernacular, whilst proposing an interesting design that works with both form and function in mind.
- 5.22 Though the proposed form would be more significant in scale than those directly surrounding to the north and east, it responds positively to the character of the area and does not have a harmful effect on the street scene. Furthermore, in this respect WBC's Landscape Architect raised no objection to the impact on the townscape, ruling the magnitude of change to be non-significant.
- 5.23 The proposal, though prominent in the street scene, is not designated as a landmark, and as existing grades the form from the 5-storey premier inn to the 2-storey residential form at Kenrick Close positively. Therefore, in response to this rapid reduction in scale and form, the roof extension and resulting sloping form provides a gradual increase in scale from east to west to paint this gradation from town to suburb through design. It further sets down the building height towards the rear (south) to reflect a decrease in levels to reduce perception of a dominant form in the townscape. The design and scale in this location is logical in townscape terms and contributes towards strengthening Wokingham's identity as a settlement as well as its higher rise peripheral form, strengthening the sheltered sense of enclosure experienced within the Town Centre core.

- 5.24 The proposed form in terms of bulk and mass is a maximum of c12.9 metres in ridge height and c28 metres in maximum width at the front elevation and c14 metres in ridge height and c28 meters in maximum width at the rear elevation. The depth of the building sits at c33.8 metres following reductions secured by Officers working proactively with the applicant. It is acknowledged that the built form has been notably set back at 1st and 2nd floor to reduce the massing effect and impacts this may have on the character and views of the townscape.
- 5.25 Design is not limited to form, and function is essential when evaluating residential development, in particular in relatively constrained areas as the application site on neighbouring amenity grounds. To this effect, in part, the design and layout has been informed by a functional need to reduce overlooking and overbearing impacts in locations where minimum separation distances cannot be followed, which though are constrained in black and white have been implemented into the proposals as positive design features. Whilst these impacts themselves are specifically discussed within the 'Neighbouring Amenity' section of this report, the positive design features achieving this are as follows:
- Second and third floor setback, recessed balconies to increase visual separation distance to prevent overlooking.
 - Flank wall protrusion to prevent overlooking.
 - Introduction of privacy screens to prevent overlooking.
 - Reduced scale where it borders the Kendrick Close 2 storey form.
 - The design overall is acceptable for the proposed location and would likely mark a positive feature on the wider street scene.
- 5.26 Whilst a degree of localised change is visible on site through the increase in ridge height resulting from the upwards 1.5-2.5 storey extension, the resulting form is of high-quality design, appropriate for its setting and compliant with the BDG, Wokingham Town Centre SPD and Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP3 and CP14.

Landscape Character and Trees

- 6.0 The site is located on a designated Green Route. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan requires new development not to result in the loss or fragmentation of Green Infrastructure. It furthermore outlines requirements for development along green routes. Applicable to the application site are: a) Provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks, including the need to mitigate potential impacts of new development, d) Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features and e) Incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.
- 6.1 The application is accompanied by a Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) prepared by Bryant Landscape Planning and dated March 2024. This document considers the effects of the proposed development on the surrounding area and is accompanied by a number of Accurate Visual Representations (AVR's) for all viewpoints. For two of the viewpoints (1 & 3) rendered AVR's have been provided giving an indication of how the development is likely to be perceived from these particular viewpoints. Details of all AVR's

are shown in Appendix B.

- 6.2 The TVIA indicates the most visible changes will be seen either from Kendrick Close, Wellington Road roundabout or further west along Wellington Road. There will be no views from Wokingham Town Centre Conservation Area. As the proposals indicate a 2.5 storey increase on the part of the building closest to the roundabout, there will be a change in view from viewpoints 1, 3, 5 and 7 with the upper floor and roof visible above the existing vegetation growing on land adjacent to Wellington Road and which currently screens the majority of the building in views 3, 5, and 7.
- 6.3 The TVIA considers the visual effects from viewpoints 1, 3 and 7 to be moderate and neutral. From viewpoint 5, minor and neutral. WBC Trees and Landscape agree there will be a moderate effect from viewpoints 1, 3 & 7 as the proposals will increase the height and extent of the current building above the existing treed horizon.
- 6.4 Whilst oblique views of the site are visible from Carey Road to the south, these are filtered by existing vegetation and further are only partially prominent from upper windows of neighbouring dwellings. Whilst this will mark a change in experience for residents of Carey Road, given the outlook from these dwellings currently falls on the higher rise form on the periphery of the town centre, this visual effect would be minor/moderate.
- 6.5 The application is also accompanied by a Landscape Design Strategy and Landscape Masterplan. Due to the requirement for additional parking bays and limited space around the site, the scope for substantial additional planting to mitigate and visually soften the increased height of the building is limited. The landscape scheme will include a small number of trees however, these are not proposed to be ultimately large growing trees due to the close proximity of the trees to the buildings, however, they do form specimens of amenity value and good quality.
- 6.6 WBC Trees and Landscape consider that there will be some limited visual effects from the proposed increased in height of the existing building, however these effects will be limited to a few near viewpoints. The form of the development will be larger than the existing building and will be seen above the existing vegetated skyline when looking towards the site from the west along Waterloo Road, however the proposals will be seen in the context of other larger buildings such as Carnival Hub and the Premier Inn. In this instance, the proposals comply with CC03 of the MDD Local Plan.

Drainage

- 7.0 Core Strategy Policy CP1 states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that ensure the provision of adequate drainage and avoid increasing (and where possible reduce) risks of or from all forms of flooding (including from groundwater).
- 7.1 MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 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.
- 7.2 The National Planning Policy Framework specifically mentions that new development should avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable, care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through

the planning of green infrastructure.

- 7.3 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore is subject to a low risk of flooding, which would not be exacerbated by an increase in height of the building and small ancillary outbuildings/ bin store extensions. WBC Drainage raise no objection to the proposal, nor require any additional conditions.

Locational Sustainability

- 8.0 CP6 of the Core Strategy aims to promote a modal shift away from the use of the private motor vehicle.
- 8.1 In terms of walking and cycling, the site is highly sustainable and suitable for residential development, being located near to a vast range of day-to-day services afforded by Wokingham Town Centre. Within just 300 metres of the site (under half of Highways recommended acceptable walking distance), is a large supermarket (Aldi), two wellness centres (Carnival Pool and Nuffield Health), various eateries and cafes (The Lord Raglan, Starbucks, Giggling Squid, The Brown Bag etc), numerous hairdressers, the Everyman Cinema, Elmsfield Greenspace, Wokingham Superbowl and various professional services. This provides an excellent opportunity for future occupiers and to support the local economy without requiring the frequent use of the private motor vehicle.
- 8.2 Whilst the vast majority of units will be attractive to professionals and couples due to their size, some of the larger units could be suitable for small family accommodation. Thus, in terms of education, the statutory walking distance is two miles for children aged under eight years old and three miles for children aged eight years old and over. Within this distance there are a variety of public, private, SEN, junior, nurse and secondary schools. These are (non-exhaustively) Wescott School (1 mile), St Theresea's Catholic Academy (0.8 miles), Chiltern Way Academy (0.8 miles), St Crispin School (1.5 miles), The Holt School (1 mile), Meadow Nursery School (1.3 miles), Saint Paul's CofE Junior School (1.2 miles), Luckley House School (0.8 miles), Holme Grange School (1.6 miles), High Close School (1.1 miles), Evendons Primary School (0.9 miles), The Emmbrook School (1.8 miles) and Floreat Montague Primary School (2 miles). This list (which is not exhaustive) and those additional schools not named provide an excellent choice for future occupiers within a walkable, cyclable distance with positive infrastructure (cycle ways, street lighting and adequately wide pavements etc).
- 8.3 Turning to access to public transport, the application site is well served by bus and rail links. There are 11 separate bus stops within an 800-metre walking distance as well as pedestrian access to Wokingham Station which connects future occupants with Reading, Bracknell, High Wycombe, London as well as internally within the borough. The Broad Street stops alone host 12 separate bus services, coming as frequently as 1 every 11 minutes.
- 8.4 To conclude, the site is highly sustainable in terms of walking environment, services offered and modes of public transport. Accordingly, the proposal in principle does not stand contrary to CP6 of the Core Strategy.

Highways

- 9.0 Whilst it is proposed that each flat would have a parking space which is the same provision

for the existing 24 flats (1 space p/u), as the 10 flats will have unallocated parking, the level of parking is acceptable.

- 9.1 Highways previously requested that a plan showing the existing spaces for the 24 flats with the additional spaces clearly illustrated be submitted. Plan FRNT_25.521_200.2_P02_Parking Plan_A3 has been submitted showing the existing and proposed spaces which is acceptable.
- 9.2 There are currently 32 spaces on site and 4 disabled bays which would be insufficient to cater for the 34 spaces required. With this submission, the applicant proposes 38 spaces on site in total which acceptably accounts for the 10 new flats proposed. This gives a parking ratio of 1.1 which is acceptable for Wokingham Town Centre.
- 9.3 The submitted Construction Management Plan sets out in Appendix ii the relocated parking spaces during construction. An acceptable explanation has been provided on this matter as this is only required during the construction phase. Considering the site's location within the town centre, a parking management plan has been secured by planning condition.

Cycle Parking

- 9.4 It is proposed that there will be capacity for at least 62 cycle space based on a two-tier racking system. This exceeds standards and provides ample opportunity for active transport in and around the borough's highly sustainable core. The precise location, appearance and fenestration details will be secured by condition.

Electric Vehicle Charging

- 9.5 It is welcome that for the new flats will be provided with EVC charging points in line with Building Control Regulations Approved Document S.
- 9.6 It is proposed that as there are existing EVC charging spaces at the southern part of the site, a further 14 charging spaces will be provided in this location which is acceptable.

Access

- 9.7 It is proposed that the access to this development would be the same as existing from Denmark Street/ Finchampstead Road Roundabout. Highways is content that no amendments to this access will be required.

Swept path analysis

- 9.8 Swept paths of a refuse vehicle of acceptable dimensions have been submitted which are acceptable. Swept paths of a large car have been submitted for the new parking spaces which is welcome.

Construction Management Plan

- 9.9 A Construction Management Plan (Document 82054-03 Rev F) has been submitted in support of this application.
- 9.10 During construction, the existing parking spaces have been relocated to allow the temporary compound to be created. These spaces would need to be returned to their original location

once construction has been completed which will be secured by condition, as well as compliance with the approved documentation.

- 9.11 The hours of work put forward to undertake implementation of the development are acceptable. The construction route either via Finchampstead Road or via Wellington Road are acceptable, which will be monitored in accordance with the works separately carried out by WBC pursuant to the South Wokingham SDL. It is welcome that construction vehicles entering and egressing the site will be managed by Banksmen insofar as to prevent congestion and allow the safe access to the site for existing residents.
- 9.12 Wherever possible deliveries to the site have been outlined to avoid the AM and PM peak hours, and no deliveries should arrive at the site outside operation hours.
- 9.13 Construction workers will park in Carnival Public Car Park as no vehicles will be allowed to park on nearby residential roads which is welcome.
- 9.14 Wheel washing and monitoring of the highway have been included which is welcome.
- 9.15 As the submitted construction management plan is of sound quality, officers have secured this document through a planning condition.

Residential Amenity

- 10.0 Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity and R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties.
- 10.1 The NPPF (2024) in paragraph 135(f) states that planning decisions should ensure developments have “*a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.*”

Overlooking:

- 10.2 R15 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires the retention of reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms, with separation of 22-30m to the rear and 10-15m to the street. In this instance, considering the proposal relates to development above two-storey, the 30 metre back-to-back distances should be considered as well as 15 metre back to flank (flats to houses).
- 10.3 In the context of the site’s location within Wokingham Town Centre, the BDG outlines that “*Schemes in more urban settings or with a more intimate character will often require a tighter, more compact layout.*” In this respect, it is advised for separation distances to be relaxed insofar as to preserve more compact character, particularly in urban centres. In the case of Wokingham, separation distances in direct compliance or in excess of those within the BDG may create urban form that is too spatially porous and thus incongruous with its surroundings.
- 10.4 The proposal forms quad-aspect flats and therefore, measurements concerning its separation distances to neighbouring dwellings do not comfortably fit within the BDG recommendations. Notwithstanding, to cautiously assess potential overlooking arising from the proposal, the application has been assessed on a dwelling-by-dwelling basis, with the figure arrived at dependent on the relationship, location and orientation of potentially impacted dwellings.

- 10.5 In terms of the proposal's relationship with surrounding dwellings, the following table has been prepared to explain the standard utilised, and whether a shortfall is present. The dwellings assessed are those principally impacted by the development proposals at Ascot House.

Property	Standard Utilised	Separation Distance (Building to building)	Separation Distance (Window to window)	BDG Requirement	Compliance
No. 2 Norton Road	Back-to-back	C24.3 metres	C27.1 metres	30 metres	No
No. 4 Norton Road	Back-to-back	C24.35 metres	C27.1 metres	30 metres	No
No.6 Norton Road	Back-to-back	C25.7 metres	C28.42 metres	30 metres	No
No.74 Finchampstead Road	Back-to-flank	C18.8 metres	C21.3 metres	15 metres	Yes
Kendrick Close 7	Back-to-back	C15.8 metres	C16.8 metres	30 metres	No
Kendrick Close 6	Back-to-back	C11.63 metres	C12.3 metres	30 metres	No
Kendrick Close 5	Back-to-back	C10 metres	C11 metres	30 metres	No
Kendrick Close 4	Back-to-flank	C15 metres	C16 metres	15 metres	Yes
No.36 Finchampstead Road	Back-to-flank	C18.4 metres	C18.4 metres	15 metres	Yes
No.44 Finchampstead Road (Apartments)	Back-to-back	C30-38.2 metres	C31-39.2m metres	30 metres	Yes
No.1 Carey Road	Back-to-back	C34.9 metres	C35.9 metres	30 metres	Yes
No.3 Carey Road	Back-to-back	C30 metres	C31.6 metres	30 metres	Yes
No.5 Carey Road	Back-to-back	C30.5 metres	C32 metres	30 metres	Yes
Longmoor House (closest point)	Back-to-back	C30.5 metres	C31.9 metres	30 metres	Yes

- 10.6 With reference to Appendix 13 of the Borough Design Guide SPD, whilst the proposal meets recommended separation between the application site, Finchampstead Road, Carey Road and Longmoor House, it fails to achieve the guided separation distances if measured on a back-to-back basis to Norton Close and Kendrick Close, particularly with the proposal suggesting an equivalent 3-storey height, wherein a 30-metre separation is required. If a

two-storey approach was taken which reflects a window to window relationship, avoiding the floor within the roof void, the development would not conflict with the BDG with respect to its relationship with Norton Road.

- 10.7 Despite partial compliance with the BDG when measuring the proposal against the dwellings fronting Finchampstead Road, Carey Road and Longmoor House, without considering mitigation measures there is potential harm arising from overlooking to Kendrick Close with separation distances as close as c10 metres at third storey floor, which is significantly short of the 30-metre recommendation. Furthermore, the relationship between the proposal and the rear elevations of the three terrace dwellings No.2,4 and 6 Norton Road falls short of the minimum requirements of the BDG and therefore stands contrary to this guidance by between 1.6 metres- 3 metres respectively.
- 10.8 The separation distances between the application site and Norton Road do not mark a significant shortfall (particularly within a town centre location) and thus do not form significant conflict with the development plan particularly given the dwellings along Norton Road sitting at notably higher land levels.
- 10.9 Separately, the site's relationship with Kendrick Close is unique considering the existing separation distance of 5 metres at two storey and therefore additional form could exacerbate this existing impact. Accordingly, mitigation is required to prevent this impact being significantly harmful to surrounding occupiers, insofar as to preserve their amenities.
- 10.10 The applicant has responded the site's overlooking constraint through the provision of privacy screens and recessed balconies which mitigate further harm (including limiting the perception of overlooking). The 1.5 metre screens proposed limit vertical arc of outlook, meaning future occupiers could not look directly down into the rear amenity space/ rear habitable rooms of the dwellings along Norton Road and Kendrick Close without 'purposefully looking' (extending outside the standard arc of outlook one would utilise in their amenity space). In any case, considering the existing relationship between these dwellings and Ascot House, there is intervisibility at current, partially down to the notably sub-standard garden lengths present at Kendrick Close and Norton Road meaning their outlook is 'borrowed' from the application site.
- 10.11 In the case of Kendrick Close, the garden depths are between 2 and 4 metres, significantly below the 11 metre recommendation within the BDG. Similar is visible at Norton Road with gardens ranging between 4 metres and 7.6 metres. This means that to facilitate the required separation distances, a standard equidistant point cannot be fairly taken equally from each site. As such, the dwellings along Norton Road and Kendrick Close essentially borrow the space of the application site for reasonable outlook/privacy. This leads to existing intervisibility and overlooking as communicated by resident objections, which is synonymous with development within town centre development of more compact urban grain. Notwithstanding, as above, mitigation measures are suggested and tested in plan form by the applicant which demonstrate that these impacts would not be significantly exacerbated in overlooking terms.
- 10.12 Whilst the mitigation measures proposed (namely the privacy screens and set back) resolve direct concerns related to overlooking, this does not override the perception of overlooking that to some degree would inevitably arise from the introduction of a large building directly facing existing dwellings. By virtue of the increased height and the fact that habitable windows are proposed directly facing existing dwellings, the perception of overlooking

should be considered for surrounding properties, even if they were separated in accordance with the BDG.

- 10.13 The Wokingham Borough Design Guide acknowledges this point in stating “*Studies have shown that perceived privacy is determined more by the degree to which one hears one’s neighbours than by overlooking.*” Whilst a degree of perceived overlooking will arise from the proposal, as above, it should be noted that as the application lays within Wokingham Town Centre, an urban location with dense grain, and therefore degree of perceived intervisibility should to some degree be expected, in particular where it is afforded notably as existing. This point was raised by resident objectors throughout the application process.
- 10.14 Turning to the proposed recessed velux windows serving the duplex style apartments, by virtue of their location on the 2nd floor, the recessed rooflight/velux windows would fail to meet the required separation distances between the eastern elevation and the dwellings at Kendrick Close. These do however comply with the BDG recommendation in every other respect.
- 10.15 Whilst the shortfall to Kendrick Close is noted, officers understand the proposed velux windows are 1.55m high at bottom sill level. Whilst this will allow some external outlook, it limits the vertical arc of outlook meaning only horizontal views will be afforded over the townscape, as opposed to directly into the habitable rooms and amenity space of the dwellings along Norton Road and Kendrick Close. Furthermore, these are set-back by 3 metres from the eave which means any down facing views would principally fall on the roofscape proposed. There are no objections in this respect.
- 10.16 To conclude, whilst there is a recognised degree of harm associated with the development in terms of perceived overlooking, given the existing levels of intervisibility in this Town Centre location, combined with recessed additional floors and privacy screens. These factors are considered to weight against the development and will be considered in the overall planning balance at the end of this report.

Sunlight and Daylight:

- 10.17 R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable outlook, preferably dual aspect (with the avoidance of north facing, single aspect flats) and no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties.
- 10.18 Through discussion with officers at pre-application stage, the roof form has been set down and sloped to create form that does not significantly intrude on access to daylight/ sunlight to adjoining properties in accordance with the Borough Design Guide. This further allows the vertical light of the sun to access neighbouring habitable windows. However, limited levels of harm have been demonstrated to exist to existing apartments at Ascot House.
- 10.19 A detailed daylight and sunlight assessment has been submitted in respect of the proposal’s impact on neighbouring properties in accordance with the British Research Establishment (BRE) guidelines contained within the Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A guide to good practice (2nd Edition). This includes Vertical Sky Component (VSC) and Average Daylight Factor (ADF) which measure diffuse daylight.
- 10.20 The conclusions of the report state that no adjoining properties other than 4 windows within Ascot House itself will be set below the recommended baseline levels of access to sunlight,

these 4 being marginal reductions from existing light levels. These calculations, validated and individually assessed by Officers are in accordance with national guidance. The submitted report evidences that neighbouring properties at Norton Road, Kendrick Close, Carey Road and Finchampstead Road would retain adequate day/ sun light in excess of the BRE thresholds.

Vertical Sky Component (VSC):

- 10.21 Vertical Sky Component is the amount of visible sky from the centre point of a window. This contributes towards both overshadowing and overbearing assessments. If the VSC with the new development in place, is both less than 27% and less than 0.80 times its former value, occupants of the existing building will notice the reduction in the amount of skylight received. However, BRE guidance states that *“VSC between 15% and 27%: Adequate daylight may still be possible with larger windows or shallower rooms, corresponding to obstruction angles between 45 and 25 degrees.”*
- 10.22 The assessment outlines that a maximum of 2.5% VSC will be lost to the habitable rooms of Norton Close as a result of the development, a maximum of 2.3% VSC lost to the habitable rooms of Kendrick Close as a result of the development and maximum of 1.6% VSC lost to the habitable rooms of Carey Road. Whilst these are impacts of the development are to a limited extent harmful, they do not weigh heavily against the application, nor would decrease the dwelling’s compliance with BRE guidance. Thus, all neighbouring dwellings would retain visibility of the sky from the centre point of their windows.
- 10.23 In terms of VSC and requisite VSC ratio, only two windows are impacted insofar as to leave them below recommended standards, these being 193 (west facing principal window of living room) and 213 (north facing principal window of living room) of Ascot House.
- 10.24 Whilst window 213 loses a modest amount of light and as existing is impacted by existing vegetation and its north facing orientation, it is just under the recommended standards (0.71 VSC ratio and 26.5% VSC). Therefore, whilst there would be a reduction below the minimum standards this harm would be insufficient to refuse the application, particularly as the habitable elements of the room (the living and dining room) would receive adequate sky light.
- 10.25 Concerning window 193, it is as existing located between two balconies, directly facing the vegetation of notable height adjacent to Finchampstead Road which limits its VSC as existing. However, this harm is exacerbated as the proposed roof form would leave window 193 between the connecting roof junctures, and subject to the existing vegetation which limits outward VSC to the west. Whilst there are shortfalls below the minimum recommended VSC ratio, window 193 serves an open plan kitchen/ living room of c2.9 metres which is limited in scale and is served by a 2sqm window. Accordingly, it is considered that the habitable elements of the room (the living and dining area) would receive adequate sky light.
- 10.26 Officers note that there initially were harms associated to window 160, as the balconies originally proposed sat directly over it, decreasing its VSC to 12.5% with a ratio of 0.35. Further to discussions with the applicant, this low-level balcony on the south elevation and its supporting skeleton structure has been removed which permits a VSC significantly greater than BRE requirements. Accordingly, no concerns are raised on this basis.

Daylight Distribution

- 10.27 Turning to Daylight Distribution, all surrounding dwellings, including those within Ascot House retain an appropriate level in accordance with BRE Guidance.

Sunlight to Windows

- 10.28 With respect to sunlight to windows, there is only one living room window of Ascot House that is below the recommended figure at 0.74 ratio (window 180). However, this only worsens by 6% in the winter months and relates to a window that features poor access to daylight as existing given its location on the eastern elevation directly adjacent to a tree and Kendrick Close. Furthermore, window 180 is a secondary east facing window and the habitable room impacted features a principal north facing window. Therefore, the impact of the proposal in respect to the open plan kitchen/dining/ living room is cumulatively limited, but in combination with the existing situation will provide a degree of additional harm (6% greater).
- 10.29 To conclude, the harms associated with the existing windows on grounds of VSC within Ascot House build on existing situations that are present at this time. Where harms were assigned by officers, the applicant has successfully amended the planning application to ensure best guidance is followed and mitigate this impact/ reasonably justify the minimal shortfall across the development.

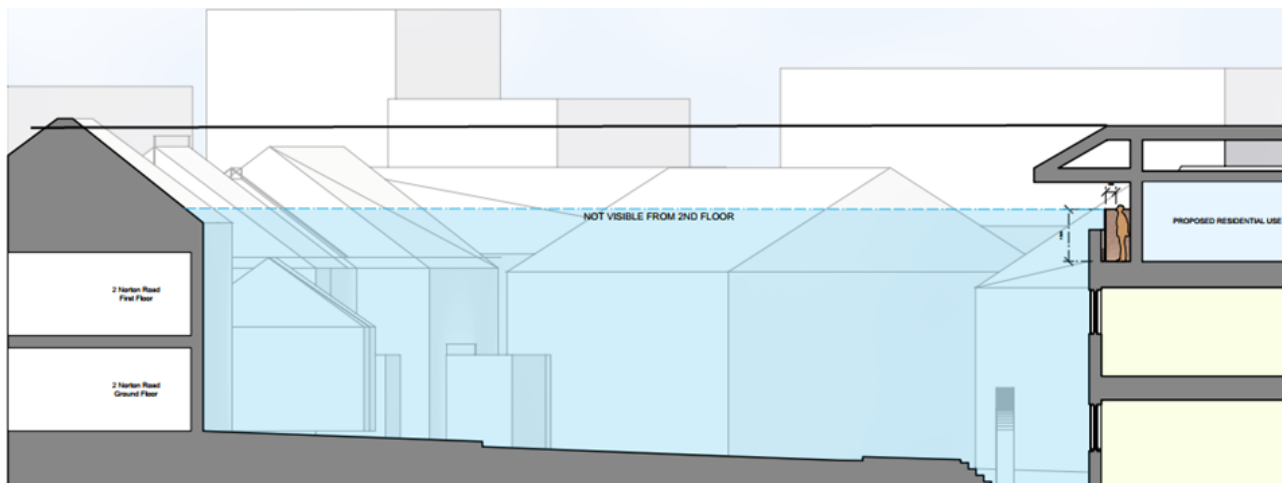
Overbearing and Sense of Enclosure:

Kendrick Close:

- 10.30 The roof form of the proposed west elevation would be obliquely visible from one north-west facing habitable room window (serving a bedroom) of No.7 Kendrick Close, which would create an exacerbated sense of enclosure caused by the overhanging pitch. However, the proposed third storey of the western elevation would not be visible from the remainder of dwellings (and habitable rooms) along Kendrick Close given its notable set back and the sloping roof form proposed. Considering the existing close relationship between Kendrick Close and the application site forming its baseline (which is a material consideration), oblique views of the west elevation from one dwelling is not considered to be detrimental, particularly as No. 7 Kendrick Close is sited on an angle providing views clear of the free-of-form access and Finchampstead Road which will remain its principal outlook.

Norton Road:

- 10.31 Given separation distances just below those recommended by the BDG, the full form of the proposed building would be appreciable from Norton Road. However, it is important to note that at current there is a 2 metre levels change between the north elevation of Ascot House and Norton Road, with the steep hip-roof dwellings at Norton Road being of comparable scale to that proposed at Ascot House where directly adjacent (accounting for the recessed form to the east). In fact, the part of the proposal facing Norton Road would actually sit lower than the dwellings adjacent.



- 10.32 Notwithstanding separation distances below the recommendations within the BDG, it should be noted that flats fronting onto dwellings are common within urban areas and therefore this situation is not uncharacteristic, particularly off Finchampstead Road. The impact of overbearing is naturally mitigated to some degree by the notable drop in levels between Norton Road and Ascot House, as well as the fact that clear uninterrupted views of the townscape would remain visible from the habitable windows of both dwellings on Norton Road. It is appreciated that the proposed road facing form on the western elevation would sit higher than the dwellings along Norton Road, however, this would only be obliquely visible (accounting for a standard 45 degree arc of outlook) from habitable rooms and appreciable from the rear amenity space when stood looking at a 45 degree plus angle (i.e. purposefully facing the building). Finally, the views from the amenity space of Norton Close would not substantially change in that the skyline and townscape would remain visible, albeit with the proposal having a more prominent feature within this (particularly its western extent).

Carey Road:

- 10.33 The proposal would be located in excess of 30 metres from neighbouring dwellings along Carey Road, however, further to site visit (including that into neighbouring dwellings), a significant drop in levels from north to south was evidenced, which leads the existing building to be a semi-prominent feature in the visual landscape. The proposed extension and increases to height would add to this visibility, however, there is a fundamental difference between visibility and overbearing. Considering the separation distances, the proposal would not significantly overbear the occupiers of Carey Road.

Ascot House:

- 10.34 The proposal would provide additional built form which would interact with existing residents and their current amenity space and to a degree, their vertical outlook. It is not considered that even those with existing balconies would be significantly impacted on overbearing grounds from the proposal, given the relatively modest increases in height when viewed in the context of their amenity space. Whilst the outlook from some existing windows and the 2no. Existing balconies would indeed change, this would not be detrimental to existing occupiers and balconies with built form above are standard features with apartments across the UK, including within Wokingham. Furthermore, given the set-backs in upper levels, limited perception of the buildings scale would be noted by existing occupiers.

- 10.35 Overall, the proposal to some degree would create a perceived overbearing impact, particularly to No.7 Kendrick Close, however, it is not considered this would be detrimental to the surrounding occupiers particularly considering the arc of outlook afforded from this dwelling remaining to provide ample views of the skyline, which is not largely dissimilar to the existing. This will be weighed in the balance.

Accessibility

- 11.0 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.
- 11.1 Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy also seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities, including for aged persons, children and the disabled. 10–20% of all dwellings should be to Lifetime Homes standards in accordance with Policy CP5 of the Core Strategy and Policy TB05 of the MDD Local Plan.
- 11.2 In this case it equates to 1-2 dwellings. Although the Lifetime Homes standards has been replaced by the new National Technical Housing standards, the need to design and build accessible and adaptable accommodation remains integral to future neighbourhood planning. In this instance, given the apartments being located on upper floors, it is proposed that the 10 no. dwellings proposed would not be built to accessible standards. Whilst this does form a technical breach of CP2 and CP5 of the core strategy, when assessing the development as a whole (including the ground floor units already in situ), a policy compliant overprovision of accessible dwellings is noted. This is returned to within the overall planning balance.

Internal Amenity:

- 12.0 Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. In accordance with the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standards and the proposal's compliance with this are referred to below:

Unit	Bedrooms	Occupancy	Area	Required	Complies
1.01	2	3	64m ²	61m ²	Yes
1.02	2	3	62m ²	61m ²	Yes
1.03	1	1	37m ²	37m ²	Yes
2.01	2	4	82m ²	79m ²	Yes
2.02	2	4	83 m ²	79m ²	Yes
2.03	2	4	82 m ²	79m ²	Yes
2.04	1	2	50 m ²	50m ²	Yes
2.05	2	4	79 m ²	79m ²	Yes
2.06	2	4	79 m ²	79m ²	Yes
2.07	2	4	80 m ²	79m ²	Yes

- 12.1 The apartment proposals comply with the NDSS and TB07 in that the minimum GIA complies with the required for both 1 and 2 bed apartments.

- 12.2 The NPPF seeks to promote development that has a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and Paragraph 166 of the NPPF state that new development should take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption. The proposal in principle has achieved this.
- 12.3 An apartment with more than one bedroom should have a main bedroom, which is to have a minimum area of 12m². Secondary of single bedrooms should have a minimum area of 7.5m² and 2m² storage.

House	Bedrooms	Occupancy	Main bedroom	Secondary bedroom	Storage	Compliant
Units 1.01 and 1.02	2	3	> 12m ²	> 7.5m ²	>2m ²	Yes
Units 2.01, 2.02, 2.03, 2.05, 2.06 and 2.07	2	4	> 11.5m ²	> 7.5m ²	>2m ²	Yes

- 12.4 The proposal complies with the nationally described space standards for internal amenity.
- 12.5 Turning to interior luminescence, 86% of the total habitable windows proposed materially exceed the guidance expressed within the BRE. Those that do not in the vast majority are served by balconies and larger windows, which provides adequate access to daylight.
- 12.6 Turning to sunlight exposure in the case of the proposed development, 9 of the 10 units have at least one habitable room window which faces within 90 degrees of due south. 8 units have a living room window which faces within 90 degrees of due south. All 10 units have a habitable room which receives a total of at least 1.5 hours of sunlight on 21 March which is the relevant test outlined within the BRE Guidance.
- 12.7 It is acknowledged that ideally, all habitable rooms would feature interior luminescence and sunlight exposure in excess of BRE requirements, however, when utilising the airspace of urban development this is often difficult to achieve. Thus, a balanced approach must be taken by the Council with this in mind accounting for the NPPF's aim of efficiently using land. The BRE acknowledge this flexibility themselves within their published guidance, in stating that the numerical values within their assessment should be viewed flexibly with respect to a site's constraints, particularly when in an urban area. In this case, the minor shortfalls of some habitable rooms are not sufficient to constitute a weighty objection, particularly considering the adequate mitigation put forward with respect to larger windows and amenity space.
- 12.8 When assessing the proposal's access to daylight and interior lighting as a whole, it would provide high quality living arrangements for future occupiers, with all 10 flats having habitable rooms in excess of the BRE guidance. Where rooms deviate from this guidance, fair mitigation is proposed in the form of larger windows, habitable elements of a room (i.e. dwelling places) brought closer to high-lux areas or balcony amenity space to ensure a high standard of internal amenity.

Environmental Health

- 13.0 Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that development should minimise the emission of pollutants into the wider environment. Pollutants could be in the form of, but not limited to, air pollution, noise pollution and ground contamination. Policy CC06 of the MDD specifically concerns noise impacts of a development. Following consultation, WBC Environmental Health did not object to the application.

Contamination

- 13.1 The site is not subject to any known historic contamination, nor would any arise considering the development constitutes the upward extension of the building. Whilst a condition has been recommended by WBC Environmental Health, considering the development pertains to airspace this would fail to meet the 6 tests within the PPG/ NPPF.

Noise

- 13.2 Paragraph 185 of the NPPF aims to minimise potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development. Similarly, Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity, Policy CC06 and Appendix 1 of the MDD Local Plan requires that development protect noise sensitive receptors from noise impact. Page 46 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that, *“perceived privacy is determined more by the degree to which one hears one’s neighbours than by overlooking”*. The proposal as a modest development of 10 residential units would not generate detrimental noise levels nor hinder the quality of life of existing residents. The proposal accords with the Development Plan and NPPF in this respect.
- 13.3 Whilst it is noted that WBC Environmental Health requested a planning condition regarding noise, considering the proposed residential use this is not considered to meet the 6 tests within the PPG/ NPPF, namely as officers consider it to be unreasonable. Construction management (including noise) will be controlled via a CMP condition otherwise applied.

Waste

- 13.4 The applicant proposes usage of the existing bin store which can be increased in capacity to facilitate the increased number of residents. Access to the Highway from the bin store is a short carry distance away, as well as from the proposed apartments to communal facilities. There is no objection in this respect.

Lighting

- 13.5 With respect to light pollution, considering the proposal is for a modest number of residential dwellings, light emission from the proposed apartments is not considered to detrimentally impact any adjoining occupiers. For the purposes for neighbouring amenity and ecological protection, a lighting strategy has been secured by planning condition which will control light emission.

Sustainability

- 14.0 Core Strategy Policy CP1 requires development to contribute towards the goal of achieving zero carbon development by including on-site renewable energy features and minimising energy and water consumption. This is amplified by MDD Local Plan policies CC04:

Sustainable design and construction and CC05: Renewable energy and decentralised energy networks and the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010).

- 14.1 As the proposal is for 10 additional units, Policy CC05 also advises that planning permission will only be granted for such proposals that deliver a minimum 10% reduction in carbon emissions through renewable energy or low carbon technology.
- 14.2 It should be noted that the above policies out of date and were written before the Council's declared Climate Emergency. For this reason, the Council produced a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) (2022) which outlines what is expected of development proposals in light of the climate emergency.
- 14.3 Turning to CC04, it should be noted that the Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 has now been superseded by the interim Future Homes Standard (as required by Building Regulations). This secures a minimum 31% reduction in emissions, in line with the CCIPPS. Whilst this is a building regulations requirement, this matter has been secured via condition with further savings secured to exceed the statutory minimum.
- 14.4 Paragraph 167 of the NPPF states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements through installation of heat pumps and solar panels.
- 14.5 To comply with policy CC04, CC05 and para 167 of the NPPF, the applicant has submitted a sustainable energy statement prepared by JS Lewis LTD that outlines decentralised energy sources will be factored into the development in the form of a solar array and hot water heat pumps. Whilst full details of decentralised sources are not known at this stage and will be subject to condition, it has been indicated that the proposals in their indicative form could achieve a carbon reduction of 52%. It will be conditioned that the development achieves at least a 10% energy reduction through renewable technologies, though it is expected this figure will be far higher. This will be achieved in addition to the uplifted emissions improvements required through Building Regulations (31%+10%).
- 14.6 Considering the above, the proposal has shown the potential to achieve significant carbon savings and utilisation of renewable energy sources. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and CC04 and CC05 of the MDD Local Plan, contributes to the Council's climate change goals (as per the CCIPPS) and fulfils the national sustainability objectives outlined within the NPPF, subject to conditions.

Heritage and Conservation:

- 15.0 Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that development must ensure the preservation of any nearby listed building, including its setting, Paragraphs 194-197 of the NPPF requires consideration of the harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset.
- 15.1 Policy TB24 of the MDD Local Plan requires the conservation and enhancement of Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas, including their views and setting.
- 15.2 The proposal is located circa 80 metres from the Wokingham Town Centre Conservation

Area, and though the site may be visible from certain vista, significant views likely will not be afforded despite bulk and mass of the proposal which may harm the setting of this area of value.

- 15.3 Policy TB26 of the MDD Local Plan allows development to Buildings of Traditional Local Character, Areas of Special Character and Areas of Special Landscape Importance where it will retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the building or area and its setting.
- 15.4 The closest listed building to the proposals is The Duke's Head Public Library, a Grade II listed building. By virtue of the changing levels, and urban nature of the town centre, the proposals would not cause any undue harm to the setting of the listed building despite being likely partial visible from certain angles. No objection has been received from WBC Built Heritage and the council has discharged its duties under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Ecology

- 16.0 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. Policy CP7 of the Core Strategy states that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted.
- 16.1 The application is supported by a preliminary ecological survey, biodiversity net gain metric and report. These outline that there is negligible ecological value on site, which is not home to any protected species. It did state that *"Individual urban trees were the greatest ecological interest identified on-site and are proposed to be retained wherever possible."*
- 16.2 The submitted ecological impact assessment outlines that during survey no bats emerged from the bat bricks and there was no sign of thermal emissions consistent with occupancy. In line with best practice guidance, it further outlined that during the construction phase, when the bricks are to be removed, they should be checked by a licensed bat ecologist. If they remain unoccupied, they can be stored safely prior to relocation.
- 16.3 With respect to external lighting, whilst no bats were found during survey investigations, the applicant's ecologist outlined that new exterior lighting should be avoided, but if necessary for security purposes, then the latest updated lighting guidance note (GN08/23) should be followed. Reflective of 'Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting | Institution of Lighting' a planning condition has been secured.
- 16.4 The scheme accords with best practice in regard to ecological impacts and mitigation. Providing the recommendations outlined herein are secured and delivered, the scheme would comply with all local and national planning policy guidance and legislation, with net gains for wildlife delivered overall.
- 16.5 This application will be determined after the commencement of mandatory biodiversity net gain, as set out by the Environment Act 2021 and associated regulations. A 10% net gain has been secured by the statutory and LEMP pre-commencement condition, which will be monitored via planning obligation. This secures medium distinctiveness habitat of 'good' quality (the top of the scale) comprising urban trees, rain gardens and scrub which is

considered a 'significant' net gain in line with the government guidance attached to the Environment Act.

Infrastructure

CIL

- 17.0 A number of objections have been received from residents and ward members due to concern that existing local amenities would not be able to accommodate the increase in population. Notwithstanding the fact that the accessible list of services is acceptable in their own right, it is worth noting that the scheme would be liable to pay a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charge. CIL contributions are used to cover the cost of infrastructure it will rely upon, such as roads, schools and healthcare, however, funding allocation is based on areas of most significant need which is not a matter for the planning process.

Employment Development

- 18.0 Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD, requires planning applications for all major development (both commercial and residential) in Wokingham Borough to submit an employment skills plan (ESP) with a supporting method statement or alternatively pay an employment skills contribution (ESC).
- 18.1 ESPs are worked out using the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) benchmarks which are based on the value of construction. Planning applicants will need to submit an estimated construction value for the development or this value can be calculated using the proposed floor space in the planning application and applying BCIS industry standard build costs (£1025 m²).
- 18.2 The number of employment and training outcomes for the site-specific ESP will be derived by applying the value of construction for the development to the benchmarks set out in the policy guidance. Organisations are required to provide a Method Statement setting out how they would intend to deliver the ESP.
- 18.3 The applicant has agreed to engage into a S106 legal obligation to secure an ESP, or contribution in lieu. If the applicants/owners bound by the planning obligation elects to deliver the ESP rather than pay the ES Contribution in lieu, the applicants/owners bound by the planning obligation will be required to notify the Council in writing of the trigger points set out in the previous sentence and deliver the ESP in accordance with the KPIs. This will include an update of the ESP demonstrating the achievements and providing evidence against each of the agreed employment and skills areas and KPIs.
- 18.4 Given the applicant has agreed to an ESP/ESC planning obligation to secure these vocational opportunities, the proposal complies with Policy TB12 of the Wokingham Borough Council MDD.

Planning Balance

- 19.0 The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing supply and therefore the development

must be assessed in line with Paragraph 11d(ii) and against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The three overarching objectives contained within the Framework seek to balance growth and local community needs against protection of the natural, built and historic environment. The benefits and disbenefits are therefore considered against these three broad topic areas below.

- 19.1 Whilst the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date by virtue of the absence of a 5-year housing land supply, that does not mean the policies carry no weight, just rather a tempered approach taken by decision makers. The weight attached to the development plan policies is a matter for the decision maker(s). On this occasion, the development complies with the Development Plan as a whole, and is wholly in accordance with the spatial strategy. Thus, whilst the tilted balance remains in effect and bolsters weight afforded to housing delivery, it does not seek to diminish the weight of the spatial strategy.

Economic

- 19.2 As with all housing development of this scale in this location, the proposal would result in economic benefits. This is broadly set to arise from the short-term economic contribution of the construction of 10 dwellings via construction industry jobs (some of which are locally secured via ESP/ESC). In the longer term, future residents of up to 10 dwellings will contribute to the viability and vitality of businesses within the Town Centre, a major retail centre, and nearby towns as well as public transport services. Although the beforementioned benefits are not unique to this scheme, the size of the development means these benefits are significant and the development is therefore considered to perform a notably positive economic role in this part of the borough and is considered to hold moderate weight in the planning balance in favour of the development.

Social

- 19.3 The provision of 10 new dwellings, in one of the most sustainable locations within the borough would positively assist in furthering the social objective of sustainable development. Whilst it is noted that the upper floor apartments would not be 'accessible' by definition forming a technical breach with CP2/5, the provision of an adequate range of dwelling sizes for this town centre location will ensure this site materially contributes to the identified general housing need over the local plan period.
- 19.4 Development on site would form efficient use of previously developed land, increasing the density on existing residential units. It will provide the opportunity for existing residents of Wokingham to remain in the area, through an opportunity to downsize locally. Infrastructure contributions will also off-set pressure on local services which may arise from the development, which are not believed to be significant given the overall modest scale of the development. The social benefits are considered to hold substantial weight in the planning balance, particularly when referenced to the expanding Town Centre's own locationally specific current and future needs.

Environmental

- 19.5 There would inevitably be a localised limited degree of visual harm to the immediate character and appearance of the area given the increases in height. However, the design put forward is appropriate for the site's location, and additional height in this area logically grades the larger buildings within the town centre to its suburban fringe. Development of

previously developed land, on an existing residential site prevents development outside of settlement limits.

- 19.6 Biodiversity net gain will be provided on-site above the mandatory requirements, which strengthens the green route which when combined with landscape enhancements provide improved foraging opportunities for native species.
- 19.7 Conditions have been secured to ensure that the environmental standards of new dwellings would meet local policy requirements in light of the Council's declared Climate Emergency and possibly significantly overachieve in these respects (5x the policy requirement for carbon saving as indicated). This environmental role is considered to have moderate weight in favour of the development within the overall planning balance.

Conclusion:

- 19.8 The most important policies for determining the application are out of date by virtue of the absence of an adequate housing land supply. Paragraph 11 of the Framework therefore states that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, or there are specific policies in the Framework which indicate that development should be restricted.
- 19.9 As outlined above, the proposal would provide numerous material benefits that weigh significantly in favour of the application. The provision of new housing in a highly sustainable location weighs substantially in favour of the scheme. Whilst past over-delivery is relevant, it is also pertinent that the current housing land supply shortfall will likely remain past the point the new LPU is adopted, thus sustainable sites such as the application site should be prioritised for brownfield development when they arise on the sporadic basis. Those less than desirable impacts of the development, namely the perceived harm to neighbouring amenity and limited character impacts is considered to be adequately dealt with via conditions and reflects a growing Town Centre location which should be permitted to expand sustainably as demand dictates. This harm is therefore afforded moderate weight in the overall balance.
- 19.10 In light of all matters raised, the identified adverse impacts of the proposed development would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework, when taken as a whole. The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions and legal agreement set out in this report.

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 the protected groups 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 upon protected groups as a result of the development.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions / Informatives

APPROVAL subject to obligations and the following conditions and informatives:

1. Timescale - The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In pursuance of s.91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by s.51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Approved details - This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings named and numbered:

Drawing Title	Drawing Number
Proposed Block Plan	25.521_200 Rev P03
Proposed Block Topo	25.521_200.1 Rev P03
Parking Plan	25.521_200.2 Rev P02
Proposed Basement Plan	25.521_201 Rev P02
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	25.521_202 Rev P04
Proposed First Floor Plan	25.521_203 Rev P04
Proposed Second Floor Plan	25.521_204 Rev P03
Proposed Third Floor Plan	25.521_205 Rev P03
Proposed Roof Plan	25.521_206 Rev P03
Proposed North Elevation	25.521_207 Rev P05
Proposed West Elevation	25.521_208 Rev P04
Proposed East Elevation	25.521_209 Rev P04
Proposed South Elevation	25.521_210 Rev P04
Proposed Context Elevations North & West	25.521_211 Rev P03
Proposed Context Elevations East & South	25.521_212 Rev P02
Proposed Context Elevations	25.521_213 Rev P02
Section AA Overlooking Diagram	25.521_219 Rev P01
Section BB Overlooking Diagram	25.521_214 Rev P02
Section CC Overlooking Diagram	25.521_218 Rev P01
Section DD Overlooking Diagram	25.521_220 Rev P01
Context Analysis Plan - Ground Floor	25.521_215 Rev P02
Context Analysis Plan - First Floor	25.521_216 Rev P02
Context Analysis Plan - Second Floor	25.521_217 Rev P02
Basement Fire Strategy Plan	25.521_221 Rev P02
Ground Floor Fire Strategy Plan	25.521_222 Rev P02
First Floor Fire Strategy Plan	25.521_223 Rev P02
Second Floor Fire Strategy Plan	25.521_224 Rev P02
Third Floor Fire Strategy Plan	25.521_225 Rev P02
Landscape Masterplan	LLD31111-LAN-DWG-010_Rev 04

Received by the local planning authority on 12/08/2024, 21/10/2024 and 13/03/2025. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

3. External materials - Prior to the commencement of any works to the existing building excluding demolition samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building/s shall have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the building is satisfactory. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3.

4. Hard and Soft Landscaping - Prior to the commencement of the development above first brick course, full details of both hard and soft landscape proposals shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include, as appropriate, proposed finished floor levels or contours, means of enclosure, car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas, hard surfacing materials and minor artefacts and structure (e.g. furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting, external services, etc). Soft landscaping details shall include planting plan, native landscaping specification (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment), schedules of native plants, noting native species, planting sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate, and implementation timetable. All hard and soft landscape works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of any part of the development or in accordance with a timetable approved in writing by the local planning authority.

Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or defective, shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of species, size and number as originally approved and permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development).

5. Landscape management - Prior to first occupation of the units hereby approved, a landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.

Reason: In order to ensure that provision is made to allow satisfactory maintenance of the landscaping hereby approved. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

6. Ecological Lighting - Prior to first occupation of the units hereby approved, a “lighting design strategy for biodiversity” for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- b) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and birds and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that bats, a material consideration, are not adversely affected by the development.

7. LEMP- No development shall take place until a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) have been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The LEMP shall include:

- Description and evaluation of features to be managed for a 30 year period pertaining to mandatory 10% on site net gain.
- Ecological trends and constraints on site that might influence management.
- Aims and objectives of management.
- Appropriate management options for achieving aims and objectives.
- Prescriptions for management actions.
- Preparation of a work schedule (including an annual work plan capable of being rolled forward over a five-year period).
- Details of the body or organization responsible for implementation of the plan.
- Ongoing monitoring and remedial measures.

The LEMP shall also include details of the legal and funding mechanism(s) by which the long-term implementation of the plan will be secured by the developer with the management body(ies) responsible for its delivery. The plan shall also set out (where the results from monitoring show that conservation aims and objectives of the LEMP are not being met) how contingencies and/or remedial action will be identified, agreed and implemented so that the development still delivers the fully functioning biodiversity objectives of the originally approved scheme.

The LEMP shall also include long term design objectives, management responsibilities, timescales and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than privately owned, domestic amenity space (balconies). The approved plan will be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building and permanently maintained thereafter.

Reason: To secure the maintenance of the Biodiversity Net Gain on-site provision for a minimum period of 30 years. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment).

8. Hours of work - No work relating to the development hereby approved, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations, shall take place other than between the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Monday to Friday and 08:00 to 13:00 Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Bank or National Holidays.

Reason: To protect the occupiers of neighbouring properties from noise and disturbance outside the permitted hours during the construction period. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

9. Parking and turning space to be provided - No part of any building(s) hereby permitted shall be occupied or used until the vehicle parking and turning spaces have been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning spaces shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.

Reason: To provide adequate off-street vehicle parking and turning space and to allow vehicles to enter and leave the site in a forward gear in the interests of road safety and convenience and providing a functional, accessible and safe development and in the interests of amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

10. Cycle parking details required - Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted details of secure and covered bicycle storage/ parking facilities for the occupants of [and visitors to] the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The cycle storage/ parking shall be implemented in accordance with such details as may be approved before occupation of the development hereby permitted, and shall be permanently retained in the approved form for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure weather-proof bicycle parking facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 9 (Sustainable Transport) and Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

11. Electric Vehicle Charging - Prior to the commencement of the development above first brick course, an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. This strategy shall include details relating to onsite electric vehicle charging infrastructure in accordance with Building Control Regulations Approved Document S and details of installation of charging points. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed strategy thereafter.

Reason: In order to ensure that secure electric vehicle charging facilities are provided so as to encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 & CP6 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC07.

12. Construction method statement – The construction of the proposed development is to be carried out in strict accordance with “Construction Management Plan (Document 82054-03 Rev F)” received by the LPA on 12/08/2024.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety & convenience and neighbour amenities. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP3 & CP6.

13. Parking Management - Prior to the first occupation of the development, a Parking Management Strategy for the management of the parking arrangements shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The submitted Parking Management Strategy shall include details of the management of all parking spaces.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory development in the interests of amenity and highway safety in accordance with Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policies CP1, CP6, CP13 and CP21 and MDDLDP policies CC07 and TB20.

14. Plant/Machinery to be attenuated - All plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with the carrying out of this permission shall be so enclosed and/or attenuated that noise therefrom does not exceed at any time a level of 5dB[A] below the existing background noise level [or 10dB[A] if there is a particular tonal quality] when measured at the nearest residential or noise sensitive property. Any recommended noise mitigation measures should be retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that no nuisance or disturbance is caused to the occupiers of properties. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 15 (Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment), Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC06.

15. Carbon Emission Reduction - Prior to the commencement of development above first brick course, a final and deliverable scheme for achieving a 10% reduction in the predicted carbon emissions arising from operation of the development through the use of decentralised renewable and/or low carbon sources (as defined in the glossary of Planning Policy Statement: Planning and Climate Change (December 2007) or any subsequent version) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

The minimum 10% reduction shall be achieved in addition to the levels of reduction in carbon emissions required through the Building Regulations in force at the time of the submission of planning application. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development. Relevant policy: NPPF, Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

16. Water Consumption - Prior to the commencement of development above first brick course, a scheme achieving a maximum domestic water consumption of 105L per capita

per day for the residential portion of the scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented before the development is first occupied and shall remain operational for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure developments contribute to sustainable development. Relevant policy: NPPF Section 14 (Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change), WBC Climate Emergency Action Plan, Core Strategy policy CP1, Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policy CC05 & the Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document.

17. Communications Plan - Development shall not commence until a Communications Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Plan shall specify methods for communicating with local residents, including the creation of a liaison group to meet in accordance with an agreed schedule. The Plan shall be carried out as approved until the final completion of the development.

Reason: In order to minimise disturbance to neighbours during construction works in accordance with CP3 of the Core Strategy (2010).

18. Privacy Screens - Prior to first occupation of the development hereby permitted, the privacy screens detailed on the approved plans shall be installed and retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenity. Relevant Policy: CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy (2010).

Informatives

1. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

2. This permission should be read in conjunction with the legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, the obligations in which relate to this development.

3. The applicant is reminded that, under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), it is an offence to: deliberately capture, disturb, injure or kill great crested newts; damage or destroy a breeding or resting place; deliberately obstructing access to a resting or sheltering place. Planning consent for a development does not provide a defence against prosecution under these acts. Ponds, other water bodies and vegetation, such as grassland, scrub and woodland, and also brownfield sites, may support great crested newts. Where proposed activities might result in one or more of the above offences, it is possible to apply for a derogation licence from Natural England or opt into Wokingham Borough Council's District Licence. If a great crested newt is encountered during works, all works must cease until

advice has been sought from Natural England, as failure to do so could result in prosecutable offences being committed.

4. The applicant is reminded that this approval is granted subject to conditions which must be complied with prior to the development starting on site. Commencement of the development without complying with the pre-commencement requirements may be outside the terms of this permission and liable to enforcement action. The information required should be formally submitted to the Council for consideration with the relevant fee. Once the details have been approved in writing the development should be carried out only in accordance with those details.

5. The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6. Adequate precautions shall be taken during the construction period to prevent the deposit of mud and similar debris on adjacent highways. For further information contact the Highway Authority on tel.: 0118 9746000.

7. Whilst it would appear from the application that the proposed development is to be entirely within the curtilage of the application site, the granting of planning permission does not authorise you to gain access or carry out any works on, over or under your neighbour's land or property without first obtaining their consent, and does not obviate the need for compliance with the requirements of the Party Wall etc. Act 1996.

8. The development hereby permitted is liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy. The Liability Notice issued by Wokingham Borough Council will state the current chargeable amount. A revised Liability Notice will be issued if this amount changes. Anyone can formally assume liability to pay, but if no one does so then liability will rest with the landowner. There are certain legal requirements that must be complied with. For instance, whoever will pay the levy must submit an Assumption of Liability form and a Commencement Notice to Wokingham Borough Council prior to commencement of development, failure to do this will result in penalty surcharges being added. For more information see the Council's website - Community Infrastructure Levy advice page. Please submit all CIL forms and enquiries to developer.contributions@wokingham.gov.uk.

9. Fire service access should comply with B5 of ADB Volume 2 2019 with additional local requirements below under the Berkshire Act 1986: Fire service vehicles currently operated by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service exceed the requirements stated in the current edition of Approved Document B. The applicant should be made aware of the following amendments:- The minimum carrying capacity for a pumping appliance is 16 tonnes. The minimum carrying capacity for a high reach appliance is 26 tonnes. Structures such as bridges should have the full vehicle carrying capacity. Any structural fire precautions and all means of escape provision will have to satisfy Building Regulation requirement. These matters are administered by the local authority Building Control or approved inspectors, who you are advised to contact in this regard

APPENDIX 2 – Parish Council Responses

PLANNING REF : 242066
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Town Hall Market Place
: Wokingham
: RG40 1AS
SUBMITTED BY : The Wokingham Town Council P&T Committee
DATE SUBMITTED : 21/11/2024

COMMENTS:

The Committee discussed the application and had several issues, it was decided to object on the following.

The main issue is mass and the size of the development, creating an overbearing building with its impacts on nearby houses.

CP3 - General Principles for development a) mass

CP9 - Scale and location of development proposals

The proposed parking allocation is not sufficient and will lead to even more congestion on local roads which will impact road safety

CP6 - Managing Travel Demand

d) appropriate vehicular parking f) Enhance road safety

There is no provision for affordable housing

CP5 - Housing mix, density and affordability

For accessibility there should be a lift included as the proposal is for four storeys.

CP2 - Inclusive communities

a) ageing population

b) Children, young people and families

The development is not in the Local Plan

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) 4) inappropriate increases in scale, form or footprint

PLANNING REF : 242066
PROPERTY ADDRESS : Town Hall Market Place
: Wokingham
: RG40 1AS
SUBMITTED BY : The Wokingham Town Council P&T Committee
DATE SUBMITTED : 16/04/2025

COMMENTS:

The changes made do not change the objections that the Committee made when previously discussing this application.

The rearranging of parking spaces will remove some of the very limited green space in this area and is not welcomed.

The Committee's objections are as before.

The main issue is mass and the size of the development, creating an overbearing building with its impacts on nearby houses.

CP3 - General Principles for development a) mass

CP9 - Scale and location of development proposals

The proposed parking allocation is not sufficient and will lead to even more congestion on local roads which will impact road safety

CP6 - Managing Travel Demand

d) appropriate vehicular parking f) Enhance road safety

There is no provision for affordable housing

CP5 - Housing mix, density and affordability

For accessibility there should be a lift included as the proposal is for four storeys.

CP2 - Inclusive communities

a) ageing population

b) Children, young people and families

The development is not in the Local Plan

CP11 - Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside) 4) inappropriate increases in scale, form or footprint

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