

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242719
Site Address:	178 Bearwood Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SH
Expiry Date:	30 December 2024
Site Visit Date:	16 April 2024
Proposal: Application to vary conditions 2 and 8 of planning consent 240665 for the proposed erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage. Condition 2 refers to the approved details and condition 8 to landscaping, and the variation is to change the siting of the approved dwelling with accompanying landscape plan, plus a change to fenestration.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Countryside
Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Tree Preservation Orders
Landscape Character Assessment Area

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB05 – Housing Mix TB07 – Internal Space Standards

	TB21 – Landscape Character TB22 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Barkham Village Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
240665	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage.	Refused: June 2024

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments
WBC Drainage – No objection
WBC Highways – Request further information
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection raised
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No comments
WBC CIL – Request further information
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection
WBC Ecology – No comments

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments
South East Water – No comments

REPRESENTATIONS

Barkham Parish Council	No comments
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site is located within the countryside, along Bearwood Road, in Barkham. The dwelling as existing is relatively isolated but the site borders No.176 Bearwood Road. Certificates of lawful use (reference 231275 & 231276) have recently been granted for two dwellings on adjoining land. Despite the nearby development, the area remains characterised by its protected woodland border and minimal surrounding built form.

Proposal: The site currently comprises an existing semi-detached pair of dwellings and a detached garage. The proposal through application 240665 sought to replace the larger of these semi-detached properties, for the erection of a larger detached dwelling. This was granted permission on the 28th of June 2024.

This application, through the variation of condition 2, seeks to relocate the dwelling further towards the north of the site.

The design and size of the dwelling would remain as per the previous application.

Whilst Section 73 planning applications are linked to a previous rendition of a scheme, the variation of the approved details conditions would essentially create a new permission, and the relocation of the dwelling gives rise to a whole new set of considerations. As such, the appraisal below will be an assessment on the current scheme based off its own merits.

Principle of Development: The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The principle of development for the erection of a replacement dwelling was already deemed acceptable under the previous planning consent 240665. Nothing contained within the current application is deemed to affect this conclusion, therefore no objections are raised on the principle of development.

Character of the Area: The character of the area is immediately defined by its verdant and open setting with large separation distances. The nearest residential sites on Bearwood Road are characterised by large dwellings sited on extensive plots. There is notable variation between the dwelling types and their designs.

Location

Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, layout and character of the area without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces and have no detrimental impact upon important landscape features.

It is expected that a replacement dwelling to be in the same or similar position to the existing dwelling, particularly in this location, as the existing dwelling has no associated curtilage or garden to prevent further spreading of domestic paraphernalia. This is discussed at 8.5.3 in the Design Guide. RD11 states *“The form, or massing of a replacement dwelling should relate well to its context and to local character. The relationship between the form of the building, the topography and landscape, will be of particular importance”*.

It continues to state that there may be circumstances where it is preferable to site a replacement dwelling in another location e.g. where it may have an more appropriate

impact or whether there are other environmental factors. Neither is the case in this instance and there is a clear negative impact on the Countryside.

The location of the dwelling would have an uncomfortable relationship with the site, as most properties along Bearwood Road are located centrally within their plots.

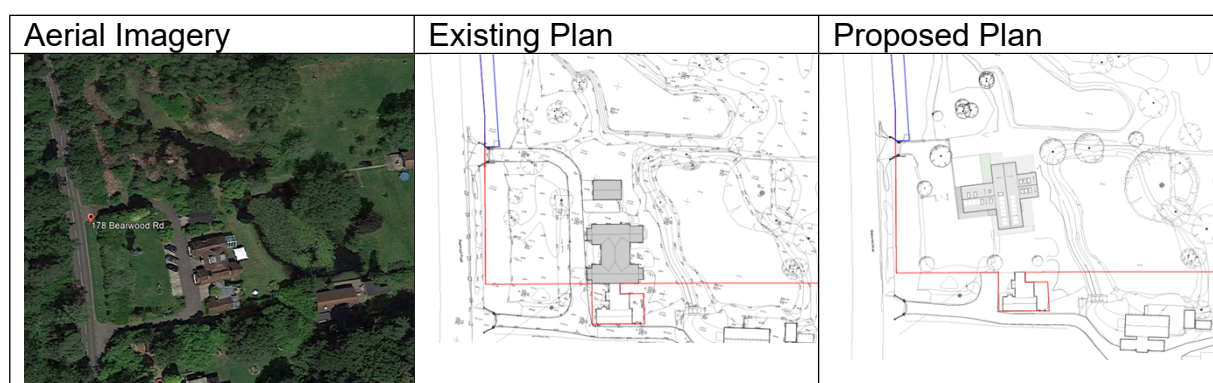
The proposed scheme represents a significant increase in both area, volume and height, with the addition of significant residential garden and driveway parking which are not present for either the existing dwelling or its semi-detached partner.

The proposed location of the dwelling is not acceptable within the plot, particularly due to the height and size of the dwelling and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the area, especially considering at the present time there is limited development in this location. The significant distance away from the existing dwelling and built form on the site causes unnecessary encroachment into an open woodland area and fails to maintain the woodland character and appearance of Bearwood Road.

The extended residential garden and patio when compared to the existing dwelling would be an inappropriate feature within the countryside setting which would further harm the character and appearance of the area.

The plans below show the location of the proposed dwelling compared to the existing. In the aerial imagery, the area surrounding and to the north of the existing garage building is largely vegetated and not manicured garden space. Given this part of the site is not currently open, this would affect the undeveloped character.

The proposed property would be located within this space. The north elevation comprises the main rear elevation and garden space, with significant patio doors opening out from the living and dining/kitchen rooms, which would lead to degradation of this vegetated area and introduce residential paraphernalia where there is currently none. In combination with this, the dwelling is position significantly closer to Bearwood Road. It is accepted that this is partially screened by mature rhododendron, however, the retention of this vegetation cannot be ensured in perpetuity and the property is likely to have a materially greater impact due to its lager size, height and location than the existing property.



The replacement dwelling fails to maintain a relationship with the adjoining (previously semi-detached) property and does not appear as a cluster of buildings alongside the Certificates dwellings. This spreading of development detrimentally impacts the

Countryside and clustered pattern of development along Bearwood Road. This encroachment into open countryside resulting from the proposal would harm its character and integrity.

The significant increase in scale of hardstanding, in combination with the amended location of the proposed dwelling, would have a materially greater impact on the open character and appearance of the countryside and street scene than the existing dwelling and recently approved dwelling.

Landscape Character

The site sits in the L1: Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills Landscape Character Area. It lies in open countryside outside settlement boundaries.

The site is well wooded and the access to the site is from Bearwood Road, identified in the Arborfield and Barkham Neighbourhood Plan (2020) as a locally valued natural asset.

Bearwood Road is a Green Route which here marks the eastern boundary of the grounds of Bearwood House, a Grade II* listed building. Bearwood Park is a Registered Historic Park and Garden of national significance.

There are Priority Habitats on the site which importantly includes the two ponds which are categorised as eutrophic standing waters, as well as grassland and orchard.

The woodlands on the site are protected by long-established TPOs (20/1973) and (87/1978).

The site sits wholly within the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape identified in the Council's Valued Landscape Assessment (2024). Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that '*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;'

The landscape strategy for the area is described in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Association (2019):

The key aspects to be actively managed are the mixed woodland and the features associated with the historic landscape. There are also opportunities to strengthen open water, woodland and remnant heathland habitats, and manage the exotic species ...

In terms of development, the WBLCA (2019) describes the aim as: '*to conserve the unsettled character of the area*'.

The proposal is for a replacement dwelling in the countryside and represents a considerable increase in bulk, height and footprint compared to that of the existing property. This increase in scale was considered to be appropriately mitigated through the previous application (240665) due to its proximity to the existing property's location, which largely contained the spread of built form into the countryside. It was further mitigated through an agreed condition (No.13), which would confirm the boundary treatments and extent of residential area (as the red line does not follow any meaningful boundaries), thus preventing any spread of residential use or paraphernalia into the wider Countryside or within root protection areas of the TPO woodland.

This is not the case with the current proposal however, which comprises extending development into the open countryside and valued landscape. The Trees & Landscape Officer has assessed the scheme and concluded that because the proposal extends the built form across a wider area of countryside, valued landscape, the local and the natural environment, it is clear that the development does not conserve the unsettled character of the area but rather militate against it, contrary to the L1 landscape strategy.

The proposed development is part of the Valued Landscape and fails to acknowledge or respond to the valued landscape in that it does not contribute to or enhance the natural and local environment. In fact, it detracts from its importance. Whilst the proposal may not have a significant impact on the settlement pattern overall on Bearwood Road, it would intensify built form and activity within the wider site (which was once a site comprising a single dwelling prior to the 3 additional dwellings on the wider site being obtained through Certificate applications). The site is part of the landscape where woodlands and vegetation makes up a significant contribution (which may contain irreplaceable habitat) and the removal of trees to accommodate a dwelling and its associated manicured lawns would have a deleterious effect on the contribution of the site to the landscape.

The T&L Officer acknowledges some limited woodland improvements through the revised landscape plan, however, the improvements are minor when considered in the light of the significant objections outlined above.

In summary, the Landscape and Trees Officer has objected to the impact of the development on the immediate landscape setting and the subsequent failure of the proposal to meet the Framework paragraph 187(a) requirement to 'protect and enhance' the valued landscape.

In addition to this, the significant increase in residential built form as well as garden is contrary to TB21, which requires proposals to retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape character. The clear domestication of the land fails to contribute to this sensitive landscape.

For the reasons stated above, the proposal is unacceptable and would fail to comply with policies CC03 and TB21 of the MDD Local Plan, Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 in addition to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Housing Amenity, Neighbouring Amenity, Built Heritage, Highway Access and Parking Provision, Flooding and Drainage, and Ecology:

The nature of the variation does not warrant any additional or different concerns on any of these material grounds. The Highways Officer for the current application did state that the accompanying landscaping plan appears to have a reduced parking and turning area, however, it is likely that a solution on these grounds would have been possible had it been required and if all other aspects of the proposal were acceptable.

Other Matters:

The applicant was aware of the Valued Landscape concerns from the previous application, where the Planning Officer requested revised plans due to the original location of the replacement dwelling being sited far from the existing properties position on site, which was considered to pose harm to TPO woodland to the north and the landscape character. The applicant agreed to relocate the property closer to the location of the existing dwelling, therefore acknowledging this harm. Despite this, the current application (by the same applicant and agent) reintroduces the previous issues raised by Officers. No justification has been provided as to why this would now be acceptable. Although the proposed location of the dwelling and its built form is of a sufficient distance from any root protection areas of TPO's thus mitigating these concerns, the same cannot be said for the impact on the valued landscape, where the relocation of the dwelling and its associated residential garden use a further 5 metres from its approved position would be considerably harmful to the woodland landscape setting.

This is also acknowledged by condition 13 on the original decision for which no alterations are sought, however, it is not clear whether there is sufficient space to have a garden of an acceptable size for a property of this nature (4 double bedrooms) in the revised location. An 11m rear garden is the minimum requirement as set out in the Borough Design Guide, without harming irreplaceable habitats or valued landscape. There is approximately 9m from the rear of the dwelling to the TPO woodland, leaving no buffer for protection of this woodland from recreational/residential garden activities. Alternatively, if the garden is proposed to the eastern or western sides of the property, this may impact on the remaining dwelling (formerly semi-detached). This has not been addressed by the applicant in this application.

Conclusion: For the reasons stated above, the proposal is unacceptable, and the application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or

will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	N/A
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	20 December 2024
Earliest date for decision:	25 November 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	20 December 2024