



Planning Statement

Land off Blakes Lane, Wargrave, RG10 9TA

August 2026



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by hgh Consulting (“hgh”) on behalf of Nicholas and Emma Herbert (“the Applicant”). Full planning permission is sought for a residential development on land off Blakes Lane, Wargrave, RG10 9TA (“the site”).
- 1.2 The proposals are described in greater detail in Section 3 of this Statement. In summary, planning permission is sought for the following (“the proposed development”):

“Demolition of existing buildings and structures and erection of one detached residential dwelling including means of access, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure.”

- 1.3 This Statement provides a planning assessment of the proposed development against all relevant planning policies and other material considerations in accordance with section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. An aerial photo of the existing site is shown in Figure 1.1 below.

Figure 1.1: Aerial of the Existing Site (approximate)



The Design Team

- 1.4 The proposed development designed by architecture made-in is of the highest quality and would deliver an exemplary design solution for the site in accordance with the National Design Guide and Chapter 12 ‘Achieving well-designed and beautiful Places’ of the NPPF. The architecture integrates with the natural palette and material profile of the local area and sits within the landscape and vegetation. The scheme provides a strong integration between the internal and external elements and minimises effects on the site’s environmental characteristics and the amenity of nearby residential receptors.
- 1.5 The schedule of submission documents is set out in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Schedule of Submission Documents

Document	Author	Reference
Administrative & Reports		
Application Forms & Notices	hgh Consulting	3 August 2026
CIL Form 1	hgh Consulting	3 August 2026
CIL Form 7	hgh Consulting	3 August 2026
Planning Statement	hgh Consulting	August 2026
Design and Access Statement	Architecture made-in	July 2026
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment	360 Eco	7 July 2026
Drainage Strategy	Canham	260327-CCL-XX-XX-RP-C-1000
BNG Exemption Statement	Riverway Group	31 July 2026
Arboricultural Method Statement	Oakfield	July 2026
Plans		
Location Plan	Architecture made-in	-
Existing Site Plan	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-EX-100
Existing Block Plan	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-EX-002
Existing Site - Demolition Plan	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-DM-101
Proposed Side Elevations	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-211
Proposed Front & Rear Elevations	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-210
Proposed Roof Plan	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-113
Proposed Ground Floor	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-110
Proposed First Floor	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-111
Proposed Second Floor	Architecture made-in	UKGWG-A-CD-112

- 1.6 The scale of development proposed by this application does not reach the minimum thresholds for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. The location and nature of the proposed development does not give rise to significant environmental impacts in its setting sufficient to warrant a requirement for an EIA; therefore, the proposed development does not constitute a scheme requiring an EIA.

- 1.7 Overall, the proposed development has the potential to deliver a sustainable, architecturally significant scheme that will enhance the local built and natural environment. It is considered that the site's development is acceptable in planning policy terms, and accordingly, planning permission should be granted without delay.

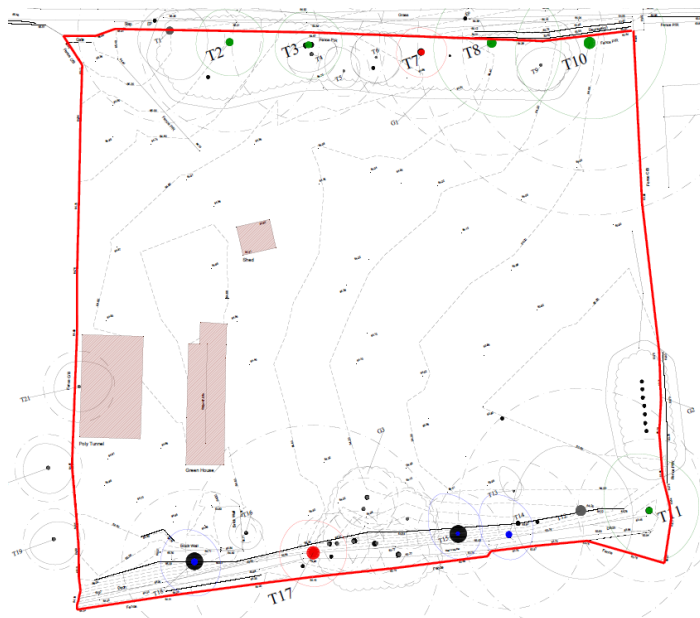
2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING CONTEXT

- 2.1 The site is located off Blakes Lane in the ward of Thames in Wokingham Borough Council's ("WBC's") administrative area.

The Site

- 2.2 The site is broadly rectangular in shape, bound by Blakes Lane to the north; existing residential properties to the east and west; and fields to the south. The site extends to 0.42ha and comprises a mixture of hardstanding, built form, grassland and scrub vegetation. The existing buildings on site are illustrated below.

Figure 2.1: Existing Buildings and Structures



- 2.3 The existing structures on site comprise a greenhouse and polytunnel extending up to c. 3/3.2m above existing ground level.

Services and Facilities

- 2.4 The site is well located to both Hare Hatch and Wargrave with a wealth of services and facilities available in the local area including:
- (a) Wargrave railway station c. 2.7km west.
 - (b) Tag Lane bus stops (providing access to 127 service) c. 350m west of the site / Hare Hatch Grange bus stops (providing access to services 127, 227 and 227A) c. 650m southeast.
 - (c) Wargrave GP surgery c. 1.5km west.
 - (d) Wargrave pharmacy c. 1.4km west.

- (e) Wargrave recreation ground including a BMX track, bowls club, scouts, cricket club, tennis courts.
- (f) Wargrave pre-school c. 1.3km west.
- (g) Robert Piggott C of E Junior School c. 1.9km west.
- (h) Horse and Groom public house c. 1km south.
- (i) Costcutter c. 1.3km west.

Planning and Environmental Considerations

2.5 A review of the site's key environmental constraints has been undertaken:

- (a) **Built heritage:** There are no designated or non-designated heritage assets on site, or adjacent to it. The nearest is the Grade II listed Oak Cottage located c. 115m east of the site.
- (b) **Conservation area:** The site is not located within, or adjacent to, a Conservation Area. The nearest is Wargrave Conservation Area located c. 1.6km west of the site.
- (c) **Landscape:** The site is not located in an area designated on account of its landscape value such as a National Landscape or National Park. Chiltern's National Landscape is located c. 4.3km northwest of the site.
- (d) **Trees:** No trees on site form part of an Ancient Woodland or Priority Habitat. There are seven Tree Preservation Orders ("TPOs") located within the site, five along the site's northern boundary with Blakes Lane and two on the southeastern site boundary.
- (e) **Ecology:** There are no statutory or non-statutory designated ecological sites within the site, or adjacent to it. The nearest is Harpsden Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest ("SSSI") located c. 4.4km northwest of the site.
- (f) **Flood risk:** The site is entirely located in flood zone 1 (lowest area of flood risk).

2.6 Clearly, there are very limited to no constraints to development. The principal challenge relates to the site's location within the Green Belt.

Planning History

2.7 The below table sets out the site's planning history based on WBC's planning portal.

Table 2.1: Planning History

Ref.	Proposal	Key Status / Dates
170445	Full planning application for the proposed erection of a single storey dwelling with basement and detached garage following demolition of 3 existing structures and clearance of site.	Refused and appeal dismissed - 10 July 2017

Ref.	Proposal	Key Status / Dates
152003	Application for a Certificate of Lawfulness for existing use for the use of the land for storage associated with a nursery business	Approved - 23 June 2015
150511	Application for a certificate of lawful existing use for the use of the land for office and storage associated with a nursery business.	Withdrawn
021752	Outline application for the proposed erection of one dwelling.	Refused and appeal dismissed - 17 July 2002

Certificate of Lawfulness (ref. 152003)

- 2.11 The site benefits from a certificate of lawfulness for storage uses associated with a nursery business. The extent of land which benefits from this lawful use is illustrated below.

Figure 2.2: Certificate of Lawfulness Plan



3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The planning application seeks full planning permission to demolish the existing buildings and structures on site and erect one detached residential dwelling arranged over three floors. The proposed description of development is as follows:

“Demolition of existing buildings and structures and erection of one detached residential dwelling including means of access, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure.”

The Design Process

- 3.2 A series of key aims were established by the architects at the outset of the design process. The aim of these were to set the bedrock upon which the design could evolve. These are as follows:
- (a) A design that celebrates space and light, and the south facing orientation.
 - (b) A house plan that interacts with the garden setting.
 - (c) Enhance the feeling of seclusion and privacy at the site.
 - (d) Maximise the south facing garden, and mature setting, with main living and kitchen spaces facing south.
 - (e) A sustainable design able to create a low carbon building.
 - (f) Green approach able to enhance the biodiversity.

As the design evolution progressed, the design team gradually fixed key elements of the building's architecture provided it satisfied the aims of the development.

Layout, Scale, Massing

- 3.3 The proposed development intends to create a residential property amounting to 734sqm arranged over three floors. The garage is single storey; the western portion of the property will extend up to two storeys; and the main part of the house extending up to 2.5/3 storeys. The maximum building height amounts to c. 9.3m above ground level.
- 3.4 The proposed development is intended to be a 6-bed dwelling.
- 3.5 The main habitable areas of the property have been reviewed against their proximity to neighbours. To the north there is a 16m offset. To the south there is a 35m offset. To the west, the nearest neighbouring property is c. 55m, with the boundary c. 15m offset. To the east is a c. 33m offset to the neighbouring property, with the boundary offset c. 31m.
- 3.6 The private garden area extends to 3,470sqm.
- An extract of the masterplan is provided below.

Figure 3.1: Masterplan Extract



Figure 3.2: Visualisation



Character and Materiality

- 3.7 A palette of materials will be selected to build upon the idea of achieving the feel and quality of the surrounding built and natural environment. The consistent use of a limited palette of high quality materials seeks to tie into the different housing typologies found within area. This, together with the inclusion of certain architectural features, aims to complement the existing character and appearance of the existing streetscape.
- 3.8 The external fabric will likely comprise brickwork; clay tiles; lead barrel dormers and timber sash windows. Suitable glazing measures will be delivered to maximise solar gain and views to the surrounding landscape.

Internal Amenity Space

- 3.9 The proposed development complies with Nationally Described Space Standards (“NDSS”).

Parking

- 3.10 The proposals make an allowance for 3no. car parking spaces within the site which will also be supported by 1no. EV Charging points. The garage provides sufficient space alongside the car parking space to accommodate 4no. bicycles in a secured and covered building.

Sustainability and Energy

- 3.11 A comprehensive suite of sustainability and energy efficiency measures are proposed, including:
- (a) An ground source heat pump.
 - (b) Photovoltaic panels.
 - (c) Mechanical ventilation with heat recovery.
 - (d) Passive cooling through façade shading, rooflights and window locations providing cross ventilation.
- 3.12 Taking these elements in the round, the proposals will deliver a highly energy efficient development which provides carbon reductions in perpetuity for the future.

Waste

- 3.13 The proposals provide sufficient storage space for refuse within the garage.

Summary

In summary, the proposed development comprises an efficient, highly sustainable development which reacts to the site’s constraints and opportunities. Management measures will be put in place during the construction phase to minimise any adverse effects. The scheme constitutes sustainable development, and as will be demonstrated in the remainder of this Report, comprises an architecturally significant design which benefits the local character and streetscape.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

- 4.2 The Statutory Development Plan for the Council comprises of the following documents:
- (a) Core Strategy, adopted 2010.
 - (b) Managing Development Delivery (“MDD”), adopted 2014.
 - (c) Central and Eastern Berkshire Joint Minerals and Waste Plan, adopted 2023.
- 4.3 The site is located within a Mineral Safeguarding Area. However, Policy M2 of the Minerals and Waste Plan only applies for sites 3ha and above. As such, the Minerals and Waste Plan is not considered further in this assessment.

Material Considerations

- 4.4 Other material planning policy and guidance which are relevant to the application include:
- (d) National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) (July 2021).
 - (e) Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”).
 - (f) Emerging Local Plan Update.
 - (g) Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document (May 2010).
 - (h) Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (June 2012).
 - (i) Wargrave Parish Design Statement (Spring 1999).
 - (j) Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system (December 2025).

Development Plan

Core Strategy

- 4.5 The Core Strategy is a high-level document setting out our strategy for managing development until 2026. This includes policies and strategies to provide new housing, schools, roads, places to work and other services. It was adopted by the council on 29 January 2010.
- 4.6 The adopted proposals map identifies the site within the Green Belt and countryside.
- 4.7 The key policies of relevance include:
- (a) CP1 - Sustainable Development.

- (b) CP2 - Inclusive Communities.
- (c) CP3 - General Principles for Development.
- (d) CP4 - Infrastructure Requirements.
- (e) CP5 - Housing Mix, Density and Affordability.
- (f) CP6 - Managing Travel Demand.
- (g) CP7 - Biodiversity.
- (h) CP9 - Scale and Location of Development Proposals.
- (i) CP11 - Proposals Outside Development Limits.
- (j) CP12 - Green Belt.
- (k) CP15 - Employment Development.
- (l) CP17 - Housing Delivery.

Managing Development Delivery

- 4.8 The Managing Development Delivery local plan builds on the strategy set out in our Core Strategy and sets out more detailed policies for managing development. It was adopted by the council on 21 February 2014.
- 4.9 The key policies of relevance include:
- (a) CC01 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development.
 - (b) CC02 - Development Limits.
 - (c) CC03 - Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping.
 - (d) CC04 - Sustainable Design and Construction.
 - (e) CC05 - Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks.
 - (f) CC06 - Noise.
 - (g) CC07 - Parking.
 - (h) CC09 - Development and Flood Risk.
 - (i) CC10 - Sustainable Drainage.
 - (j) TB01 - Development within the Green Belt.
 - (k) TB05 - Housing Mix.
 - (l) TB07 - Internal Space Standards.
 - (m) TB08 - Open Space, Sport and Recreational Facilities Standards.
 - (n) TB18 - Garden Centres and Other Small Rural Units outside Development Limits.
 - (o) TB21 - Landscape Character.

(p) TB23 - Biodiversity and Development.

Material Considerations

Emerging Local Plan Update

- 4.10 Work is underway on a new local plan - the Local Plan Update - which will put in place a new planning strategy for the period to 2040. Once adopted, it will replace the current Core Strategy and Managing Development Delivery local plans.
- 4.11 Adoption of the Local Plan Update has been delayed beyond the original target adoption date of May 2026. The Local Plan Update was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination by an independent Planning Inspector on Friday 28 February 2025. Two independent Inspectors were appointed, with Part 1 examination hearings held in November 2025. The Inspectors subsequently confirmed the examination could progress to Part 2 hearings, which commenced in March 2026.
- 4.12 Whilst not adopted, the emerging policy basis is a material consideration. The key policies of relevance include:
 - (a) SS1 - Sustainable development principles.
 - (b) SS2 - Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy.
 - (c) SS4 - Development within or adjacent to minor settlements.
 - (d) SS5 - Development in the countryside.
 - (e) SS6 - Development in the Green Belt.
 - (f) SS10 - Meeting our housing needs.
 - (g) CE1 - Design principles for efficient buildings.
 - (h) CE3 - Environmental standards for residential development.
 - (i) C1 - Active and sustainable transport and accessibility.
 - (j) C2 - Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design.
 - (k) C5 - Parking and electric vehicle charging.
 - (l) H1 - Housing mix, density and standards.
 - (m) FD1 - Development and flood risk (from all sources).
 - (n) FD2 - Sustainable drainage.
 - (o) NE1 - Biodiversity and geodiversity.
 - (p) NE2 - Biodiversity net gain.
 - (q) NE4 - Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows.
 - (r) NE5 - Landscape and design.
 - (s) DH1 - Place making and quality design.

- (t) DH2 - Safeguarding amenity.
- (u) HC5 - Environmental protection.
- (v) HC9 - Contaminated land and water.

NPPF

- 4.13 The NPPF sets out the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies. Taken together, these policies articulate the Government's vision of sustainable development, which should be interpreted and applied at the borough level to meet local aspirations.
- 4.14 At paragraph 11, the NPPF states that plans and decisions should apply a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**. For decision-taking this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

PPG

- 4.15 In March 2014, the Department for Communities and Local Government (“DCLG”) launched the web-based PPG resource. This aims to provide guidance which is useable in an up-to-date and accessible manner.
- 4.16 With regard to decision taking, the PPG is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system (December 2025)

- 4.17 On 16 December 2025, the Government published a consultation draft of a revised NPPF. The consultation closed on 10 March 2026. As the proposed reforms are a consultation draft they are not the determining policy framework for this application at the present time. This notwithstanding a new NPPF could be published prior to determination of this application. As such, the Applicant reserves the right to prepare an Addendum in due course once the new NPPF is published and forms the national policy basis for determining the application.
- 4.18 The following chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the site and the proposed development against the Development Plan and the material considerations which need to be considered as part of the decision-making process.

Summary

- 4.19 The following chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the site and the proposed development against the Development Plan and the material considerations which need to be assessed as part of the decision-making process.

5.0 PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The Applicant submitted a request for pre-application advice on 11 May 2026. WBC formally issued written advice on 17 June 2026. The Officers assessment addressed the following matters:
- (a) Principle of development: the site qualifies as grey belt land and would not constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
 - (b) Design, character, impact on landscape: the scale of development is not considered out of character with the existing townscape and landscape.
 - (c) Highways: appropriate visibility splays, parking provision, cycle storage, EV charging and refuse arrangements should be demonstrated.
 - (d) Trees: implement buffers around TPOs and veteran trees.
 - (e) Drainage: application to be supported by a drainage statement implementing SUDS and best practice.
 - (f) Amenity: indicative layouts demonstrate amenity of existing off-site residents and future on site residents is achievable with appropriate separation distances, and no overlooking, overbearing or daylight concerns anticipated.
- 5.2 Overall, the pre-application process has been a positive exercise to establish the Council's position on the principle of development and key technical matters which have informed the design process and assessed in the following policy assessment.

6.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 This section considers the extent to which the proposed development accords with the relevant development plan policies and other material considerations. The key matters for assessment are:

- (a) Principle of Development.
- (b) Built Heritage: Character and Appearance.
- (c) Archaeology.
- (d) Amenity.
- (e) Landscaping, Biodiversity and Trees.
- (f) Sustainability and Energy.
- (g) Highways and Parking.
- (h) Other Material Considerations.

Matter 1: Fallback Position

- 6.2 The site benefits from a lawful storage use associated with horticultural activities.
- 6.3 The approved plan provided below confirms the extract of the lawful use area in red (ref. 152003).

Figure 6.1: Certificate of Lawfulness Plan



- 6.4 The proposed development would remove the lawful use and the associated environmental effects on local highways, air quality and noise sensitive receptors.
- 6.5 Given the lawful use, the absence of planning controls preventing its resumption, and the Applicant's ongoing ownership and operational control of the site, the fallback position carries substantial weight. The fallback position is not merely theoretical. The lawful storage use is capable of immediate implementation.

Matter 2: Principle of Development and Green Belt

6.6 WBC is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land (the figure is acknowledged as 2.5 years by the council), and as a result the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies in line with paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.

6.7 Grey Belt is defined in the NPPF as:

“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 of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”

6.8 The introduction of grey belt extends the range of development proposal which could be considered as ‘appropriate’ with reference to GB policy. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states 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 proposed⁵⁶;

c) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework⁵⁷; and

d) Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.”

NPPF Paragraph 155(a): Assessment of Green Belt Purposes

6.9 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out the five purposes of Green Belt:

“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.”

6.10 With regards to the Grey Belt assessment, purposes a, b and d are of relevance.

Purpose A: To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 6.11 The site is located in a semi-rural location with existing residential development adjacent to the site and located off Blakes Lane. The site is bound by existing residential properties to the east and west; Blakes Lane to the north; and dense vegetation to the south. To assist in the assessment of a site's contribution towards Green Belt purposes, NPPG was updated in February 2025. With reference to purpose (a) NPPG makes clear that this purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. A key illustrative feature for purpose (a) is a lack of physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. Clearly the site is not located adjacent or near to a large built up area, and there are physical features in the form of Blakes Lane; existing residential properties; and dense tree coverage that contain the development. Consequently, the site does not contribute strongly to Purpose A of NPPF paragraph 143.

Purpose B: To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another

- 6.12 NPPG makes clear that purpose (b) relates to the merging of towns, not the type of semi-rural development proposed. For a site to make a strong contribution to this GB purpose, NPPG suggests that it should be free of existing development and forming a substantial gap between towns where development would lead to the loss of visual separation between towns. The site is in a semi-rural location and does not form a strategic gap between towns, nor does it make a visual contribution to the separation of towns in the wider area. Consequently, the site does not contribute strongly to Purpose B of NPPF paragraph 143.

Purpose D: To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

- 6.13 NPPG states that his purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. The site has no visual relationship to any historic towns. Wargrave is a village. There are no grounds to conclude that the proposal would detract from the setting or special character of any historic town. Consequently, the site does not contribute strongly to Purpose D of NPPF paragraph 143.
- 6.14 In summary, the site does not contribute strongly to Purposes A, B or D of NPPF paragraph 143.

NPPF Paragraph 155(b): Demonstrable Need

- 6.15 As set out previously, the tilted balance is engaged as the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

NPPF Paragraph 155(c): Sustainable Location

- 6.16 Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.
- 6.17 There is not a standardised approach to considering the sustainability credentials of a site and decision makers should acknowledge that accessibility levels will vary between sites located within urban centres to those in more rural or edge of settlement locations, where there might be a more inherent reliance on travel by private car.

- 6.18 There are no locally adopted policies on accessibility standards. Nonetheless, the Framework requires proposals to identify and pursue opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use, whilst recognising that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas. It seeks to ensure that developments prioritise sustainable transport modes taking account of the type of development and its location.
- 6.19 To the west of the site is the no. 127 bus service, accessible within a 4-minute walking journey. Wargrave station is the local rail hub and provides frequent Great Western services. These connections provide realistic alternatives to car travel for commuting, education and retail trips. The presence of reliable rail and bus connections aligns the site with those grey-belt appeals where Inspectors found proposals to be in sustainable locations.
- 6.20 The site lies within a short journey of local shops, primary schools and GP services commonly used by households; these facilities are comparable to those relied upon by Inspectors when finding that modest development on grey-belt sites could be sustainably located.
- 6.21 Overall, it is considered the site is in a sustainable location and can access a range of services and amenities through sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling and public transport.

NPPF Paragraph 155(d): Golden Rules

- 6.22 The proposed development does not comprise major development as defined by the NPPF. As such, the golden rules test do not apply for the proposed development.

Adopted Local Planning Policy

- 6.23 Turning to adopted local planning policy, there are several policies of relevance.
- 6.24 Policy CP11 ‘Proposals outside Development Limits (including countryside)’ states that:

“In order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where:

- 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.*
- 6) Essential community facilities cannot be accommodated within development limits or through the re-use/replacement of an existing building;*
- 7) Affordable housing on rural exception sites in line with CP9.”*

6.25 The overarching aims of policy CP11 are to prevent settlement coalescence and to maintain the quality of the environment. Due to the modest scale of the development and distances from nearby settlements, the development would not result in settlement coalescence. The site comprises lawful employment land and has been previously developed. The proposals are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and will instead result in a series of environmental improvements / enhancements compared to the existing vacant and dilapidated nature of the site.

6.26 Policy CP12 ‘Green Belt’ states that

“Planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in PPG2.

The Metropolitan Green Belt in the borough as illustrated on the key diagram comprises the land north and east of Twyford but excluding Wargrave. It also includes the land in the parish of St. Nicholas Hurst east of The Straight Mile and north of Carter’s Hill.”

6.27 Policy TB01 ‘Development within the Green Belt’ states that:

“1. The Green Belt is defined on the Policies Map.

2. Within the Green Belt, development for the purposes set out in paragraphs 89 and 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework and as set out in point 3 below will only be permitted where they maintain the openness of, and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in, the Green Belt.

3. The alteration and/or extension of a dwelling and the construction, alteration or extension of buildings ancillary to a dwelling in the Green Belt over and above the size of the original building(s) shall be limited in scale.”

6.28 The proposed development is not inappropriate development as set out in the preceding assessment, and therefore, there is not conflict with Policies CP11 and CP12 of the Core Strategy, or Policy TB01 of the MDD.

Summary

- 6.29 Overall, whilst the proposal would result in an increase in built form, the site is visually contained by the dense boundary vegetation which limits the openness aspect of the site. There is existing built form and hardstanding on site associated with its lawful storage use. The proposed development is not inappropriate development and complies with paragraph 155 of the NPPF. The principle of development is acceptable.

Matter 3: Loss of Employment

- 6.30 The site benefits from a Certificate of Lawfulness (ref. 152003) confirming the lawful use of part of the site for storage associated with a horticultural business. Historically, the wider site formed part of a horticultural operation and therefore constitutes an agricultural use rather than a designated employment site.
- 6.31 Policy CP15 of the Core Strategy seeks to safeguard strategically important employment sites and premises that make a meaningful contribution towards the Borough's employment land. The site is not allocated or protected for employment purposes within the Development Plan and does not form part of any designated employment area.
- 6.32 The site has been vacant and underutilised for a considerable period and is currently characterised by dilapidated structures, unmanaged vegetation and a generally poor environmental appearance. The lawful storage use associated with the nursery business has ceased and there is no evidence that the site continues to perform any meaningful employment function or contributes to the local economy through active employment generation. This notwithstanding, the use could resume if the Applicant should choose to.
- 6.33 The proposals would result in the loss of a lawful storage use associated with horticultural activities. However, the scale of the use is limited and the site is not considered to be of strategic employment importance. Furthermore, Wokingham Borough Council, in its pre-application advice (ref. 261143), acknowledged that whilst any future application should explain when the nursery business ceased and justify the loss of the existing use, loss of employment land had not been identified as a barrier to the site's redevelopment under previous applications and was not raised as a fundamental concern in the Council's assessment.
- 6.34 The existing lawful use also provides an important fallback position which carries weight in the planning balance. The site could lawfully revert to storage operations associated with a nursery business, generating vehicle movements, activity, noise and operational impacts. The proposed residential development would remove this lawful commercial activity permanently and replace it with a low-intensity residential use, resulting in reductions in traffic generation and associated environmental effects.
- 6.35 The proposed development would also secure wider environmental benefits through the removal of redundant buildings and hardstanding, investment in landscaping, biodiversity enhancements, sustainable drainage infrastructure and the delivery of a highly energy-efficient dwelling. These benefits would represent a clear improvement over the existing condition of the site.

- 6.36 Given the site's non-designated status, the absence of an active employment use, the limited economic role currently performed by the land and the substantial environmental enhancements arising from the development, it is considered that the loss of the lawful storage use does not give rise to any harm or planning policy non-compliance. The proposal would not prejudice the Borough's employment land objectives and is therefore acceptable having regard to Policies CP1, CP3 and CP15 of the Core Strategy.

Matter 4: Character and Appearance

- 6.37 To determine the harm to the Green Belt it is also necessary to consider the potential effects to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.
- 6.38 Policy CP3 'General Principles for Development' of the Core Strategy sets out a series of best practice design measures that should be integrated into development proposals. Policy R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.
- 6.39 Policy TB21 of the MDD states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed the requirements of the Council's Landscape Character Assessment, including the landscape quality; landscape strategy; landscape sensitivity and key issues. They should also retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape.

The Existing Character and Appearance

- 6.40 The site is not subject to any landscape designations which would denote value under the meaning intended of paragraph 187a of the NPPF. The landscape value of the site is poor with an enclosed character due to the vegetation and tree cover on the site boundaries. It has an urbanising influence due to the existing built form and hardstanding within the site.
- 6.41 Within the surroundings, the principal receptors comprise existing residential dwellings. The trees bounding the site are a positive feature and largely retained and enhanced as part of the proposals.
- 6.42 Overall, the site is poor due to the existing urbanising influences including hardstanding. It also benefits from a strong visual containment.

Assessment of the Proposed Character and Appearance

- 6.43 The proposed development comprises a single residential property with a similar scale, mass, design and materiality to the local built environment. The use of a local material palette and vernacular supports the character and appearance of the area. The proposals would equate to best use of previously developed land.
- 6.44 The architectural style has taken inspiration from the surrounding context to deliver an element of variety through the form, massing and materiality of the development. The development is set-back from Blakes Lane, settling within the contained nature of the site. Paragraph 124 of the NPPF promotes the effective and efficient use of land to provide homes. Given the site's context, it is considered this comprises a suitable density of development which delivers architecture in-keeping with the local vernacular and appearance of the wider area.

- 6.45 Whilst the development would inevitably increase the quantum of built form on the site, the design solution would be in-keeping with the local area. As such, the proposed development would not cause material harm to the character and appearance of the rural area of the site and surrounding area. The proposals comply with Policies CP3, TB21 and the Borough Design Guide.

Matter 5: Housing

Housing Mix

- 6.46 Policy CP5 ‘Housing Mix, Density and Affordability’ states that planning permission will be granted for residential development providing a mix and balance of densities, dwelling types, tenures and sizes. A policy specific to Housing Mix has been integrated into the MDD via Policy TB05, requiring an appropriate housing mix.
- 6.47 The proposed development comprises an 6-bed property. Paragraph 3.23 of the MDD confirms that 15% of new homes in the Borough should be 4-bed+.

Housing Standards

- 6.48 Policy TB07 ‘Internal Space Standards’ sets out the minimum internal space standards for the Council. This includes minimum areas for the communal spaces including living, dining and kitchen. This standards should be read alongside NDSS. The proposed development exceeds both the Council’s and NDSS internal space standards.

Matter 6: Amenity

- 6.49 The NPPF seeks to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. Decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity for future users.
- 6.50 Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should not have an adverse impact on neighbouring properties.
- 6.51 Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide outlines the separation distances required to maintain privacy and limit sense of enclosure.
- 6.52 R15 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires the retention of reasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms, with separation of 22-30m to the rear and 10-15m to the street. R23 notes that the side walls must not contain windows, especially at first floor level.
- 6.53 R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD aims to protect sunlight and daylight to existing properties, with no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties. It also requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable outlook, preferably dual aspect (with the avoidance of north facing, single aspect flats) and no material impact on levels of daylight in the habitable rooms of adjoining properties. Habitable windows of adjoining properties must not be obstructed by a 25-degree angle and two storey extensions must not obstruct a 45-degree line back towards a habitable window of the adjoining property.

- 6.54 Policy R16 of the Borough Design Guide SPD advises a minimum depth of 11m for rear gardens and a 1m setback from the site boundary to allow access thereto. It should receive direct sunlight and be capable of accommodating play, clothes drying and storage.
- 6.55 Policy CP1(8) of the Core Strategy states that development should avoid areas where pollution (including noise) may impact upon the amenity of future occupiers. Policy CC06 of the MDD states that proposals must demonstrate how they have addressed noise impacts to protect noise sensitive receptors (both existing and proposed). An example of a noise sensitive receptor is a dwelling.

Internal and External Amenity

- 6.56 With regards to internal amenity for future residents this has been addressed previously. The external garden space amounts to 3,470sqm providing ample private amenity space for future residents. The proposed garden area also meets minimum depths set out in the Borough Design Guide SPD.
- 6.57 Overall, it is considered the development would not have a detrimental effect on the amenity of adjoining neighbours as it would not appear overbearing, nor give rise to a harmful loss of light and overshadowing. Sufficient internal and external amenity space is provided for future residents.

General Environmental Amenity for Existing and Future Residents

- 6.58 The site is located within a semi-rural environment. It is not considered there would be particular environmental amenity impacts such as noise, daylight, sunlight, air quality, lighting, odour or any other factors which could impact the amenity of future or existing residents.
- 6.59 Given the scale of the development, and the implementation of standard controls such as a Construction Environmental Management Plan ("CEMP"), there is not anticipated to be any other harm associated with the development that cannot be easily mitigated through design or best practice site management.
- 6.60 Appropriate separation distances have been secured through the masterplan.
- 6.61 There are no existing residential receptors which could be subject to amenity affects which have not been mitigated either through design or best practice environmental controls.

Summary

- 6.62 Overall, there are no amenity related concerns for existing and future residents, such that further mitigation needs to be identified. There is sufficient standoff distances between existing and future properties, and best practice construction management measures will minimise nuisance effects during the construction phase. The design of the properties will address national space standards, and suitable provision for external private garden space has been designed into the illustrative layouts.

Matter 7: Other Technical Considerations

Contamination

- 6.63 Paragraph 187 of NPPF confirms that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst others, preventing new development from being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil pollution and remediating and mitigating contaminated land, where appropriate.
- 6.64 Paragraph 196 states that planning decisions should ensure that a site is suitable for its proposed use taking account of ground conditions and any risks arising from contamination. Where a site is affected by contamination, responsibility for securing a safe development rests with the developer and/or landowner (Paragraph 197).
- 6.65 Planning Practice guidance states that the local planning authority should work with applicant to find acceptable ways forward if there are concerns about land contamination (Reference ID: 33-009-201907222)
- 6.66 The site is a mixture of hardstanding and grass. A Phase 1 desk-based survey can be conditioned and undertaken prior to commencing works on site. The Phase 1 survey will confirm whether further intrusive investigations are required. It is not anticipated there would be substantial areas of contamination which would prevent the proposed development from coming forward.

Arboriculture

- 6.67 Paragraph 187 of NPPF confirms that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst others, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, including trees.
- 6.68 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.
- 6.69 There are several trees on site subject to TPOs. All of these trees will be retained and protected as part of the proposed development. There is substantial buffers to these trees secured through the site layout plan.
- 6.70 Prior to commencing works on site, it is proposed to agree with the Council an Arboricultural Method Statement which sets out mitigation measures to be secured during the construction phase including the temporary protection plan, root protection areas, temporary ground protection measures and a landscaping plan detailing the location, size and species of any replacement tree planting.
- 6.71 Overall, the proposed development will be a significant improvement to the site's landscaping and habitat provision

Ecology

- 6.72 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.
- 6.73 The habitats identified on site comprise trees, bare ground, developed land, vegetation and grassland. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment has been undertaken as part of the planning application. the potential for protected species on site is negligible or low, with the exception of birds for which a moderate potential has been identified.
- 6.74 There are no ecological sites on site or adjacent to it, and no impacts anticipated. The site was found to contain limited potential to support protected species and best practice measures will be employed to mitigate effects to ecological receptors including appropriate time of site clearance; pre-clearance checks; site management measures; and sensitive lighting strategy.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.75 Policy CC09 of the MDD Local Plan requires consideration of flood risk from historic flooding. Policy CC10 of the MDD Local Plan requires sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.
- 6.76 The site is below 1ha and therefore a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.
- 6.77 A drainage strategy has been prepared by Canham consulting which sets out a series of SUDS measures on site to capture, store and discharge surface water in accordance with best practice.
- 6.78 Measures will be employed to limit water use consumption to less than 105l per person per day.

Sustainability and Energy

- 6.79 Paragraph 157 of the NPPF requires development to meet local requirements for decentralised energy supply.
- 6.80 The proposed development would be a state-of-the-art highly energy efficient building. It will reduce the requirement for energy usage through high quality insulation, materials, glazing and a fabric first approach to minimise energy usage during its operation. This would be coupled with low carbon and renewable technologies in the form of photovoltaic panels, MVHR systems and an ground source heat pump. The proposals will go above and beyond in terms of their sustainability credentials and lead to a tangible long term benefit to tackle climate change both in terms of the effects of a changing climate, and impacts to the climate.
- 6.81 The proposals satisfy national and local planning policy in relation to sustainability and energy.

Highways, Parking and Servicing

- 6.82 Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

- 6.83 Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not lead to highway problems and should encourage sustainable forms of transport to allow for choice.
- 6.84 Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan requires adequate internal and external storage for the segregation of waste and recycling as well as provision for green waste and composting and an appropriate area for ease of collection.
- 6.85 Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards.
- 6.86 The existing site is historically served by an existing vehicle crossover from Blakes Lane at the sites north-western corner.
- 6.87 This existing access will be retained to serve the proposed residential property.
- 6.88 Along the Blakes Lane frontage, there is a generous margin between the edge of carriageway and property boundaries which forms part of the adopted public highway extent, with extract provided below.
- 6.89 Visibility splays from the site access are therefore readily accommodated within this highway boundary extent. The alignment of Blakes Lane ensures that right turning vehicles entering the site will have good forward visibility along Blakes Lane before entering the site.
- 6.90 Any self-seeded and overgrown vegetation within the margin in front of the site boundary can be removed as part of the development and maintained thereafter.
- 6.91 3no. parking spaces are proposed. Each parking space has minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m. There will be 1no. EV charging point provided within the garage.
- 6.92 There is no material impact to the highways network. The site is in a highly sustainable location with excellent access to local services and amenities, as well as public transport infrastructure including bus and rail services.
- 6.93 Overall, the proposals are compliant with national and local planning policy in relation to highways, parking and servicing.

Fire Safety

- 6.94 The proposed development will meet the necessary Building Regulations Standards for fire safety. Given the small scale nature of the development, any detailed fire prevention and protection measures will be agreed with the Council during determination.

Designing Out Crime

- 6.95 Paragraph 92 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion.
- 6.96 The proposed development has been designed with Secure by Design principles in mind and therefore seeks to minimise crime and fear of crime through appropriate design, layout, lighting, access and landscaping.

Summary

- 6.97 A high quality design solution has been created which provides a suitable design and layout to sympathetically integrate the development into its setting. On balance, taking all material considerations into account, it is considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance area. There are no amenity related effects that would prevent the proposed development from coming forward. In summary, the proposed development is policy compliant and should be granted planning permission without delay.

7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by hgh Consulting in support of the following proposed development:

“Demolition of existing buildings and structures and erection of one detached residential dwelling including means of access, landscaping, drainage and associated infrastructure.”

7.2 The case for the proposed development can be summarised as:

- (a) The site comprises previously developed land and benefits from a lawful fallback position for storage uses associated with a nursery business, which carries substantial weight in the planning balance.
- (b) The proposal would redevelop an underutilised and visually contained site with a high-quality, well-designed residential dwelling that reflects the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
- (c) The site does not contribute strongly to Green Belt purposes identified in paragraph 143 of the NPPF and therefore constitutes Grey Belt land. The development satisfies the requirements of paragraph 155 of the NPPF and should not be regarded as inappropriate development within the Green Belt.
- (d) The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and the proposal would contribute to the delivery of additional housing in a sustainable location.
- (e) The development would deliver significant environmental enhancements through the removal of the existing structures and hardstanding, retention and protection of important trees, biodiversity improvements, sustainable drainage measures, and sensitive landscaping.
- (f) The proposed dwelling incorporates a comprehensive range of sustainability measures, including a ground source heat pump, photovoltaic panels, mechanical ventilation with heat recovery and a fabric-first design approach, delivering long-term reductions in energy demand and carbon emissions.
- (g) The scheme would not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring occupiers, highway safety, landscape character, ecology, trees, drainage or any other technical planning matter.
- (h) There are no material planning constraints that would prevent the proposed development from coming forward.

7.3 The proposed development comprises of a high quality design that addresses the requirements of local and national planning policy. Accordingly, the proposed development should be granted planning permission without delay.



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