

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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| Application Number: | 252421 |
| Site Address: | Penguin, Wargrave Road, Remenham, Wokingham, RG9 3JD |
| Expiry Date: | 26 January 2026 |
| Site Visit Date: | 2 September 2025 |
| Proposal: Full application for engineering operations to alter the ground levels and repair to the waterfront edging (part retrospective) | |

| PLANNING POLICY | |
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| 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 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 CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB01 – Development within the Green Belt TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development |
| Other | Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document |

| PLANNING HISTORY | | |
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| Application No. | Description | Decision & Date |
| 252020 | Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed erection of a single storey side extension, a first floor hipped end roof side extension and a rear dormer, plus erection of 2no. outbuildings. | Refused: October 2025 |
| 186/56 | Reconstruction of bungalow | Approved: May 1956 |

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| 944/55 | Outline – replacement of temp dwelling with permanent bungalow | Approved: February 1956 |
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CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – No comments

WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to a condition

WBC CIL – No comments

External

Environment Agency – No objection

REPRESENTATIONS

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| Ruscombe Parish Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Believes that WBC Enforcement should inspect the groundwork already undertaken at the site before any decision. <i>(Officer note: an investigation has already been undertaken by the LPA, which resulted in the submission of this application)</i> Requests that WBC should look at in particular the new ground levels on this site compared to the original land levels of properties on either side. RPC thinks this might cause erosion & it thinks that the views of the Environment Agency should be sought by WBC. <i>(Officer note: The Environment Agency have been consulted on the application)</i> |
| Ward Member(s) | No comments received |

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| Neighbours | <p>One letter received from the residents of the adjacent site (The Moorings), who are objecting to the development on the following grounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They state that the submitted “Existing Site Plans” are factually inaccurate. • The plans incorrectly show an “existing shed/store” near the boundary; no such structure has existed during their 26 years of ownership. • The area previously contained vegetation and trees providing screening and wildlife habitat. • A shipping container has been recently placed on the land and is described as a new, unauthorised structure, not an existing outbuilding. • Ground levels are also said to be misrepresented; the apparent raised area is rubble rather than an established change in level. • The objectors argue that presenting the container as “existing” could avoid proper planning assessment. • Concerns are raised regarding impacts on residential amenity, character of the riverside setting, and biodiversity. • They request corrected plans and that the container be treated as unauthorised development requiring full planning assessment. |
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APPRAISAL

Context: The application site is situated on the River Thames, fronting Wargrave Road, and lies within the designated Green Belt. The proposal seeks part-retrospective planning permission for alterations to existing ground levels and for repair works to the established waterfront edging.

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

The NPPF recognises that certain forms of development, including engineering operations (para 154(h)), are not inappropriate within the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. In this instance, the works are localised in nature within the residential garden of an existing dwelling, largely follow the existing developed form of the site, and do not introduce built form or materially increase activity levels but form a landscaped garden. As such, the proposal would not result in a significant loss of openness, either spatially or visually, nor would it undermine the wider Green Belt purposes.

In addition, the NPPF supports development that contributes to the effective management of flood risk and the adaptation to climate change. The repair of waterfront edging and associated level adjustments have the potential to provide benefits by maintaining the integrity of the riverbank and managing land stability adjacent to the watercourse. Subject to appropriate drainage assessment, which will be discussed later in this report, such works are consistent with national policy objectives for development in areas influenced by flooding.

Taking the above into account, and subject to detailed consideration of Green Belt impacts and flood risk, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle and aligns with the relevant objectives of the NPPF.

Character of the Area: The site is strongly defined by its riverside setting, where the wetland character of the River Thames landscape is a prominent and valued feature. The works themselves, when considered in isolation, have not resulted in any significant alteration to the overall appearance of the plot, it is visually considered to appear as a landscaped garden with no over engineered urbanising effect. Several neighbouring properties also display clear evidence of established interventions along the river's edge, including engineered waterfront structures and modified ground levels, reflecting both the historic and ongoing relationship of these sites with the river. In this context, the works proposed are not considered out of character.

Conversely, the recent removal of trees from within the site has had a negative effect on its appearance. However, this matter falls outside the scope of the current application. The visual impact arising from the loss of vegetation can be partly

addressed through the implementation of an appropriate landscaping scheme, as discussed later in this report.

Neighbouring Amenity: When assessing changes in site levels, it is important to consider the potential for increased overlooking. In this case, the areas of land that have been raised are located centrally within the site boundaries, sufficiently distancing them from neighbouring properties and mitigating any risk of invasive or harmful overlooking. There are no other neighbouring amenity issues applicable to the development.

A neighbouring resident raised several objections to the development; however, their principal concern relates to what they consider to be a misrepresentation of the site on the submitted plans. Specifically, they dispute the accuracy of the structure labelled "Shed/Store" on the existing site plan and contend that it should be regarded as unauthorised development. While the Local Planning Authority is sympathetic to the neighbour's position, the structure is shown on the existing plan only and does not appear on the proposed plan. As the existing plan does not form part of the approved details condition, it would not be proportionate or necessary to require amendments in this instance, although the LPA acknowledges the importance of existing plans accurately reflecting the site's current circumstances.

Flooding and Drainage: WBC Drainage have not provided comments on the proposal. However, for sites located within Flood Zone 3, as is the case here, the Environment Agency (EA) is the relevant statutory consultee under planning legislation, and their advice carries greater weight in the assessment of flood risk matters. The EA have reviewed the applicant's submitted Flood Risk Assessment and have raised no objection to either the retrospective or the proposed works.

Notwithstanding this, the EA have highlighted important requirements that the applicant must follow, including the need to obtain the appropriate permits prior to undertaking any further works but overall have no objections to the proposed development. This guidance will be secured by way of an informative attached to the decision notice.

Landscape and Trees: As identified in the Planning Statement, the groundworks associated with the change in levels has already been undertaken. Any existing trees and other vegetation that was previously growing within the site have been removed at some point prior to the works taking place.

The trees on the site were not protected by a TPO but would have contributed to the wetland character of the River Thames landscape. This landscape is now included as a Valued Landscape in the Valued Landscapes Assessment (September 2024) where scenic quality related to waterside habitats is considered important. Therefore, any development, including ground works, within this landscape character area (Thames River Valley – A1) will need to be accompanied by an appropriate landscape scheme in accordance with Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21.

In summary, the Landscape & Trees Officer has no objection to the retrospective or proposed works on this site, however, the LPA will require a landscape condition to be included which will need to respond to the existing character of the wider countryside due to the sensitive nature of the landscape adjacent to the River Thames.

Conclusion: For all the above, the proposal is acceptable and the application is recommended for 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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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

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| Conditions agreed: | Yes |
| Recommendation: | Approve |
| Date: | 23 January 2026 |
| Earliest date for decision: | 11 November 2025 |

**Recommendation agreed by:
(Authorised Officer)**



Date: 23 January 2026

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- *Green Belt*
- *Countryside*
- *Flood Zone 3*