



### **Design and Access Statement**

**Project:** The Birches, Castle Road, Farley Hill, Reading, Wokingham, RG7 1UL  
New entrance porch, amendments to fenestration, internal alterations, and  
change of use of room above garage to ancillary accommodation

**Date:** April 2025

**Authority:** Wokingham Borough Council

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Absolute Architecture on behalf of the Applicants to accompany the submission of a Householder Planning Application for The Birches, a detached family dwelling in Farley Hill.
- 1.2 Permission is sought for the creation of a new entrance porch along with amendments to fenestration and internal reconfiguration of the house. A change of use is also proposed for the existing store/games room above the detached garage to provide ancillary accommodation to compliment the main house by providing a new bedroom with ensuite for family use.

## **2 Site and Surrounding Area**

- 2.1 The Birches is a detached C21 property situated in a residential area within Farley Hill. The property is two storey.
- 2.2 Whilst simple in form and finish the property suffers from a convoluted plan and lacks a defined formal entrance to suit a property of this scale.
- 2.3 The site is located outside of a settlement boundary, and sits within the Farley Hill Area of Special Character, an area 'dominated by parkland estates, open fields and infill developments' with 'wooded backdrops'.
- 2.4 The total site area of the property is 0.61 Hectares, and sits within a wider area of woodland

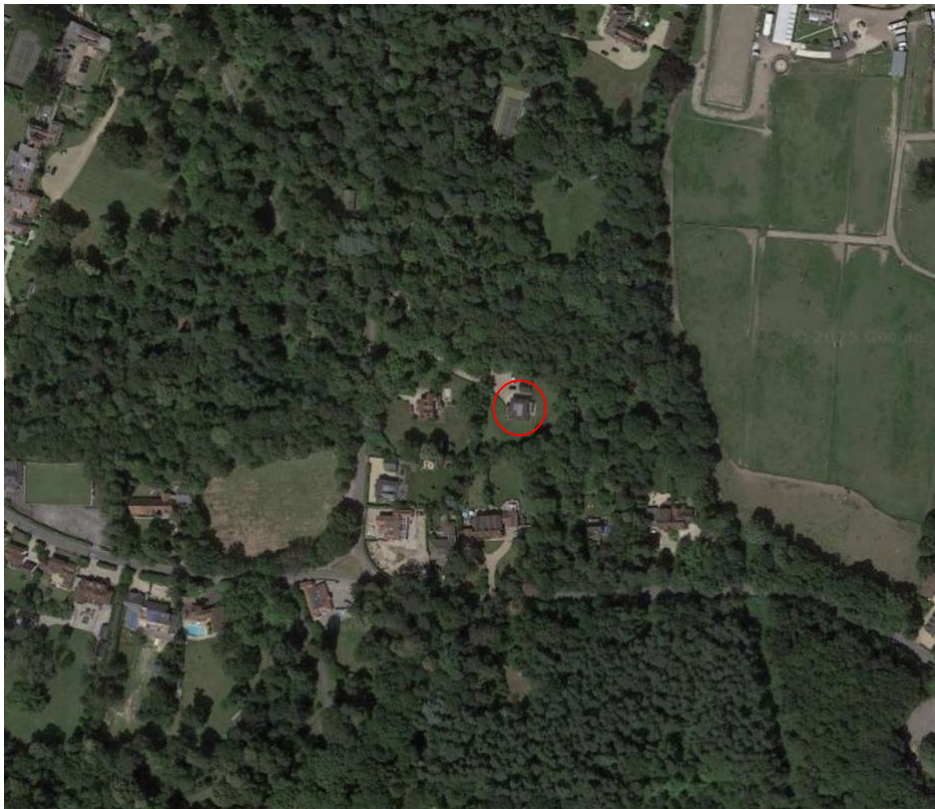


Image 01: Google Maps image indicating the location of The Birches



Image 02: Google Maps image showing The Birches.

### 3 Planning Policy – NPPF

- 3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and provides the Government's framework for delivering sustainable development and facilitating economic growth through the planning process. The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.2 The NPPF is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking, and should, unless there are extreme adverse implications to doing so, supersede conflicting or absent Local Plan policies.
- 3.3 In developing the proposals on behalf of the Applicants, we have drawn on the following principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):
  - *To seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings*
  - *That good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people*
  - *To respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials.*

## 4 Planning Policy – Local

4.1 We have drawn from the local planning policies and strategies in developing the proposal, including the Wokingham Borough Adopted Core Strategy 2010, in particular:

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- WHE3 – Development in areas of special interest

4.2 It is anticipated that the key planning considerations will be:

- Impact on the site and neighbouring dwellings
- Scale and massing
- Design considerations

## 5 Existing Property



Image 03: Photograph of the existing side elevation.

5.1 The Birches is a C21 detached dwelling built with rendered walls and pitched roofs finished in plain clay tiles. The property features brown UPVC windows, brown soffits and fascias, and a timber clad balcony to the Eastern elevation.

5.2 Internally, the ground floor comprises a large central Kitchen/Dining area, connecting to a Reception Room, Snooker Room, Shower Room, Snug and Study. The central open-plan Kitchen/Dining area is well proportioned but lacks visual links to the rear garden as well as being low on natural daylight. The entrance to the property is currently via the North-Western corner of the kitchen, providing a poor entrance sequence.

5.3 There are 5 bedrooms on the first floor. The master bedroom is well proportioned and connects to an en-suite adjacent. The remaining bedrooms however are cramped and not of suitable scale for the dwelling. To the southern edge a large family bathroom overlooks the rear garden.

- 5.4 The house is situated within a generous plot with mature landscaping and trees. There is an existing patio to the rear of the property.



Image 04: Rear elevation with master suite balcony

- 5.5 The property is approached by a long private driveway and has gravelled parking spaces at the front of the house.
- 5.6 Additional parking is provided within a detached garage to the north of the main house. The first floor of the garage is currently used as additional storage/games room for the family and is accessed via an external stair.

## 6 The Proposal – Layout, Massing & Appearance

- 6.1 Planning permission is sought for the creation of a new entrance porch, amendments to fenestration and internal reconfiguration works at The Birches to enhance and develop the property into a high-quality family home. As well as this it is proposed that the existing store/games room above the garage is turned into an additional bedroom with ensuite to function as ancillary accommodation to support the main house.
- 6.2 The existing house has no formal entrance, with the front door leading directly into the property's kitchen. Proposals seek to create a new covered entrance on the Northern elevation leading into a new entrance hall with relocated staircase with WC below. At first floor the number of bedrooms is reduced to four, creating more suitably proportioned rooms.
- 6.3 To accompany internal reconfiguration as well as rationalising the external appearance, various amendments are proposed to the fenestration. In place of the existing front door and adjacent window, a new enlarged window is formed. These alterations are summarised below:
- A new enlarged kitchen window is created on the northern elevation in place of the existing external door and smaller adjacent window.
  - The existing window within the proposed study is enlarged, with the adjacent smaller window removed.

- New french doors are created within the proposed snug, addressing the garden
- New sliding doors are formed on the southern elevation, addressing the garden
- At first floor new enlarged windows are proposed to bedrooms 3 and 4, and the north facing window within bedroom 3 is re-positioned to balance the facade
- A new window is proposed to the master bedroom dressing area

6.4 The existing first floor room above the detached garage currently has approval for restricted use as a storage/games room under permission 170745 from May 2017. Condition 6 states that “the first floor accommodation over the detached garage hereby permitted shall be used only as storage/games room accommodation ancillary to the main residential use of the dwelling and for no other purpose whatsoever without first obtaining the written permission of the local authority”. This application seeks to gain approval for the use of this space as ancillary accommodation for use by the family in the form of an additional bedroom with new ensuite.



Image 05: Proposed visual.

## 7 Sustainability Enhancements

7.1 The proposed alterations have adopted ‘fabric first’ principles to be energy efficient and constructed from high-quality, long-lasting materials.

## 8 Amenity

8.1 The proposed alterations are deemed to not result in any loss of amenity or cause any adverse impact on neighbouring properties.

## **9 Arboriculture and Landscape**

- 9.1 No notable trees, hedges or vegetation will be impacted by proposals.

## **10 Access & Highways**

- 10.1 Existing site access and parking arrangements are retained and remain unchanged.
- 10.2 Arrangements for waste and recycling collection will remain unchanged.

## **11 Ecology**

- 11.1 No ecological habitats are identified as being impacted by the proposals.

## **12 Summary**

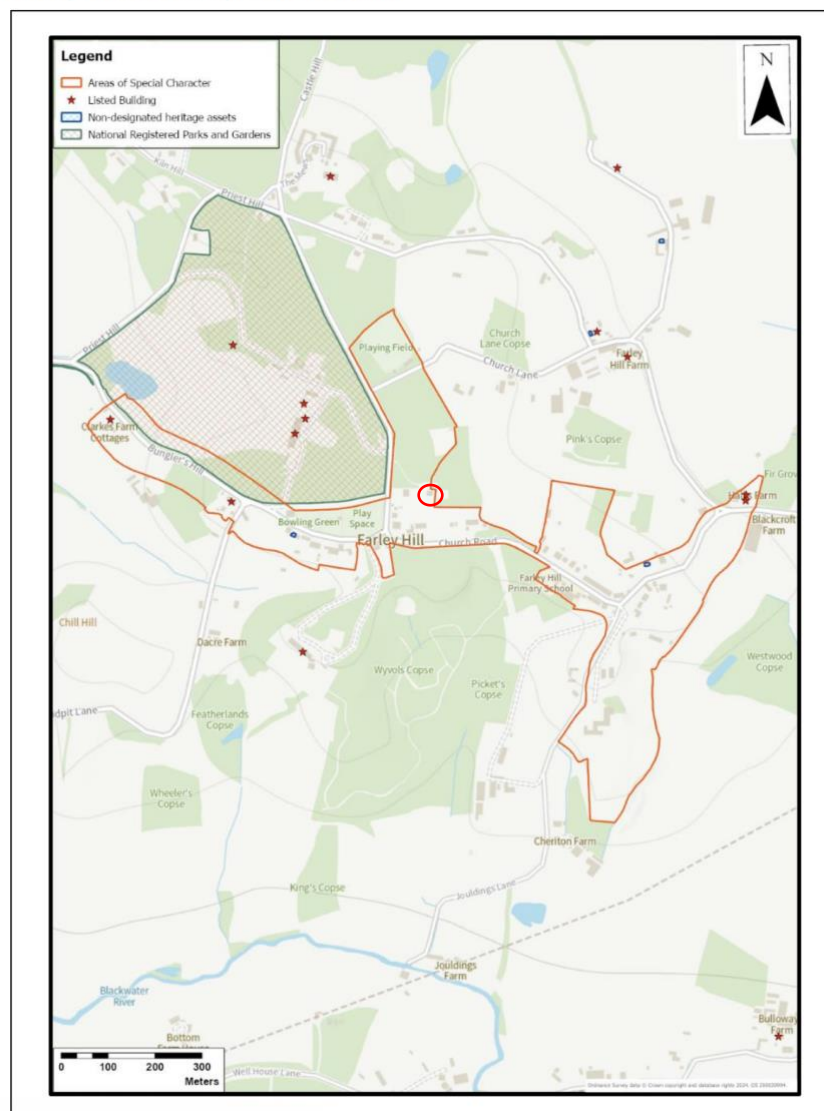
- 12.1 The application proposals seek to enhance the property through greatly improving the entrance sequence by creating a new formal entrance porch, whilst also re-planning the internal layouts to make the property suitable for modern family living.
- 12.2 The proposal is of high-quality architectural design and has no detrimental impact on the character of the property, its setting, nor on neighbouring properties.
- 12.3 The proposed construction materials follow the palette of materials of the existing property. The proposals maintain and enhance the charm and character of the property, as such, it is respectfully requested that the application for planning approval be granted.

## Appendix 1 – Heritage Statement

### 13 Farley Hill Area of Special Character

- 13.1 This designated Area of Special Character is located within a rural landscape, comprising farm fields and areas of woodland. It lies approximately 6.9km southwest of Wokingham railway station and around 4.7km south of Reading. To the north of the Area of Special Character lies the Grade I Listed Farley Hall and its grounds, which is also a National Historic Park and Garden. Part of the grounds of Farley Hill and its associated designations extend into the area of Special Character, along Bungler's Hill.
- 13.2 The AoSC has a linear layout, with buildings concentrated along Bungler's Hill and Church Road. The area can be described as being predominantly residential, comprising two storey detached buildings with tile roofs and brick elevations of varying designs. There are four Grade II listed buildings within the AoSC. Roads are primarily bordered by mature trees and hedges, with buildings generally being well set back from the road, evoking a woodland character.

Farley Hill Area of Special Character



Map showing location of the property within the Area of Special Character –  
Wokingham Council Historic Environment Topic Paper, Appendix C

- 13.3 The proposals primarily focus on the interior of the existing property. Where the exterior is affected, the proposed construction materials follow the palette of materials of the existing property. The size and massing of the proposal remain in keeping with that of surrounding properties and do not change how the property sits within the site or the visibility of the property from neighbouring sites or roads. The proposals maintain and enhance the charm and character of the property without impacting the surrounding area.
- 13.4 The proposals do not impact the existing access, amenity or ecology of the surrounding area.
- 13.5 The existing trees and hedges that surround the property will not be affected, and as such the woodland character of the wider AoSC will not be changed by the proposal.