

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	240665
Site Address:	178 Bearwood Road, Barkham, Wokingham, RG41 4SH
Expiry Date:	7 June 2024
Site Visit Date:	16 April 2024
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. four bedroom detached dwelling with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and garage.	

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
061138	Application for a certificate of existing lawful use for the use of an existing annexe as a separate dwelling.	Approved: July 2006

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to a condition
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to a condition
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Economic Prosperity & Place (Community Infrastructure) – No comments
WBC Landscape and Trees – Objection
WBC Ecology – No comments
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objection subject to conditions
WBC CIL – CIL liable development
WBC Education (School Place Planning) – No comments
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments
WBC Ecology Newts – No objection subject to a condition

External

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

REPRESENTATIONS

Barkham Parish Council	Request that further consideration is given to the potential heritage of the existing dwelling. If any heritage issues are not deemed relevant, the PC have no objection subject to compliance with the Barkham Village Design Statement.
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. This application seeks to replace the larger of these semi-detached properties, for the erection of a detached dwelling. The remaining property being the Lawful Annex Dwelling, which was granted a certificate of lawful use as an independent dwellinghouse in 2006.

The replacement dwelling is a contemporary design and is of a greater size than the existing property. The position of the replacement dwelling would also differ to the existing, being moved further into the north of the site.

Despite the above, an amended site plan has been received showing the re-positioning of the property in closer proximity to the current dwelling's location than originally submitted.

Red Line Plan:

The red line (Site Location Plan) ref: 640 00 Rev A, includes a second dwelling at the site (approved under the Certificate 061138) and over 50% of the land within the red line is a woodland, protected by Tree Protection Orders (20/1973) and (87/1978). It has been requested that the red line is amended to include the residential property and its residential curtilage/garden only, with all other land outlined in blue. The Agent has refused to amend the drawing. The Development Management Procedure Order (England) Order 2015 requires the red line plan to include "land to which the application relates". The plan does this and therefore is not technically invalid, but it also includes land which the application does not relate to. The red line submitted is not part of the residential development.

In addition to this, driveway works and gates/boundary treatments are shown on the site plan which are outside the residential curtilage of the dwelling and are not included in the description of development. No further details have been provided as to the nature of these gates/boundary treatments.

Further details on both the curtilage of the replacement dwelling and the boundary treatments will be required via condition.

Principle of Development:

Section 38(6) of The Planning and compulsory purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (CS), the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD) and Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (Joint Plan) (2023) which are read alongside the NPPF.

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 within the designated countryside as per CC02 and would not result in a residential net gain that contributes to housing delivery numbers. Therefore, utilising the Council's adopted development plan without engaging the tilted balance, Core Strategy Policy CP11 is the relevant policy to assess whether the proposal is acceptable in principle by virtue of the site's countryside location.

Core Strategy:

Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy does not ordinarily permit development outside of development limits, however, there are exceptions. Regarding replacement dwellings, the policy states that the proposal must: 'Bring about environmental improvements' or 'Not result in inappropriate increase in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.'

The proposed dwelling would mark a significant increase in the mass of built form on the site. The volume calculations submitted by the agent indicate that the proposed property would have a volume of approximately 1200m³, which would be a 76% increase from the existing dwelling (approximately 682m³). Notwithstanding the proposed increase in scale, it is not considered that the proposal would undermine the overall purpose of Policy CP11 in preventing excessive encroachment into the countryside.

The dwelling does not wholly comply with the guidance within the WBC Design Guide in terms of size increase, which suggests that a 50% increase in volume for a 1 storey dwelling is acceptable. However, this existing dwelling is 2 storeys, and therefore does not result in an inappropriate increase in scale, form or footprint from the original building.

As stated, replacement dwellings in the countryside must demonstrate that they bring about environmental improvements. The proposed plans indicate both renewable energy technologies in the form of Solar Panels and an Air Source Heat Pump, as well as other sustainability features. Although the initial process of demolishing a property for the erection of a larger one is in itself an unsustainable practice, it is considered that the proposal has appropriately demonstrated that it would support long term environmental improvements.

With all the above considered, it is concluded that the proposed replacement dwelling is acceptable in principle and compliant with CP11 of the Core Strategy.

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.

The site sits in the L1: Bearwood Wooded Sand and Gravel Hills Landscape Character Area. 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.

The woodlands on the site are protected by long-established TPOs.

The site sits wholly within the Barkham and Bearwood Valued Landscape identified in the Council's Valued Landscape Topic Paper (2020). Paragraph 180 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)'

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'.*

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 of 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".*

The position of the proposed dwelling as originally submitted was considered to have an uncomfortable relationship with the site, as most properties along Bearwood Road are located centrally within their plots. The revised position means that it is a lesser distance away from the existing dwelling and built form on the site, thus reducing the effect of unnecessary encroachment into the countryside. The amended position of the property is now considered to adequately maintain the woodland character and appearance of Bearwood Road. In addition, moving the dwelling further away from the TPO woodland will reduce pressure on its trees and samplings, while also preserving a greater degree of distinction between the residential setting and the natural woodland.

While the modern design of the proposal marks a significant departure from the existing dwelling, this would not cause harm due to the varied nature of built form in the area. Furthermore, it is considered that the existing dwelling has no particular architectural merit, and its external appearance has a neutral contribution to the character of the area. This proposal provides the opportunity to enhance the site's contribution to the character of the area in this respect, and given the matching proportions, external detailing, and architecturally interesting features, the quality of the design is considered to achieve this aim. The materials proposed include a mixture of brick with timber framing and large expanses of fenestration. These are considered appropriate in this countryside setting.

Further to the above, there is a sporadic pattern of development within the immediate locality with no defined boundary between buildings and the open countryside. The scale of the proposal would not be disproportionate to other dwellings on similarly sized plots within the wider area, and the proposal would consolidate built form into one, albeit larger, building, as opposed to the existing property and detached garage. The proposal is therefore not considered to undermine the coherence of the street scene, nor have an undesirable impact on the established pattern of development and visual landscape characteristics of the area.

The Trees & Landscape (T&L) Officer originally raised an objection to the scheme on the grounds it would harm the valued landscape, countryside, TPO woodland and the general landscape character of the site. Upon review of the amended position of the proposed dwelling, the Officer accepts that this relocation does constitute an improvement, however, they did not feel that all their concerns were addressed, which largely relate to the scale of the replacement dwelling and what is thought to be a lack of integration into the landscape.

For the reasons stated above, it is not considered that the remaining objection from the T&L Officer now identified the same level of harm. An emphasis was originally placed on the extent in which the replacement dwelling was pushed northwards from the existing properties position, which has now been significantly reduced. This has reduced the encroachment into the open countryside and the valued landscape. It is therefore considered that the proposal now conserves the unsettled character of the area, in line with the landscape strategy of this area.

TPO Woodland:

The proposal, as originally submitted, would have brought built form into the TPO woodland area, albeit this area is temporarily a woodland lawn. Woodland lawns do exist naturally but are sometimes created through anthropogenic activities.

Moving built form closer to the woodland TPO would have increased the pressure to extend the garden into the woodland, inhibit its ability to regenerate, and thus undermine the woodland and the amenity it brings to the locality. The amended plans have reduced any concerns in this respect, with the dwelling and associated domestic paraphernalia being moved significantly away from the edge of the woodland.

Despite the objection of the Trees & Landscape Officer remaining, some conditions have been recommended in the case of an approval. These include the requirements for:

- 1- An Environmental Colour Assessment
- 2- Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
- 3- A Lighting Assessment
- 4- A Landscape Scheme
- 5- Tree Protection
- 6- Tree Retention
- 7- Material and Finishes

Upon assessment in detail, conditions 1-3 are generally requested for significantly larger developments than the one proposed through this application and in this instance are considered disproportionate to the scale of proposal. However, conditions 4-7 are acceptable, with further details on some of these matters being required prior to the commencement of the development to ensure no undue harm.

Heritage:

The existing buildings are set back from the highway and screened by dense vegetation to its roadside front boundary, which compliments the verdant characteristic of this part of Bearwood Road that has the wooded grounds of Bearwood, a registered historic parkland, lying along the western side of the highway.

The dwelling is not shown in the 1873 edition of the OS map. It appears that it was sometime after the 1933 edition of the OS maps that the single-storey form of dwelling seen today (without the link to the annexe) emerged. This building is considered to hold no historic significance. As such, from a heritage stance, no objection would be raised to the demolition of this dwelling.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposal would introduce a number of habitable windows at first floor level, which would give rise to a wider outlook than the existing ground floor windows of the existing bungalow. Notwithstanding, the separation distances to the nearby annexe dwelling and other properties would prevent any overlooking concerns.

In similar fashion to the above, despite the increase in bulk, the replacement dwelling would be sufficiently distant from nearby properties due to the extensive plot, thus preventing any potential loss of light or overbearing impact to neighbouring plots.

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. The 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standards' defines that a two storey, four-bedroom dwelling should have a minimum gross internal area of 97 to 124 sqm. A dwelling should also accommodate for a minimum combined floor area of living, dining and kitchen space; 27sqm is advised for a 4-person dwelling according to the Borough Design Guide. The dwelling would have a living, dining and kitchen space of approximately 69.6m², therefore exceeding the minimum requirement.

The size of bedrooms 1 & 3 and the master bedroom would comply with the minimum recommended floor space for twin/double bedrooms (11.5 sqm) as set out in the nationally described internal space standards. Bedroom 2 would fall slightly short of this requirement, however, given the marginal shortfall, it is not considered that this would not be detrimental to the amenities of the occupiers. All the habitable rooms would be served by appropriately sized windows and fenestration. As such, the internal living environment for the proposed dwelling is acceptable.

The dwelling also achieves an acceptable standard of external amenity for existing and future users, although the exact boundaries of the residential garden will need to be clarified through a boundary treatment condition and hard and soft landscaping.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The proposed replacement dwelling would utilise the exiting access onto Bearwood Road which is considered acceptable.

The parking and turning layout will be revised and the space available is considered sufficient to accommodate the level of parking required by WBC parking standards.

Independent, secure, and covered cycle parking has been indicated and this is welcomed.

EVC provision is required in accordance with Building Regs Approved Doc S. There is opportunity within the proposed layout to enable this to be fulfilled.

Flooding and Drainage:

The site is within Flood Zone 1 and WBC Drainage would have no objection to the principle of the development, however, the application form proposes surface water management via SuDS. Whilst revised drainage details were submitted, these related to the dwelling's previous position. As such, it is considered appropriate for a condition requiring further updated drainage details is recommended to ensure they relate to the development as proposed.

Ecology:

The proposed development is in the red impact risk zone for great crested newts (GCN), meaning there is highly suitable habitat and a high likelihood of the species on the site. A condition would have been recommended to ensure the applicant provides a precautionary working method statement to mitigate any potential impacts to GCN and their habitats.

The buildings present on site are not considered to be bat roosts and no evidence of bat activity was found during the survey. The buildings are assessed as providing negligible roost potential for bats and no further surveys are recommend.

Conclusion:

For the reasons set out above, the proposal would not undermine the intended purpose of Policy CP11. It would have an acceptable impact on the character of the area and on the amenities of neighbouring residents and there are no other material considerations that would warrant a refusal of the application. It is therefore acceptable, and the application is recommended for conditional approval.

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:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	28 June 2024
Earliest date for decision:	12 April 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>BJC</i>
Date:	28.06.24