66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NS

Proposed change of use from a physiotherapy clinic to a 6-bedroom dwelling.

Planning Statement

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1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

This planning statement has been prepared in support of a full application for change of use of the main building at the application site from physiotherapy clinic to a residential dwelling at 66 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NS.

The following statement covers the subject and information required for submission as set National Planning Policy Framework (2024), MDD Local Plan, Borough Design Guide and Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy. This document will outline the application site history and the design strategy for the proposed development. It should be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings.

1.2. Site Location



Aerial photograph

1.3.Site Description

The host application site is occupied by a 2.5 storey semi-detached building with two a detached residential building and detached garage/storage. The application property contains a Physiotherapy

and Wellbeing Clinic (use class E) and rear part of the site comprises of hardstanding, stores and a large garage which fills the rear corner of the property.

The side comprises generous driveway with parking spaces and access in the corner of the plot. The boundaries of the site contain a mesh fence and bushes and residential garden include circa 2.0m close-boarded fence and soft landscaping around it. The host property is presented on the below photographs.




THE WARR PHYSIO
& WELL-BEING CLINIC
Ware Clinic
Ware Clinic









1.4. Surrounding Area Description

The application site is located on the eastern side of Finchampstead Road adjacently to private road leading to residential properties at the back. Adjoining to the application site as a semi-detached building is no. 68 Finchampstead Road. It is a Grade II Listed Building (erected in the late 18th century with 20th century extensions and alterations). Further to the south adjacent to no. 68 there is a petrol station.

A dense band of trees borders the site to the north along the private lane running parallel with the site boundary, which provides access to a residential development (Eyres Court and other). On the opposite side of the road there is a retail cluster of single storey commercial properties with a significant parking area in its central part.

The host dwelling is surrounded by mixed scale of buildings, which are relatively various in terms of their scale, appearance, architectural details or size of the plots. The existing group of residential buildings located on this side of Finchampstead Road include commercial properties and dwellings of a double storey height, usually hipped, crown and gable roof forms and relatively mixed external materials pattern.

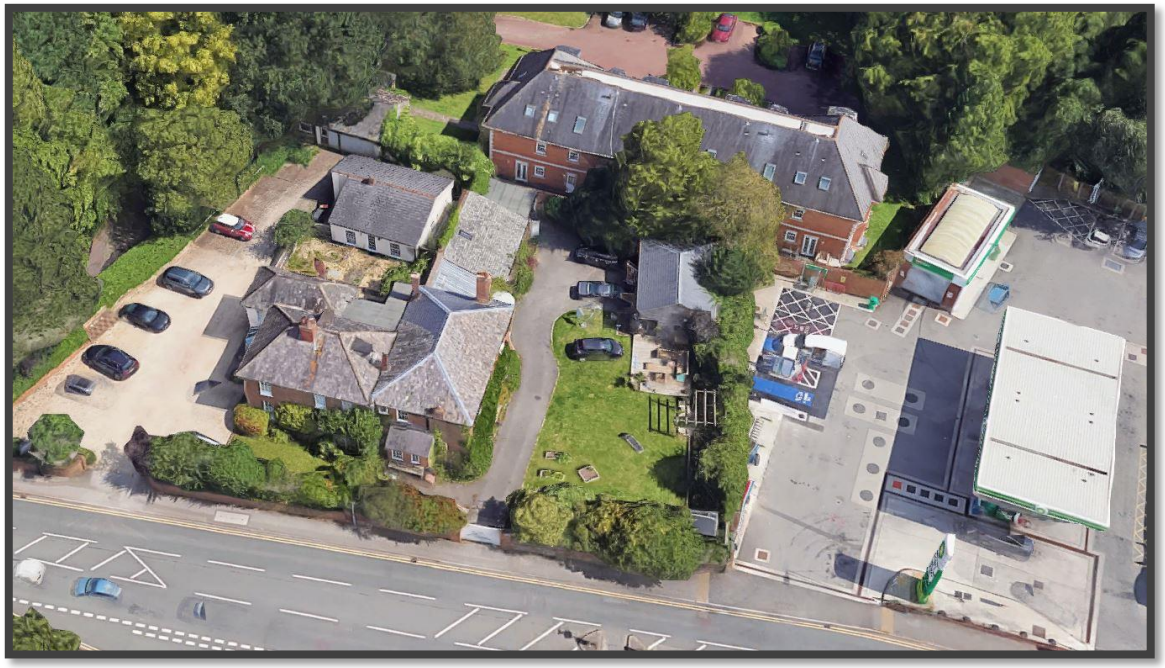
The surrounding streetscene includes moderate relatively mature and dense landscaping, with hedges, trees and overgrown front boundaries of prevailing development at Finchampstead Road.

The majority of the streetscene is characterised by a various type of development, therefore, there is a significant level of diversity in terms of following aspects (also presented in the below photographs included in this paragraph):

- various size of plots;
- irregular building line of the properties;
- boundary treatments or layout of the front gardens;
- diversity of roof forms;
- fenestration and architectural details;
- roof forms of main buildings (angle, design, ridge/eaves height);
- scale/footprint/volume;
- distance from the highway.







2. Planning Policy

2.1. NPPF

Sustainable Development

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF emphasises that "*The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development*" and expands that in the paragraph 8, that it "*has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive:*

- *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;*
- *an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy".*

Furthermore, a decision-making in favour of sustainable development is strengthened and its significant weight is confirmed in paragraph 39, which states that *"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible".*

Housing Quality and Design

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that the *"high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities".*

Furthermore, NPPF paragraph 133 emphasizes an important role of the design codes and guides, which should "*local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design"* and that *"their level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety where this would be justified*".

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF comprises a list, in terms of what decisions should ensure with regards to proposed developments, inter alia:

- *"function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- *are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- *establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users46; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience".*

Heritage

The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires decision takers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building and its setting when exercising planning functions. The decision maker must give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the significance of the listed building, and there is a strong presumption against the grant of permission for development that would harm its heritage significance.

The NPPF Paragraph 207 states that *"In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation."*

Also paragraph 208 of the NPPF highlights that *"Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal."*

2.2. Core Strategy and MDD Local Plan

Residential development location

The application property is located within the settlement limits of Wokingham Borough in Wokingham, therefore it stands in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CP9 'Scale and location of development proposals', which states that "*Development proposals within development limits will be acceptable in: 1) The major development locations of Earley, Green Park, Shinfield (North of M4), Twyford, Winnersh, Wokingham and Woodley*".

The proposed development would also comply with the MDD Local Plan CC02 Policy 'Development Limits'. Also, by virtue of its typically residential character, Core Strategy includes a clear assumption in favour of such redevelopment.

Housing Mix

Core Strategy Policy CP5 – 'Housing mix, density and affordability' says that "*Planning permission will be granted for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes*." It then continues "*The provision of a variety of types and sizes of accommodation is desirable across the borough, so that the housing needs of as many households as possible can be met*" and "*Depending upon the character and needs of the area, it may not be necessary to include a mix of dwellings in every residential scheme, especially smaller ones*". It is therefore considered that the proposed dwelling, of a preserved typical design for the surrounding area, is a suitable and well-fitted proposal, which would stand in accordance with the above-mentioned housing mix policy.

Accessibility

Wokingham BC Adopted Core Strategy include two policies that include the accessibility aspect. Policy CP1 relate to sustainable development and states that development will be granted to schemes that "*Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes*" and also "*Demonstrate how they support opportunities for reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car".*

Policy CP6 relates directly to diversification of travel modes and emphasises the importance of sustainable transport, stating that planning permission will be granted for development that "*Provide for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice*" and which is *"located where there are or will be at the time of development choices in the mode of transport available and which minimise the distance people need to travel".*

Design Quality

The overall design quality aspect is included in Core Strategy, MDD Local Plan and the Borough Design Guide. Core Strategy Policy CP1 'Sustainable development' emphasises importance of maintaining or enhancing the high quality of environment and it states that proposals should "*Provide attractive, functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable schemes*". Another relevant Core Strategy Policy is CP3, which highlights 'General Principles of Development' contains features, which are necessary in order to grant a planning permission, inter alia*:*

a) *Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
b) *Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
c) *Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses;*
d) *Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*
e) *Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
f) *Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping.*

In addition, CP3 continues and encourages in paragraph 4.19 to ensure trough the Borough Design Guide, that proposed developments is of *"a high standard of design that can integrate with the character of the area is also important to achieving sustainable development in the borough".*

Borough Design Guide SPD of Wokingham Borough Council includes numerous references to design principles in chapter 4 – 'Residential', which included more detailed guidance in terms of desirable quality of the submitted schemes. Paragraph 4.2 of the BDG SPD includes all relevant aspects, which are taken into account when assessing the proposals in terms of their character and context. It states that "*Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or*

underlying character and quality of the local area". It also contains a list of the different elements and the degree of consistency or variety, which create the character of a place, inter alia:

- "*the network and hierarchy of movement, creating streets;*
- *the layout of development blocks and plots;*
- *the arrangement and form of buildings, including the building line and gaps between buildings;*
- *open spaces;*
- *the architectural design of buildings;*
- *the hard and soft landscape design of plots, boundaries, streets and spaces, parking areas;*
- *the details, decorative elements, materials and planting"*.

Heritage

MDD Policy TB24 (Designated Heritage Assets (Listed Buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas) emphasises that the LPA will conserve and seek the enhancement of designated heritage assets in the Borough and their settings by:

a) Requiring works to or affecting heritage assets or their setting to demonstrate that the proposals would at least conserve and, where possible enhance, the important character and special architectural or historic interest of the building, Conservation Area, monument or park and garden including its setting and views.

b) Supporting development proposals or other initiatives that will conserve and, where possible, enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of designated heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that would improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition or at risk.

3. Appraisal

3.1. General concept

The overall aim of the proposal is to make efficient use of the existing site and its assets, by proposing a semi-detached, dwellinghouse with high quality contemporary design, amenity spaces, internally and externally, through the above proposal. The application site is characterized with a location within settlement boundaries of Wokingham, which is consistent in terms of the size, design due to retention of its main features and external appearance. The proposed converted dwelling would be therefore considered acceptable, subject to appropriate level of impact upon the surrounding area.

3.2. Impact on the Character of the Area

Design

The proposed development would result in a creation of a new semi-detached residential unit, with a more modern interiors, but with an uncontentious visual impact upon the existing streetscene as the external elevations would remain unchanged. The 2.5 storey scale would also be retained and seamlessly fit in next to double and single storey adjacent properties. Furthermore, one of the aims of the proposed scheme is to retain an in keeping appearance and with cohesive type and colour of used materials in comparison with the host dwelling, consistent with the attached semi-detached dwelling and with other properties along this part of the road, what would lead to a more seamless impact of this development in relation to surrounding area.

The proposed development would retain a sympathetic design, compliant roof forms with appropriate fenestration elements. The proposal would preserve the fenestration elements installed within elevations of the building, in order to provide an appropriate and high quality design and to retain a typical suburban appearance and character of the residential properties in the surrounding area. In wider perspective the proposal, due to a mixed design pattern around the host property, would be considered to visually fit within the surrounding area, resulting in an improvement within the streetscene.

Site Layout

The proposal would transform the property to become a reasonably scaled 2.5 storey detached property, which would retain the existing outdoor amenity space at the back and retain the distances, in compliance with the established pattern in this neighbourhood. Furthermore, the current proposal would present a consistent approach in terms of the spacious site layout with adequate garden and hardstanding space, separations and of the appropriate visual mass and built form with mitigating soft landscaping along the front and side boundaries, in relation to the neighbouring properties.

Streetscene

Given the relatively mixed appearance along the streetscene and the fact that the proposed scheme was intended to preserve the external front and side elevation visible in the streetscene, the proposal would appear appropriate and to provide a high quality look in relation to the buildings in the closest proximity. The proposal has a prominent location and it would be mostly exposed and clearly visible from the Finchampstead Road perspective, however the proposed scheme would retain its character and provide enhancement the overall visual arrangement and neatness of the host property and the along this area. The proposed scheme would also propose adequate front and rear garden of sufficient

size with soft landscaping to the front and along the side boundaries, which as whole would mitigate the visual arrangement of the built form.

3.3. Impact on neighbours

Loss of Light and Overbearing

Due to the proposed development situation, retention of the overall scale and form of the converted building and appropriate scale in relation to the neighbouring properties, no adverse changes to current overbearing and overshadowing arrangement would be considered to arise. The enclosure impact would not occur as the positioning of the proposed development would be unchanged. Effectively, the proposed development would be designed in compliance with the BRE Daylight and Sunlight Guidance, with no unacceptable breach of the 25° and 45° sightlines.

Loss of Privacy and Overlooking

Due to the proposal's location, its scale, positioning of the windows and sufficient separation distances from the neighbouring properties, no adverse changes to current overlooking arrangement would be considered to occur. The proposed upper-level windows would be facing the driveway, private road or gardens of the host dwelling, therefore resulting in no unacceptable loss of privacy.

There are ground floor windows of Stable Cottage facing the application building subject to change of use, however these are obscure glazed, therefore no overlooking would occur.

3.4. Transport, parking and waste

The proposed site is located within walking distance from the retail shopping parades and commercial properties in Wokingham. Given close proximity from adjacent bus stops on Finchampstead Road (about 2 min walk), the application property benefits from an extensive bus service including routes. The application site therefore contains frequent links to Reading Centre, Bracknell, Wokingham and Winnersh.

The application property provides easy access links with the A329 and M4 for towards the east to London and Wales to the west. The broad road networks around the site also provide huge choice and possibilities of cycle routes and walking paths in and around the area. The closest local amenities are located along Finchampstead Road and Wokingham town centre, which include wider range of services such as grocery shops, cafes, pubs, educational facilities, surgery or nursery. Range of services located within walking distance of circa 5min from the application site, makes it highly appropriate and

sustainable for a residential development. It also lies within close proximity from main bike paths, which links this part of Wokingham town centre and surrounding towns and villages.

The proposed converted dwelling would benefit from an allocated min. 6no. parking spaces (side driveway) and additional parking space in the garage. There is also a refuse area and lockable bike storage provided, adequate for the size of the proposed development.

3.5. Sustainability

It is considered that the application site is within an existing settlement, conveniently located in a residential area of Wokingham with favourable access to community facilities, employment areas, open space and necessary services. Furthermore, it is considered that sustainability of the proposed residential buildings, in compliance with the relevant Local Plan Policies and NPPF, would be also significantly improved due to numerous aspects:

- Reducing air permeability to the minimum consistent with health requirements;
- Design that will reduce thermal bridging;
- Highest possible level of insulation of hot water pipes and hot water storage vessels, walls, roof and floors;
- Double glazing;
- Fitting the house minimum B rated appliances (washing machine, dishwasher etc.);
- Permeable paving where applicable;
- Recycling of waste and site waste management plan, to ensure materials arising in the construction process are recycled;
- Energy efficient internal and external lighting.

3.6. Private Outdoor Amenity Space

It is acknowledged that currently the proposal comprises a sufficient outdoor amenity space within its residential curtilage for typical outdoor activities and garden paraphernalia. The proposed dwelling would contain a circa 117.0m² private rear amenity space with an external side access door, which would stand in compliance with the Borough Design Guide.

3.7. Internal Amenity Space

The proposed dwelling would include an internal space of circa 240.0m² on three levels, sufficient and appropriate for a 6-bedroom dwelling. The layout provides appropriate level of privacy and living quality, due to appropriate internal ground and first floor arrangement. It is confirmed, that the

proposed dwelling would comply with the 'Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard' adopted by Department for Communities and Local Government in March 2015 (minimum 138.0m² for a three storey, 6-bedroom dwellings). The proposal would be considered to successfully meet requirements in terms of minimum height, storage area, bedrooms internal area, accordingly with the Technical housing standards.

3.8. Heritage

The proposed development would be designed to minimize the impact upon the adjacent listed building, as it is proposed to preserve the external appearance of the building, which would successfully mitigate the impact of the proposed development upon the significance of the heritage asset and listed building no 68 Finchampstead Road in Wokingham.

3.9. Landscaping and Tree Impact

The proposed development would be designed to minimize the impact upon the existing landscaping and it is proposed to preserve soft landscaping to the front and side of the building, along the sidewalks and along the boundaries of the application site, which would successfully mitigate the impact of the proposed development upon the character of the surrounding area.

The existing TPOs, which are located to the north of the site would be unharmed.

3.10. Biodiversity

The proposed development would be designed to provide adequate biodiversity on site, by retaining the planting around the site in order to preserve existing level of variety of plants species in the area, which would introduce an adequate mitigation of the proposed scheme with regards to this aspect.

4. Conclusion

By virtue of the scale and nature of the proposed development, it is considered that it would comply with the relevant parts of NPPF, Wokingham Core Strategy, MDD Local Plan, therefore we kindly appeal, to approve the submitted application.

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1 Right Plan