

Date: 3 January 2025
Application: 242731



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Pre-application Advice Response Letter

Application Number: 242731

Site Address: The Old Thatch, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead,
Wokingham, RG40 3TH

Expiry Date: 26 November 2024

Proposal: Pre-application advice for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling and carport with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings.

Dear Neil Davis,

Thank you for your request for planning advice which was validated on 29 October 2024. This letter will provide advice about your scheme and what you may need to do when submitting a planning application.

At this stage, we have not consulted anyone else about your scheme, such as neighbouring properties, but we would do so if a planning application is submitted. Before you submit a planning application, we recommend that you carry out your own public consultation and provide evidence of this through a Statement of Community Involvement.

We have provided a [frequently asked questions page](#) to answer some of the common queries about planning which will help explain the planning application process.

Site and Surroundings and Description of Proposal

The application site comprises a two-storey detached dwelling situated on the eastern side of Drift Lane, within a rural area designated as countryside. The site's location and surroundings are primarily characterised by open fields, dense woodland, and sparse development, contributing to its distinctly rural and secluded nature.

Pre-application advice is sought for the proposed erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling and carport with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings.

Planning Constraints

The following planning constraints have been identified in relation to the site:

- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- SSSI Impact Risk Zones
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Minor

Assessment of Proposal & Key Issues

Principle of Development and Character of the Area:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. Policy CC01 of the MDD Local Plan 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.

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that 'maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy relates to proposals outside such development limits. It is a restrictive policy designed to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment. Additionally, paragraph 187 (b) of the NPPF acknowledges as a core principle the value of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and enhancing the natural environment. The site is located in the countryside and therefore must be assessed against Policy CP11. 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 application site is situated within a rural setting, predominantly surrounded by open fields and sporadic development. To the south, a relatively formalised row of residential properties along Lower Sandhurst Road is evident. These dwellings are predominantly two storeys in height, set within substantial plots and are arranged in a layout that follows a gently curved yet predominantly linear alignment, contributing to a sense of spaciousness and formality.

In contrast, Drift Lane presents a markedly different character. The lane is largely undeveloped, featuring a mix of open fields and dense woodland. Along its length, only two other dwellings (excluding the application site) front onto the road, reinforcing the lane's more secluded and undeveloped nature. This distinction highlights the site's rural and relatively isolated context.

Following the adoption of the Core Strategy, section 8 of the Borough Design Guide provides more detailed advice regarding development in the countryside, including a guideline figure for replacement dwellings. For single-story developments, a 50% increase in volume compared to the original building is considered acceptable.

The supporting Planning Statement states that the proposed replacement dwelling would represent an 86% increase in volume. However, the Case Officer notes that these calculations do not appear to have been based on the 'original dwelling.' According to the Council's records, the volume of the original dwelling was approximately 240m³. Consequently, the proposed replacement dwelling would represent an approximate 692.9% increase in volume, which is clearly and significantly in excess of the guidance outlined in the Borough Design Guide. It is important to note that the property has already been extended well beyond the 50% volumetric guideline, and any further development must be appropriately scaled to align with the character of the area.

The agent has acknowledged that the proposal exceeds the Borough Design Guide's guidance but has referenced a recently constructed replacement dwelling at 'Broomfield,' further along Drift Lane. Under application reference 173566, a two-storey replacement dwelling was approved in February 2018, replacing a one-and-a-half-storey house. The new dwelling represented a 212% increase in volume compared to the original dwelling.

Each application is assessed on its own merits and despite the proximity of the sites, the character of the application site is distinctly different from that of the Broomfield site, which contributed to the case officer's justification for the larger dwelling in the earlier application. Consequently, the differences in site characteristics must be carefully considered when evaluating the acceptability of the proposed increase in scale and volume.

Although Broomfield is accessed via Drift Lane, the site is positioned at the junction of Drift Lane and Lower Sandhurst Road, occupying a prominent location that is clearly read within the context of Lower Sandhurst Road. This is further emphasised by the orientation of the dwelling, which faces directly onto Lower Sandhurst Road.

As noted previously, dwellings along Lower Sandhurst Road are typically two storeys in height, set well back from the highway, and occupy substantial plots with considerable footprints. These characteristics informed the justification provided by the previous case officer for approving a larger replacement dwelling at Broomfield, exceeding the guideline volume increases.

The officer's report highlighted that the original dwelling at Broomfield was modest in scale compared to other properties along Lower Sandhurst Road. In this specific instance, it was considered that a strict application of countryside policies would have resulted in a replacement building that appeared disproportionately small relative to neighbouring dwellings. The approved dwelling was therefore considered more in keeping with the scale and character of similarly sized developments on Lower Sandhurst Road, aligning well with the established pattern of development. Additionally, the approved dwelling was centrally located within the plot, maintaining a significant separation from both Lower Sandhurst Road and Drift Lane, further contributing to its compatibility with the area.

In contrast, the application site under consideration is located approximately 100 meters away from Lower Sandhurst Road and adopts a distinctly more rural character. Unlike Broomfield, which is prominently positioned and visually tied to the character of Lower Sandhurst Road, the application site is situated along Drift Lane — a much quieter, less formal road with sparse development. The existing dwelling, while two storeys in height, is relatively modest in scale and situated close to the road on slightly elevated ground. Its hipped roof design, coupled with traditional architectural features such as thatching, serves to reduce the perceived bulk and massing of the building. This, combined with the presence of mature vegetation along the front boundary, ensures that the existing dwelling maintains a subdued and low-key appearance, which is more consistent with its rural surroundings.

As such, the specific circumstances and context of Broomfield do not provide a suitable basis for justifying a significant increase in size and scale at the application site.

Although elevations of the existing property have not been provided, the ridge height of the proposed replacement dwelling appears to be significantly taller than that of the existing dwelling. Paired with its wide front elevation, measuring approximately 20 meters, the proposal would result in a substantial increase in both massing and visual prominence on the site. While the existing dwelling forms a continuous block of development, its hipped roof design successfully softens its appearance, breaking down the perceived scale and mass.

In contrast, the proposed manor house style dwelling, with its unbroken façade and considerably larger scale, would occupy a similar position to the existing dwelling—close to the highway in a visually prominent location along this rural road. While the architectural design of the proposed dwelling is not inherently objectionable, given the varied architectural styles in the surrounding area, its height, scale, and expansive frontage would be inappropriate in this rural countryside setting.

The proposed dwelling, by virtue of its substantial cumulative increase in volume when compared to the original building, constitutes a disproportionate addition far exceeding the size and scale of the original structure. This results in inappropriate increases in scale, form, and volume, detracting from the character and appearance of the existing dwelling within its site context. Furthermore, the proposal would adversely impact the rural character of the countryside location, contrary to Policies CP1, CP3, and CP11 of the Core Strategy.

As previously stated, the Council is not opposed to the principle of a replacement dwelling in this location. However, any future scheme should strive to be more sympathetic to the rural character of the area. This could be achieved by reducing the overall volume, bulk and scale of the proposed dwelling, incorporating a design that breaks up the built form to provide visual relief, and repositioning the dwelling further back from Drift Lane to minimise its visual prominence within the rural setting.

It should however be noted that both the council's planning records, and aerial imagery indicate that the proposed red line boundary extends further northwards and eastwards into areas that appear to comprise agricultural land. The case officer therefore advises that any full application submission should ensure that the proposed red line boundary is confined solely to the established residential garden area associated with the dwelling.

Impact on Trees and Landscape:

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

As stated above, The size and scale of the replacement dwelling would be excessive and would detract from the rural characteristics of the lane. The proposal would therefore have a harmful impact on the landscape character.

The Tree and Landscape Officer has reviewed this pre-application and notes that the Planning Statement indicates a tree survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment will be submitted as part of any full application. This assessment must be prepared in accordance with BS5837:2012 standards.

Provided the tree survey, impact assessment, and associated mitigation measures comply with BS5837:2012 and are deemed appropriate, the Trees and Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposal in principle.

The application site is of sufficient size to secure a scheme of soft landscaping in the interests of Policy CC03. A Landscape Proposals Plan is likely to be required at condition but in this case, should be provided with the submission of any full planning application for expediency and to illustrate efforts to provide suitable replacement planting.

Housing Amenity:

Internal amenity

Policy TB07 of the MDD and R17 of the SPD require adequate internal space to ensure the layout and size achieves good internal amenity. A minimum standard of 97m² applies for a four-bedroom, two storey dwelling. The internal gross floor area would comply with this requirement, and as such there is no objection in terms of adequate internal space.

In terms of bedroom sizes, the Technical Housing Standards requires that a dwelling with more than one bedroom should have a main bedroom (double), which is to have a minimum area of 11.5sqm. Secondary of single bedrooms should have a minimum area of 7.5sqm and living spaces should have a minimum area of 27sqm. There should also be provision for storage. Based on the submitted floors plans, the proposed bedrooms would comply with the national space standards for double occupancy and single occupancy rooms. The living spaces would also comply with the above requirements.

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD also requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable dual outlook and southern aspect. The proposed dwelling would include sufficient openings to the front and rear elevations which will provide natural light into the habitable rooms

External amenity

R16 of the SPD requires a minimum depth of 11m for rear gardens and a 1m setback on the site boundary to allow access thereto. The proposal would meet the above requirements; therefore no objections are raised.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed dwelling would be suitably located away from any neighbouring residential properties not to pose any overlooking, overbearing or loss of light concerns.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Councils Highways Officer has reviewed this pre-application and notes the following:

General

This proposal will replace the existing dwelling and outbuildings with the proposed dwelling with 11 habitable rooms and a new carport of dimensions 6.75m x 6.75m. No additional traffic impact will be anticipated from the replacement of dwelling.

Access and Manoeuvring

The existing site is accessed via Drift Lane. As this road is not adopted highway, the applicant shall include the access to Drift Lane in the proposed red line in the formal planning application.

It will be expected that the details of the access, including the position, width and whether the access be gated, will be retained as existing. As the access point will be retained and the proposed turning area will likely be sufficient for emergency vehicles to manoeuvre, the Highways will assume existing services to be retained. Shall there be any change to the access, details shall be submitted in the formal submission. Swept paths of a fire tender would then be required.

Parking

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Village location will require three parking within the red line boundary. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

The proposed carport of dimensions 6.75m x 6.75m will be proposed within the red line. The applicant also states that some driveway parking spaces will be provided. As the submitted site plan indicates wall and level differences adjacent to the driveway, the applicant will be expected to indicate the parking area for at least one parking space other than the carport and provide swept path analysis of a large saloon car in the formal submission.

EV Charging Points

Each new dwelling will be expected to provide a minimum of one EV Charging Point under the latest Building Regulations (Approved Document S).

The proposed EVCP adjacent to the carport will be welcomed.

Cycle Provisions

According to the WBC Parking Standards, three cycle parking allocation will be required per dwelling with 6+ habitable rooms. The Highways will recommend indicating a secured and covered cycle store of appropriate sizes on the site plan, which can accommodate at least three cycles.

Alternatively, the retainment of direct access to the rear garden for cycle storage can also be acceptable.

Refuse Collection Strategy

The site access road is a private road. As the proposed development will be expected to be accessed through the existing access road, the Highways will assume existing collection will be retained. The applicant shall confirm if the existing refuse collection servicing will be retained in the formal submission.

Flooding and Drainage:

According to EA mapping, the development is in Flood zone 1 with a low risk of surface water flooding.

The Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed this pre-application, and would have no objection to the principle of the development as represented by coloured site plan drawing 100 dated June 2024.

The submission of any full application should be accompanied a drainage strategy which should address the following:

1. Calculations indicating the existing runoff rate from the site.
2. BRE 365 test results demonstrating whether infiltration is achievable or not.
3. Use of SuDS following the SuDS hierarchy, preferably infiltration.
4. Full calculations demonstrating the performance of soakaways or capacity of attenuation features to cater for 1 in 100-year flood event with a 40% allowance for climate change and runoff controlled at existing rates, or preferably better.
5. If connection to an existing surface water sewer is proposed, we need to understand why other methods of the SuDS hierarchy cannot be implemented and see confirmation from the utilities supplier that their system has got capacity and the connection is acceptable.
6. Groundwater monitoring confirming seasonal high groundwater levels in the area.
7. A drainage strategy plan indicating the location and sizing of SuDS features, with the base of any SuDS features located at least 1m above the seasonal high water table level.
8. Details demonstrating how any SuDS for this development would be managed throughout the lifespan of the development and who will be responsible for maintenance.

Ecology:

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.

Great Crest Newts and Bats

The site is also within an Amber Risk Zone which contains suitable habitats where great crested newts are likely to be present and is located in a Bat Roost Suitability Habitat.

As such, there is a risk that the proposal could affect protected species and priority habitats and an ecological appraisal (comprising an extended Phase 1 Habitat and Species Scoping Survey, and any phase 2 surveys) would need to be submitted with any application.

Surveys should be carried out by suitably experienced ecologists who are a member of a professional organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and / or are licensed or accredited by Natural England to survey protected species. Some ecological surveys are seasonal and this should be factored into the project timeframe.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is a standardised technique for environmental audit and involves classifying and if required mapping habitats on and adjacent to the application site. The survey is then 'extended' and any features or habitats that are likely to be of importance for notable or protected species, and or prove to be a constraint to development are investigated further and described.

If the surveys show that the site contains habitats suitable for protected species further surveys for species such as reptiles and bats may need to be carried out.

Paragraph 99 of the government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact within the Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

“It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted.”

Biodiversity Net Gain:

Biodiversity Net Gain is mandatory for major and minor planning applications unless the development meets the exception criteria set out in paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. and The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024. In the event planning permission is granted, and the exceptions do not apply, paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 grants permission subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” and that development may not begin unless:

- a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

Environmental Health:

The Councils Environmental Health Officer has reviewed this pre-application and comments that the Council holds no specific information to indicate that the application site or the area surrounding the site may be contaminated. Nevertheless, on a precautionary basis the possibility of contamination should be considered for a potentially sensitive residential development.

If contamination is found at any time during site clearance, groundwork and construction A full contamination risk assessment and if found to be necessary, a ‘remediation method statement’ would be required following the grant of any planning permission in this instance.

Boundary Treatments:

R5 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires a clear distinction between the public and private areas. R12 of the Borough Design Guide SPD states that boundary treatments contribute positively to the character of the area.

Fencing should be included on the architectural plans. It should be Sympathetic to the rural setting of the lane.

Summary

The application site is in a rural setting along Drift Lane, contrasting with the more formal residential character of Lower Sandhurst Road. The proposed replacement dwelling represents an approximate 692.9% increase in volume compared to the original 240m³ dwelling, far exceeding the Borough Design Guide's 50% guideline. This in combination with the quiet rural setting of the lane would have a harmful impact on the landscape, and character & appearance of the locality. The proposed dwelling's height, 20-meter frontage, and manor house design result in excessive massing and visual prominence, conflicting with the area's countryside character. The scheme is therefore considered to conflict with national and local policy and therefore would not be acceptable.

A replacement dwelling could be acceptable if it reduces scale and bulk, breaks up the massing, and is set further back from Drift Lane. The proposed carport, with its modest size and open design, is acceptable and preserves the area's open character.

Submitting a Planning Application

Once you are ready to apply, please submit an application through the [Planning Portal](#). Specific documents are set out in the appendices below but refer to the Local Validation List available on the council's [how to apply for planning permission page](#) to assist you with ensuring the plans and documents submitted meet our validation requirements.

Other Guidance

Your development may also require Building Regulation approval to ensure it is built to national safety, design, and environmental standards. The Council's Local Authority Building Control (LABC) service offers a full range of plan approval, inspection, and associated services through an ISO9001 nationally accredited team of qualified building surveyors. These surveyors work closely with the Council's planning department to ensure the appropriate construction of your build. To find out more visit the Council's [Building Control website](#) or call 0300 790 0580 to speak to a member of the team.

If your project requires a dropped kerb on the road in front of your house then you may require consent from the highway authority; further information is available on the Council's [dropped kerbs page](#). Finally, if your project includes 100 sqm or more of new floor area then it is liable for the community infrastructure levy. Refer to the Council's [CIL page](#) for more information.

This concludes the pre-application process and I trust that this informal advice is of use to you. Please be aware that it is given without prejudice to any future decision that the Council may take. If you would like further advice, then a new pre-application submission and associated fee will be required.

Yours sincerely,

Tariq Bailey-Biggs, BSc (Hons), MSc.
Planning Officer
Development Management
Wokingham Borough Council
ME 28.01.2025

Appendix One – Relevant Policies and Guidance

The relevant policies associated with this proposal are as follows:

National Policy Core Strategy 2010 (CS)	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014 (MDD Local Plan)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

Appendix Two – Site History

The relevant planning applications associated with this site are as follows:

Application Number	Description	Decision & Date
080621	Proposed erection of single storey rear extension, plus demolition of existing single storey extension.	Approved, 07/03/2008
996/71	Single storey extensions.	Approved, 28/09/1967
R/186/67	Alterations and additions to existing private house to provide extra Bedrooms & bathrooms.	Approved, 30/09/1971

Appendix Three – Validation Requirements

The documents required for validating any future planning application are as follows:

- – required document
- – possibly required document: these may either help determine an application or resolve the need to use a pre-commencement condition

Please note supporting information with regards to what details are required for each document are contained on the following page on the Council's website: [how to apply for planning permission page](#).

Standard Documents

- Application form ●
- Location Plan (1:1250) and Block Plan (1:500) ●
- All plans to metric scale and to show existing and proposed ●
 - Floor Plans
 - Elevation Plans
 - Roof Plans
 - Site Layout Plan
- Correct fee (where one is necessary) ●
- CIL Form 0 ●

Additional Documents

- Biodiversity survey and report ●
- Design and Access Statement ●
- Flood Risk Assessment ○
- Tree Survey / Arboricultural Statement ●
- Water Course / Drainage Statement ○
- Employment Skills Plan ○
- Affordable Housing Statement ○
- Land Contamination ○

Appendix Four – Legal Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy

If your development requires a legal agreement pursuant to section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act, this will need to be signed and completed prior to determination of any application. Preparing and completing an agreement will be carried out by the Council's legal department and is subject to a separate charge and Land Registry fee.

As the proposal is for residential development, it **would** be liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The CIL charge rate is calculated on the net additional floor space at £365 per square metre. Some exemptions may apply and it is advised to look at the Council's [community infrastructure levy advice page](#). A CIL form is required to make your application valid.