

Development Management Team
Wokingham Borough Council
Civic Offices
Shute End
Wokingham
RG40 1BN

Date: 21 March 2025

Our ref: 64051/01/DL/ERo/33456914v10

Dear Sir/Madam

Full Planning Application for the demolition of the Coach house and erection of replacement dwelling at The Coach House, Five Horseshoes House, Remenham Hill, Remenham, Berkshire RG9 3EP

On behalf of our client, Five Horseshoes LLP, we are pleased to submit an application to Wokingham Borough Council ("WBC") for the following proposed development at The Coach House, Five Horseshoes House, Remenham Hill, Remenham, Berkshire RG9 3EP (the 'Site'). The description of development is as follows:

"Full planning application for the erection of a replacement dwelling following demolition of the existing Coach House".

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal (ref. PP-13844968) and the requisite planning application fee of £578.00 (plus £70.00 Planning Portal administration fee) has been paid.

Application submission

The following documents accompany this application submission:

- 1 Completed application form, prepared by Lichfields;
- 2 Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA), prepared by Lichfields;
- 3 Application Drawings (for approval), prepared by MW Architectural Consultant - as listed in the submitted Drawing Register document; and
- 4 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, prepared by Windrush Ecology.

Site and Context

The Site is situated in the settlement of Remenham, approximately 1.7km to the east of Henley-on-Thames. The proposals relate to an existing two-storey dwelling (the 'Coach House') situated to the rear

of Five Horseshoes House which fronts the A4130. No works are proposed to the Five Horseshoes House building but works are proposed to its curtilage. Five Horseshoes House's planning history is set out below where relevant to the Site. The Coach House sits to the east of the plot which is rectangular in shape and is set back from Remenham Hill Road (A4130) by approximately 20 metres. There is an expansive area of hardstanding to the rear of the Site which is used for parking.

The Site does not contain and is not adjacent to any listed buildings. Five Horseshoes House and the Coach House are considered to be 'Non-designated Heritage Assets' (NDHA). Beyond the south of the Site, beyond the A4130, the grounds to Park Place and Temple Combe are a registered National Historic Park and Garden with Grade II* listed status and are 20 metres away at the nearest point.

The Site is located within the Green Belt and the surrounding area hosts residential development in a variety of layouts, and commercial development including equestrian and light industrial uses. The Site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore deemed to be at low risk from flooding.

Proposal

The proposed development is the demolition of the existing Coach House and the erection of a replacement dwelling. The existing dwelling is to the rear of Five Horseshoes House, and the proposed replacement dwelling is set further north into the plot, on an existing area of hardstanding. The proposed surface water drainage strategy would comprise directing surface water to existing and newly created permeable landscaped areas including through use of porous tarmac, so it could drain on site.

The wider site has been actively marketed for a number of years, at a distressed price and by multiple estate agents, however, has been subject to a prolonged lack of interest by prospective buyers. The proposed relocation would assist vehicle manoeuvrability within the site which is currently severely constrained by the location of the Coach House building and provide better separation between the Coach House and Five Horseshoes House, now both are used as dwellinghouses. At present only small vehicles can fit through the gap.

The key elements of the proposals are as follows:

- The replacement dwelling will be lower in height than the existing Coach House, comprising two bedrooms and one bathroom. It has been designed to reflect the existing footprint and proportions of the existing Coach House.
- The replacement dwelling does not extend further into the rear of the plot than the established rear building line set by adjacent dwellings as indicated on plan 2024_5/P2/D, and is located on existing hardstanding. The proposals would reduce the hardstanding on the site from 881 sqm to 407 sqm, and increase soft landscaping from 432 sqm as existing to 905 sqm.
- The replacement dwelling has been designed to protect the privacy of adjacent residential properties by preventing direct views towards adjacent gardens.
- There is space for 3 bins to serve the replacement dwelling, which are to be provided to the southwest of the building.
- The proposals will provide dedicated parking for the Coach House (2no. spaces) and Five Horseshoes House (3no. spaces).

Planning History

A review of the planning history for the Site on the WBC online planning register has identified that the Site history comprises recent planning applications relating to both the Coach House and Five Horseshoes House, collectively and individually. The following summarises those most relevant to the current application:

Application ref.	Location	Description	Status
202264	The Coach House	Prior approval submission for proposed conversion of offices (Use Class B1(a)) to 1 no. residential dwelling (Use Class C3).	Prior approval given 23 rd October 2020 and since implemented, as such the existing use of the building and curtilage is residential.
203089	Five Horseshoes House	Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use from office (Use Class B1(a)) to 3no. two bedroom residential units (Use Class C3).	Prior approval given 5 th January 2021.
210465	Five Horseshoes House	Full planning application for the proposed erection of a three storey rear extension to existing building following demolition of existing two storey flat roofed extension to the rear, plus changes to fenestration.	Approved 8 th July 2021.
213116	Five Horseshoes House and The Coach House	Full application for the proposed erection of a part three storey, part single storey rear extension including roof terrace to form 3no residential units, following the demolition of existing two storey flat roofed rear extension and demolition of detached outbuilding, plus insertion of 6 no. rooflights and associated roof alterations.	Approved 29th November 2021.
232970	Five Horseshoes House	Prior approval submission for the proposed change of use of offices (Use Class E) to 1 no. dwelling (Use Class C3)	Prior approval given 16 th January 2024 and since implemented, as such the existing use of the building and curtilage is residential.

Of note is that planning permission ref. 213116 permitted the demolition of the Coach House. The Officer's Report (page 6) stated:

"The WBC Conservation Officer has indicated that, whilst the loss of the non-designated heritage asset is somewhat regrettable, in this instance given its demolition would facilitate a viable re-development of the site, it would be considered acceptable."

The extension to the rear of Five Horseshoes House was also considered acceptable in relation to the impact on neighbours. The Officer's Report (page 7) stated:

"There is an existing overlooking relationship between the Five Horseshoes House and Common Barn Cottages, with the rear windows at the Five Horseshoes having views into the amenity space at the cottage. The proposed extension would be significantly taller than the existing flat roofed extension, and it would also be longer. However, considering the existing overlooking relationship and the oblique angle between the new rear windows and the neighbouring rear windows, it is considered that the 17 metre separation distance would be acceptable, this is especially considering the tree which is within the neighbouring plot and would partially obscure views towards the neighbouring rear windows. This is despite the proposal falling below the 22 metre back to back distance as outlined in the Borough Design Guide."

These matters are addressed further in the planning analysis section.

Planning Policy Context

In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The adopted statutory Development Plan for WBC relevant to the site and proposals comprises the following documents, both of which are dated:

- The Core Strategy (CS) (adopted 2010); and
- Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (adopted 2014).

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated on 12th December 2024 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The NPPF is based on a fundamental presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that *"For decision-taking this means: c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay"* (Para 11c). The Council acknowledge that they have a deficiency in housing supply¹ and therefore certain development plan policies are out of date. As such the weight to be attached to any conflicts between proposals and development plan policies should be set against the extent of housing shortfall, longevity of unmet housing needs in the Borough, and the fact the adopted Local Plan does not meet current levels of housing need.

Where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, the NPPF requires permission to be granted unless *"the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance **provides a strong reason** for refusing the development proposed"* (Lichfields emphasis).

¹ According to the latest WBC 5YHLS Statement (January 2025), the Council contends the HLS position as of 31st March 2024 was 1.7 years.

Alongside the NPPF there are a range of National Planning Practice Guidance (PPGs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that comprise material considerations in planning decisions. WBC's Borough Design Guide SPD (2012) is considered of relevance to this application.

Remenham Parish was designated as a Neighborhood Area on 26th July 2013, however, there is no made Neighborhood Development Plan for the Site.

WBC are currently undertaking a Local Plan Update and as part of this process, undertook a Proposed Submission Plan (Regulation 19) consultation between 30th September and 13th November 2024. Once submitted, the draft policies will attract weight in decision-making in accordance with the provisions of NPPF (paragraph 49).

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

MDD policy TBo1 (2014) permits development in the Green Belt for the purposes set out by Paragraphs 89 and 90 of the NPPF where they would "*they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt*". Policy TBo1 is now dated as it precedes the most recent version of the NPPF (2024). The current NPPF (para 154) 2024 makes clear that development will not be inappropriate in the Green Belt where it for "*the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces*". Notably it does not predicate this appropriateness on maintaining openness as policy TBo1 does.

Furthermore, CS Policy CP11 sets out requirements for proposals outside Development Limits stating, "*in the case of replacement dwellings the proposal must: i) Bring about environmental improvements; or ii) Not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building*".

The proposed replacement dwelling is in the same use as the existing, and not materially larger than the one it replaces (as assessed in the following section) and hence is considered to be appropriate development in this location and in the Green Belt. The proposals will bring about environmental improvements including enhanced vehicle manoeuvrability on site, the construction of a dwelling of modern standards of environmental performance, achieving BNG on site, and returning existing hardstanding to soft landscaping.

Green Belt

As described above, the proposals are considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt on the basis the replacement dwelling is in the same use as the existing, and not material larger than the one it replaces (para 154 of the NPPF).

As shown in the existing and proposed elevations, the replacement dwelling has been designed to reflect the overall scale and proportions of the existing Coach House. The existing Coach House has an overall volume of approximately 277m³ and the replacement dwelling has an overall volume of approximately 298. This minor increase enables a modest porch to the east of the new dwelling and a staircase to the first floor, necessary to ensure the proposals meet national space standards and comply with MDD Policy TBo7 (Internal Space Standards). The minor increase in the proposed dwelling's volume (equating to 7.5%) is not considered to result in a dwelling which is materially larger than the existing.

The ridge of the proposed dwelling will be 99.25m AOD, which is lower than the existing 99.29m AOD (drawing no 2024/5 P11 rev C). The ridge level AOD of the proposed dwelling will lower than the existing Coach House and remain notably subordinate to Five Horseshoes House and the adjacent dwellings to the east (as shown on drawing no. 2024/5 P22 rev C).

For the reasons set out above, the proposals are considered to be appropriate development in the Green Belt, compliant with the provisions of policy TBO1, and NPPF para 154.

Impact on Character and Appearance of the Area

CS Policy CP3 seeks to ensure that new developments are appropriately designed, sustainable, and integrate effectively into their surroundings, particularly with existing dwellings. Policy TBO6 sets out a number of requirements for development of private residential gardens, including avoiding unacceptable tandem development. Additionally, the Borough Design Guide sets out guidance for backland and tandem development. The proposals have been designed to accord with the principles and guidance set out within these policies and SPD.

By increasing the distance between the Coach House and Five Horseshoes House, the proposals meet the expectations of the CS Policy CP3 criteria b) providing “*a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme*” for future users and e) by enabling “*the full potential of the site*” for residential use.

In addition to the replacement dwelling being sympathetic to the height, scale and design of the existing building, it would match the materials used on the existing building in line with the Borough Design Guide. This includes painted brickwork, new flintwork, slate roof, painted timber windows and doors and rainwater goods to replicate cast iron visuals and the proposed porch would be an oak frame with a slate roof.

The proposed replacement dwelling would be located to the rear of the existing building whilst ensuring that it does not extend beyond the existing building line to the rear to keep with the grain of the surrounding residential development. Reconfiguring the layout and access for the plots and proposed landscaping would be an improvement over the current hardstanding and communal spaces previously provided in line with Policy TBO6. Therefore, in accordance with R22 of the Borough Design Guide, it is considered the proposed replacement dwelling is acceptable ‘backland’ or ‘tandem’ development, as it does not harm the existing character of the local area and “*results in a high quality environment for both the proposed and existing residents*” (page 54).

The proposed development would therefore be in accordance with CS Policy CP3 and MDD Policy TBO6, the Borough Design Guide and the NPPF.

Residential Amenity

CS Policy CP3 sets out that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that inter alia “*are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height... with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users*” (Policy CP3, page 38). The Borough Design Guide sets out a range of considerations for designing for privacy, visual impact and amenity which have been considered in developing the proposals.

The proposed dwelling would be positioned east of Common Barn Cottages and west of Hectorage which features a single storey outbuilding which provides a degree of separation with the dwelling. Given the modest height of the proposed dwelling height and the separation distance with Hectorage, the proposed dwelling would not have an adverse overbearing impact on the garden or house of Hectorage. The side facing first floor bedrooms will have a cill height that prevents elevated views over the neighbouring property. The Borough Design Guide advises a distance of 22 metres “*between the rear of two buildings that directly face one another*” (page 46). In this instance, the main aspects of the proposed dwelling are at the north and south and will be 24 metres from the main rear elevations of Five Horseshoes House, and a greater distance from neighbouring properties to the east and west.

The proposed dwelling would be located adjacent to the rear of Common Barn Cottages to the west but offset from the boundary. The proposals incorporate private gardens located immediately to the rear of both the replacement dwelling and Five Horseshoes, thus providing a high standard of external amenity for future occupiers in line with Policy TBO6.

The existing eastern boundary is marked by dense screening. There is also a site level difference between the properties with the proposal site being set considerably lower than Common Barn Cottages. The level difference, existing boundary screening and modest ridge height of the proposed dwelling would prevent it appearing unduly prominent from the west. Again, first floor bedrooms will have a cill height that prevents elevated views over Common Barn Cottages.

The development would not result in an adverse impact on residential amenity and would provide a good level of amenity for future occupants. It would therefore be in accordance with CS Policy CP3, MDD Policy TBO6, the Borough Design Guide and the NPPF.

Heritage

CS Policy CP3 sets out that planning permission will only be granted for proposals that inter alia “*Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses*”. This is inconsistent with the approach of the NPPF 2024 (which allows for a balanced judgement of heritage impacts) and is considered to be out of date.

The accompanying HIA provides a thorough assessment of the proposals heritage impacts assessed against relevant policy. It confirms that the Coach House and Five Horseshoes House are considered to be NDHA.

The proposed development would result in the loss of the Coach House. The significance of this has been assessed in heritage terms and is considered to be of very limited historical and architectural interest and of very low importance overall. Although the loss of the NDHA is unfortunate, its loss has previously been considered acceptable by WBC given its low importance and the benefits associated with the redevelopment of the wider site. The same balanced judgement should be applied in this instance.

With regards to Five Horseshoes House, the assessment has concluded that the sensitive design of the replacement dwelling, and the benefits associated with the landscaping of the area to the rear of the building, including the reintroduction of private gardens and tree planting, would neutralise the harm caused by the loss of the existing coach house. Overall, the most important features that contribute to the building’s historic and architectural significance would be preserved.

Policy CP3 is out of date and the HIA outlines that a balanced judgement should be considered undertaken in respect of the loss of the Coach House. This balance has been undertaken previously by the council, and its loss has been accepted (during application ref. no. 213116). In the context of the NPPF para 11d, the application of policies in the Framework that protect assets of particular importance do not provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed and hence permission should be granted.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

CS Policy CP7 seeks to protect features of ecological importance and MDD Policy TB23 requires biodiversity features to be incorporated into new developments.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment, prepared by Windrush Ecology, accompanies this planning application. This assessed the Coach House building as having 'negligible' potential to offer shelter to roosting bats. Given this, no further surveys were considered necessary. The demolition of this building would therefore not result in an unacceptable impact on protected species.

A BNG calculation has been undertaken in the Statutory Metric and is included within the BNG assessment that accompanies the application. The assessment shows that the proposed development complies with mandatory requirements of providing a 10% increase in BNG above the baseline.

It has therefore been ensured that there will be no detrimental impact upon important ecological features. The development will therefore be in accordance with CS Policy CP7, MDD Policy TB23 and the NPPF.

Transport and Parking

CS Policy CP6 and MDD Policy CCo7 require appropriate parking and access arrangements to be provided for residential schemes.

The existing access to the east of Five Horseshoes will remain unchanged. However, relocating the Coach House will allow reconfiguration of the internal access route within the site to provide better manoeuvrability. The reconfigured access route within the site would run straight past Five Horseshoes House to the parking provision to the rear, following the eastern boundary. This direct route would enhance visibility within the site, creating a safer and more practical arrangement with added opportunities for a softer approach to landscaping.

In line with previous permissions, three parking spaces are retained for use by Five Horseshoes House (ref. 232970) and two parking spaces for the Coach House are provided (ref. 202264). The replacement dwelling is provided with bin storage and cycle storage.

The proposals would ensure that acceptable access, parking and storage is provided. The development would therefore be in accordance with CS Policy CP6, MDD Policy CCo7 and the NPPF.

Conclusion

This covering letter together with the plans and supporting documents have demonstrated that the proposed development would form appropriate development in the Green Belt in line with para. 154 of

the NPPF. The proposals would not result in unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area, residential amenity, highway safety and ecology. When a balanced assessment of the proposal's heritage impacts is undertaken as required by the NPPF, the impact is considered acceptable and would be consistent with the Council's previous decision making at the site.

Please let my colleague Ellie Roe or I know if you require any further information.

Yours faithfully

Nick Kirby
Planning Director
BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI