

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242945
Site Address:	Linden House, Bath Road, Hare Hatch, Wokingham, RG10 9SE
Expiry Date:	2 May 2025
Site Visit Date:	20 February 2025
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1 No two storey detached dwelling with associated parking and landscaping, following demolition of existing garage and carport.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Green Routes and Riverside Paths
Areas of Special Character
Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Countryside
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Green Belt
Ground Water Zones
Radon Affected Area
Landscape Character Assessment Area
Listed Building Buffer Zone

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits CP12 – Green Belt
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

	TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB02 – Development adjoining the Green Belt TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets TB26 – Buildings of Traditional Local Character and Areas of Special Character
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP does not apply to this scale of application.
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Wargrave Parish Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
07981	Garage	Approved 18/05/1971
980180	Proposed Two Storey Rear Extension To Dwelling And Hipped Roof To Replace Existing Side Flat Roof Extension	Approved 19/10/1998
001774	Proposed two storey rear extension to dwelling plus hipped roof to replace existing side flat roof.	Approved 21/11/2000
161117	Householder application for the proposed erection of a replacement detached garage, following demolition and removal of existing garage.	Approved 14/06/2016

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received
 WBC Drainage – Recommend approval but with conditions
 WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
 WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection. *Officer comments: This will be discussed within the main report.*
 WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection
 WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
 WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to conditions
 WBC Ecology – No comment received

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Wargrave Parish Council object to the application on the basis of this being over-development within the Green Belt.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is located on the northern side of Bath Road (refer to Fig. 1 below). The majority of the site comprises land which, until recently, was woodland adjacent to Bath Road but now appears to be being used for additional garden land ancillary to Linden House, a traditional two-storey dwelling. The use of this land is presently unauthorised not having been granted planning permission nor forming part of the established residential curtilage of Linden House.

This is corroborated by the current Land Registry Maps (see extract at Fig 2. below) which indicates separate ownership parcels for the application site, Linden House and intervening land. A small part of the site, in the south-eastern corner, includes a residential garage associated with Linden House, as highlighted in yellow in Fig. 2 below.



Fig. 1: Extract of Location Plan

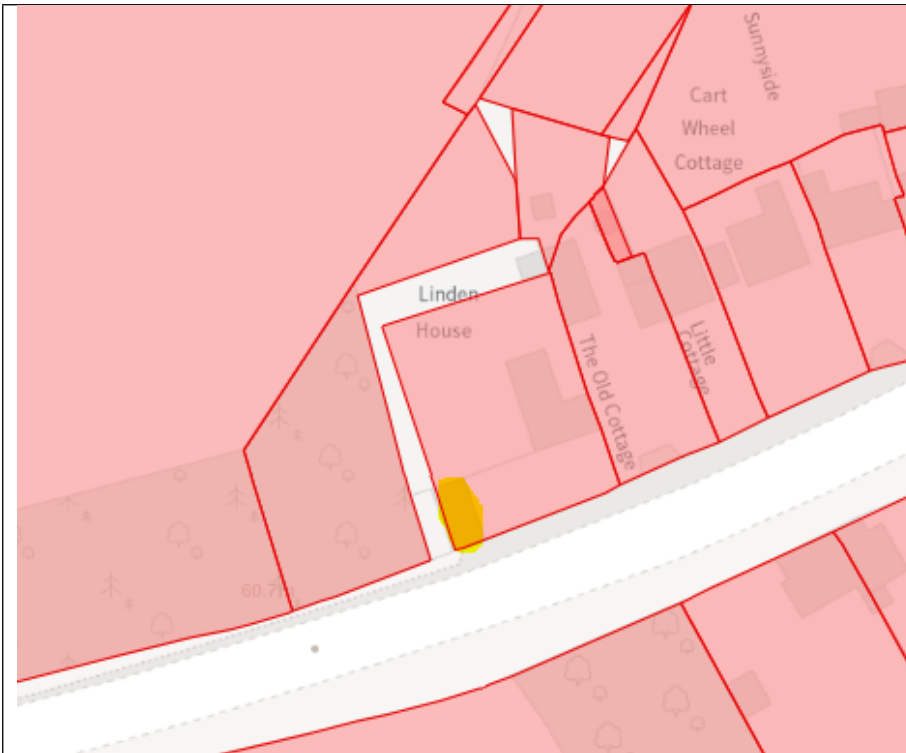


Fig. 2: Extract of Land Registry Plan



Fig. 3: Google Earth image (April 2020)

Linden House sits at the western end of a line of residential dwellings which collectively comprise of the village of 'Kiln Green'. The application site is located outside of settlement limits and is within the countryside, additionally, the site is located within land defined as Metropolitan Green Belt. While the site is located adjacent to Bath Road, it still forms part of the wider rural character of Kiln Green as identified within the Wokingham Landscape Character Assessment 2019 (LCA). The LCA identifies that one of the key characteristics of this area (identified in the LCA as 'G1: Hare Hatch Farmed Chalk Slopes') is the scattered rural settlement pattern. Guidance within the LCA states that the individual identity of villages should be conserved through the control of new development, and in particular it should avoid the spread of linear development along the A4.

Description of Development:

This application seeks permission for the proposed erection of a two storey, four-bedroom dwelling, following demolition of the existing triple bay covered parking structure.

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 site is located outside of settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where it does not result in an inappropriate increase in scale, form or footprint of the original building. 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.

Development within the Countryside:

As the site is outside of settlement limits, Core Strategy Policy CP11 is also relevant which states that development will not normally be permitted unless it meets the following exceptions:

- 1) It contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside based enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of the countryside; and
- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 3) It is contained within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion, or in the case of replacement buildings would bring about environmental improvement; or

- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;
- 5) 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 new dwelling would replace the existing garage block which is to be demolished. Point '2' of CP11 states that proposals outside of development limits are not normally permitted where there is excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings. The existing garage block to be demolished is 5m x 8.1m and has a maximum height of 2.3 metres. The new dwelling has dimensions of 7.5m x 15.8m (the depth not including the front and rear gable projections) and has a maximum height of 8.4 metres. This is a significant increase in scale when compared to the existing garage.

Moreover, the proposed location of the new dwelling would be inappropriately sited 6.3m away from the garage and 19.5m away from Linden House itself. This represents a significant encroachment of built form within the countryside that would be separate from the established pattern of housing development to the east. This would significantly detract from the rural character of the area and from the countryside setting, contrary to Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy.

Development within the Green Belt:

The application site is located within designated Green Belt and outside of settlement limits in the open Countryside. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts with national policies for the protection of Green Belt land covered by Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Paragraph 142 of the NPPF states that, "The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence". Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves 5 purposes:

- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land."

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF states that, "Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances." When considering any planning application, LPAs must ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Paragraph 153 further states that, "Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of its inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations."

Paragraph 155 of the NPPF then goes on to say that “The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to [paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework]; and
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.”

Prior to assessing Paragraph 155, it is important to understand what is meant by the grey belt. Annex 2 of the NPPF provides the following definition:

“For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.”

Using the definition above, it is clear that the application site should be considered as being within the grey belt. The application site does not strongly contribute to preventing the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas as the application site is located on the edge of a small settlement (point (a) of Paragraph 143). The site does not prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another as the application site is not located within a town (point (b) of Paragraph 143). And lastly, the application site is not within a historic town or within the setting of (point (c) of Paragraph 143). Therefore, the land is not contributing to purposes (a), (b) or (c) of the Green Belt as per Paragraph 143, thus the application site is within the grey belt.

With regards to Paragraph 155 of the NPPF, it is made clear that all exceptions must apply. Looking at the assessment made in the paragraph above, it is clear that the development proposal would utilise grey belt land and therefore the proposal complies with point ‘a.’ of Paragraph 155. Where the Council does not have a 5-year housing land supply, there is a clear need for the type of development proposed (a new dwelling), and therefore the proposal complies with point ‘b.’ of Paragraph 155. Whilst it is recognised that a countryside setting is not the most sustainable location for a new dwelling, being located outside of settlement does not mean that the location is unsustainable. In this instance, the site is located along the A4 which provides good access to wider transport networks, and as such the site is deemed as being in a sustainable location meaning the proposal complies with point ‘c.’ of Paragraph 155. Point ‘d.’ of Paragraph 155 relates to the ‘Golden Rules’ and affordable housing, and this is not relevant for this application.

The three relevant exceptions (a, b and c) of Paragraph 155 all apply and are met and therefore the proposal is considered as appropriate development within the Green Belt. The principle of development within the green belt is therefore accepted in this instance.

Trees and Landscape Character:

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. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic character and quality of the local area.

The site is within Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Area G1: Hare Hatch Farmed Chalk Slopes. This is a high-quality landscape characterised by a gently sloping landform that supports a mosaic of arable fields and pasture and small deciduous and mixed woodland blocks. The settlements are confined to small clustered rural hamlets, farmsteads and manors.

One of the key issues for this Landscape Character Area are as follows:

- Demand for new residential expansion, infill and densification of existing settlements, inside and outside the area, eroding the rural character and tranquillity of the area and potentially eroding the historic settlement form of the villages, hamlets, farmsteads and manors.

To maintain the landscape character of the Hare Hatch Farmed Chalk Slopes the following strategy is required: to conserve and enhance the existing character notably varied farmed landscape and field boundaries, scattered semi-natural woodlands, and parkland landscapes, the robustness of which has declined. Open views to the prominent wooded horizon provided by the adjacent character area F1: Bowsey Hill Wooded Chalk Knolls should be maintained.

In terms of development, the aim is to conserve the sparse settlement pattern and historic built form of the villages, hamlets, farmsteads and manors. One of the guidelines in the Landscape Character Assessment 2019 is to 'conserve the individual identity of the villages and hamlets, farmsteads and manors through control of new development. In particular, avoiding the spread of linear development along the A4'.

The erection of a new dwelling on the end of a row of houses along the A4 would be in direct conflict with the guidelines of the Landscape Character Area as it would be a continuation of linear development along the A4.

As stated at the start of this report, a number of trees on site were cleared, however, it is noted that none of these trees were protected (TPO) trees or veteran trees. Whilst these trees contributed towards the verdant and rural character of the area, there is still a significant amount of woodland to the west of the application site. The proposed new dwelling would be of a similar size and scale to the existing property Linden House. A condition to secure a scheme of landscaping is recommended, and it is considered that subject to this being appropriate, the proposed new dwelling would not significantly impact upon the character of the area enough to warrant a reason for refusal of the application. Additionally, the scheme of landscaping can help mitigate the impact of the removal of the trees from site.

No details of external materials have been submitted with the application, so a condition to secure them is recommended. Subject to adherence to this condition, the proposal would make a positive contribution to the character of the area subject to the adequate

soft landscaping detailed above. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3 and MDD policy TB06.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that development proposals should not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

Overlooking:

In considering overlooking issues, the proposed new dwelling does not feature any windows on the side elevation at first floor level. But, 'Bedroom 1', as identified on the submitted proposed first floor plan, does include opening doors and what appears to be a Juliet balcony at first floor level on the rear elevation. However, there is no balcony that can be stepped out on to, and therefore it is deemed that the outlook would be the same as any other window on the rear elevation (this being down the length of the rear garden). It is therefore not deemed that the new dwelling would introduce any overlooking concerns, and the privacy of Linden House is maintained.

Loss of Light:

The proposed new dwelling is set 3.45 metres from the boundary with the neighbouring property Linden House. There is also a flank-to-flank separation of 19.5 metres. Given the substantial separation between the new dwelling and both the neighbouring boundary/property, it is deemed that the new dwelling would have no adverse light impacts.

Overbearing:

The proposed new dwelling has a maximum height of 8.4 metres, and it is set 3.45 metres from the boundary with the neighbouring property Linden House. The substantial separation to the boundary ensures that the proposed new dwelling would not cause any significant overbearing issues to the neighbouring Linden House.

Residential Amenity Space:

The proposed dwelling would have a private rear garden approximately 19 metres in depth and 23 metres wide. The host property, Linden House, would retain a similarly sized but slightly larger rear garden. In each instance, this far exceeds the requirements of the Council's Borough Design Guide which normally seeks a minimum garden length of 11.0 metres and suitable amenity space requirements are therefore complied with.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The existing garage of dimensions 4.7m x 4.6m does not fully meet the council's requirement for car parking. Therefore, following the removal of the garage, there would be no loss of a parking space for the existing dwelling or the wider site. According to WBC Parking Standards, the development of such scale in a village location would generally require three parking spaces within the red line boundary, with each parking

space having minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. The four proposed driveway parking spaces meet the Council's requirement in this instance.

The Council's Highways Team was consulted on this application, and they are satisfied with the width of the access, the driveway clearance, the EV charging point and the cycle storage. However, as the widening of the access is proposed, the applicant should note that separate consent will be required from the Traffic Management team for the proposed width of the new dropped crossing. Additionally, whilst the position of the proposed EV charging point is acceptable, it will be subject to further authorisation via Building Control. Standard conditions for parking and turning, and surfacing of the access have been recommended.

Flooding and Drainage:

The Council's Flood Risk and Drainage Officer has identified that the site is located within Flood Zone 1 and therefore they have no objection to the principle of the proposed development. However, they require details of the proposed drainage for the development, via a drainage strategy report, and therefore a condition is recommended to secure this.

Ecology and Newts:

NatureSpace have notified the Council that the applicant for this application has joined the district licencing scheme, and the applicant has provided a NatureSpace certificate confirming this. A planning condition and informatives are recommended by the Certificate and it is recommended that these are attached to this decision.

Housing Land Supply:

The Council is currently only able to demonstrate that it has 2.5 years' worth of deliverable sites, rather than a five-year supply as required by the NPPF. Subsequently, the Local Development Plan is considered out of date in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF. Paragraph 11 states that where policies which are most important for determining an application are out of date, permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in the Framework that protect area or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impact 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.

Firstly, in considering i), it must be recognised that the proposed development is outside of settlement limits, being located within designated countryside, and additionally, the site is located within the Green Belt. When considering the proposal under ii), it must be determined as to whether there are any adverse impacts generated

by the development that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. This is referred to as the 'tilted balance', as harms and benefits are not weighed equally, but tilted against any adverse impact. The tilted balance required by paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is laid out below.

Tilted Balance:

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out that achieving sustainable development means that development should satisfy three overarching objectives in relation to economic, social and environmental benefits.

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that where a local authority is 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. It continues to advise that unless there are specific policies in the NPPF protecting the land subject to the application, that permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF (tilted balance).

In considering the weight to be attached to the various benefits and adverse impacts of a proposed development under the NPPF and the development plan, any planning application must be considered in context.

Residential development in this location is considered unacceptable in principle with the local plan as the site is located outside settlement limits within land designated as Countryside. However, whilst the site is located within the Green Belt, it falls within the definition of grey belt land, and as justified within the 'Development within the Green Belt' section of this report, the proposal would not be viewed as inappropriate development within the Green Belt according to national policy. Additionally, whilst the proposal conflicts with one of the guidelines in the Landscape Character Assessment 2019, the addition of one new dwelling would not significantly contribute to linear development along the A4. Therefore, only limited weight can be attributed to the harm on the countryside setting and impact upon the landscape character when considering the planning balance.

Returning to the three objectives of sustainable development, economically the proposed development would enable job creation during the construction period, although this would be very limited given the scale of the development. The inhabitant of the new dwelling would also contribute to the economy through consumer spending. However, only one dwelling is proposed, and this holds limited weight in the planning balance. Furthermore, job creation and consumer spend are residual consequences of any housing development.

Regarding the social role, the provision of one new dwelling would make a negligible contribution to the housing supply. Whilst the site is located outside of settlement, it is deemed to be in a sustainable location by virtue of its good connections to key highways networks. Therefore, the provision of one new dwelling holds limited weight in the balance.

Regarding the environmental role, a number of trees have already been felled to accommodate the proposed new dwelling. A condition is recommended to secure further landscaping through the submission of a scheme of landscaping. Whilst it is unlikely that further planting would adequately mitigate the impact caused by the removal of the trees, it should be noted that the trees were removed outside of the application process and further planting as part of the proposal would improve the conditions on site. However, where the site is deemed as being sustainable, there would still be an over reliance on private motor vehicles to access basic amenities and services. Overall, the environmental performance of the development is neutral.

When engaging the tilted balance, the limited identified harm on the countryside is considered to be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the benefits of this scheme when assessed against the framework as a whole.

Conclusion:

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed new dwelling is acceptable subject to conditions and is recommended for approval.

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.

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.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approved
Date:	12 August 2025
Earliest date for decision:	31 January 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>BJC</i>
Date:	12.08.25