

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Application Number:	252455
Site Address:	The Old Thatch, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TH
Expiry Date:	15 December 2025
Site Visit Date:	Not required – see 251135
Proposal: Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. 4 bedroom dwelling to include rooflights plus car port following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.	

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB07 – Internal Space Standards TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Wokingham Borough Local	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS5 – Development in the countryside CE7 – Low carbon and renewable energy generation CE8 – Protecting renewable energy generation

Plan Update (LPU)	C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes DH1 – Place making and quality design
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
251135	The Old Thatch, Lower Sandhurst Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3TH	Refused, 07/08/2025 Dismissed at appeal on 10/11/2025
242731	Pre-application advice for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling and carport with associated landscaping following demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings.	Replied, 28/01/2025
080621	Proposed erection of single storey rear extension, plus demolition of existing single storey extension.	Approved, 07/03/2008
996/71	Single storey extensions.	Approved, 28/09/1967
R/186/67	Alterations and additions to existing private house to provide extra Bedrooms & bathrooms.	Approved, 30/09/1971

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Environmental Health – No objections. WBC Drainage – No objections, subject to a conditon. WBC Highways – No objections, subject to a conditon. WBC Landscape and Trees – Furhter information requested. WBC Public Rights Of Way – No comments received. WBC CIL - This development will be liable for CIL. WBC Ecology Newts – No objections. WBC Ecology – No comments received. WBC Waste Services – No comments received. WBC Green Infrastructure – No objections, subject to an informative.
External
South East Water – No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Finchampstead Parish Council – No objections, subject to a condition requiring that any damage done to the byway as a result of the works, is restored back to its original state after the works are completed.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description and Proposed Development:

The application site comprises a two-storey detached dwelling situated on the eastern side of Drift Lane, within a rural area designated as countryside. The site's location and surroundings are primarily characterised by open fields, dense woodland, and sparse development, contributing to its distinctly rural and secluded nature.

This application seeks the erection of 4-bedroom dwelling to include rooflights plus car port following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located in the countryside and therefore must be assessed against Policy CP11. The policy states that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where inter alia:

- 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.

Building on the Core Strategy, Figure 8.19 within Section 8 of the Borough Design Guide provides detailed guidance for development within the countryside, including an indicative limit on volume increases for replacement dwellings. It advises that, for single-storey buildings, an uplift of up to 50% over the volume of the original dwelling is generally considered acceptable.

This planning application follows a similar scheme previously submitted and refused in August 2025 under planning reference 251135. The reason for refusal was, in summary, that the scale and form of the replacement dwelling was deemed dominant and incongruous, resulting in harm to the rural character of the area. This decision was upheld at appeal under reference APP/X0360/W/25/3372519 in November 2025, where the Inspector concluded that the proposed 154% increase in volume and 36%

increase in footprint, combined with a higher ridgeline, represented excessive enlargements compared to the original building.

Following the receipt of updated plans for the current application received on 04/12/2025, the scale of the proposed dwelling has been further reduced to now constitute a 119.8% increase in volume. While this still exceeds the recommended guideline, it nevertheless represents a substantial reduction compared with the previously refused scheme. Moreover, the proposal would utilise the existing footprint more efficiently, reducing the perceived spread of development and helping to contain the building within a form more consistent with the original dwelling on the site.

Importantly, whilst a numerical analysis of scale, height and volume is relevant, it is not the sole determinant of visual impact or acceptability in design terms. The revised design incorporates several staggered roof elements that effectively break up the massing and reduce the visual dominance of the structure. This helps to temper the increased volume and ensures the proposed dwelling sits more comfortably within its rural context.

Accordingly, when assessed against Policy CP11(ii), the proposed increases in scale, form, and footprint are not considered inappropriate when compared with the original building, particularly in light of the reductions achieved from the dismissed scheme and the improved design approach that now better responds to the site's countryside setting.

Character of the Area:

The application site is situated within a rural setting, predominantly surrounded by open fields and sporadic development. To the south, a relatively formalised row of residential properties along Lower Sandhurst Road is evident. These dwellings are predominantly two storeys in height, set within substantial plots and are arranged in a layout that follows a gently curved yet predominantly linear alignment, contributing to a sense of spaciousness and formality.

In contrast, Drift Lane presents a markedly different character. The lane is largely undeveloped, featuring a mix of open fields and dense woodland. Along its length, only two other dwellings (excluding the application site) front onto the road, reinforcing the lane's more secluded and undeveloped nature. This distinction highlights the site's rural and relatively isolated context.

The existing dwelling, while two storeys in height and occupying a slightly elevated position, close to the edge of Drift Lane, retains a modest and recessive appearance within the rural landscape. This is attributed to several key design features. The building's form is broken up through a series of projections, recesses, and stepped elements, which help to articulate the facade and reduce the overall visual bulk. The use of a hipped roof, combined with traditional architectural features such as thatched roofing, further softens the massing and integrates the dwelling into its setting.

The proposed dwelling seeks to retain the core architectural principles and built form of the existing dwelling, albeit in a more substantial and modernised form. Key elements, including the hipped roof, four gable-end features and stepped roof

profiles, have been incorporated into the design to break down the overall scale and mitigate the perception of bulk.

The ridge height has been reduced considerably compared to the previously refused scheme. Whereas the earlier proposal featured a maximum ridge height of approximately 8.6 metres, the revised scheme reduces this to approximately 7.3 metres. This reduction materially lessens the prominence of the building, helping to limit its visibility within the rural setting and ensuring that the scale of the dwelling remains more proportionate to its rural surroundings. The submitted elevation drawings also show that the existing natural sloping ground levels would be retained, which would help preserve the informal character of the site and reduce the perceived height and bulk of the dwelling when viewed from the road.

The proposed material palette, consisting of natural stone, brick and clay tiles would be in keeping with its rural context.

Overall, the revised dwelling would read as a more contained and sympathetic form of development that would respect the character and appearance of Drift Lane and its rural context.

Separately, the proposed carport is modest in both size and scale, designed with an open structure that minimizes visual intrusion. Given its transparency and lightweight appearance, it would preserve the openness and rural character of the surrounding countryside.

Housing Amenity:

Internal 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. A minimum standard of 97m² applies for a four-bedroom, two storey dwelling. The internal gross floor area would comply with this requirement, and as such there is no objection in terms of adequate internal space.

The proposed dwelling would meet the above requirements.

In terms of bedroom sizes, the Technical Housing Standards requires that a dwelling with more than one bedroom should have a main bedroom (double), which is to have a minimum area of 11.5sqm. Secondary of single bedrooms should have a minimum area of 7.5sqm and living spaces should have a minimum area of 27sqm. There should also be provision for storage. Based on the submitted floors plans, the proposed bedrooms would comply with the national space standards for double occupancy and single occupancy rooms.

The proposed living spaces would also comply with the above requirements.

R18 of the Borough Design Guide SPD also requires sufficient sunlight and daylight to new properties, with dwellings afforded a reasonable dual outlook and southern aspect.

The proposed dwelling would include sufficient openings to the front and rear elevations which will provide natural light into the habitable rooms.

External amenity

R16 of the SPD requires a minimum depth of 11m for rear gardens and a 1m setback on the site boundary to allow access thereto. The proposed rear garden space would meet the above requirements; therefore, no objections are raised.

Neighbouring Amenity:

The proposed dwelling would be suitably located away from any neighbouring residential properties not to pose any overlooking, overbearing or loss of light impacts.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Vehicle Parking

This proposal will replace the existing dwelling and outbuildings with the proposed dwelling with 10 habitable rooms and a new carport of dimensions 6.75m x 6.75m. The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and considers that the driveway, which could accommodate up to four off-street parking spaces would be sufficient for a dwelling of this size, and in accordance with the council's Parking Standards. As such, there are no highways issues.

Access and Manoeuvring

The existing site access via Drift Lane is retained. As the access point will be retained and the proposed turning area will likely be sufficient for emergency vehicles to manoeuvre, the Highways Officer assumes the existing services to be retained, which is acceptable.

Sustainability

In view of the site is already in use for the existing dwelling, the Highways Officer would have no objections on site sustainability for the replacement dwelling. No additional traffic impact will be anticipated from the replacement of dwelling.

Cycle Provisions

In accordance with the WBC Parking Standards, three cycle parking spaces are required for a dwelling containing six or more habitable rooms. The Highway Officer advises that details of a secure and covered cycle store of an appropriate size would normally be expected. However, in this instance, the Highway Officer is satisfied that the provision of direct access to the rear garden for cycle storage, as shown on the submitted formation plan, would be acceptable. Accordingly, no objections are raised.

Waste collection

No information has been provided on refuse collection. However, it is envisioned that refuse collection would be identical to the existing situation, off Lower Sandhurst Road. No objections are raised to this arrangement.

Flooding and Drainage:

The proposed development is in Flood zone 1 according to the Environment Agency mapping with a low risk of surface water flooding.

The Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed the application and has noted that the drainage details have not been provided, and the existing drainage details has not been mentioned. Whilst there would be no change to the built footprint, the scheme would increase considerable hard standing in form of new driveway and patio areas.

The Drainage Officer has subsequently recommended a condition be implemented which secures details of the surface water drainage system of the site prior to the commencement of development. A suitable condition would be attached to any approval.

Landscape and Trees:

The site is in Countryside, located on the single-track Drift Lane, a restricted byway FINC36.

The site is divided by 2 landscape character areas as defined in the Wokingham Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2019) these are 'Finchampstead Ridges Forested and Settled Sands' and 'Blackwater River Valley with Open Water'. Both of these landscape character types have moderate quality landscape, moderate landscape sensitivity and a modest capacity for change. The site is also located in the 'Forests and Rides' Valued landscape.

The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed the submitted Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA Rev. A, 9.10.25), Tree Constraints Plan (2/25), Tree Protection Plan (Rev. A, 10/25) and Preliminary Arboricultural Method Statement (Rev. A, 9.10.25).

The AIA identifies 64 individual trees and 3 groups, with 5 trees and 1 group proposed for removal. While most are of 'C' quality, concern is raised regarding the proposed loss and encroachment into the Root Protection Area (RPA) of Group G32, a group of 'B' quality Beech trees on the southern boundary, which make an important contribution to the rural landscape. Retention of this group, along with boundary hedges and thickets, would be preferable and aligns with Policies CC03, TB21, CP1 and CP3.

Significant concern is also raised regarding cumulative incursions into the RPA of T34, an off-site 'A' quality Oak along Drift Lane, arising from demolition works and the proposed circular driveway. Further mitigation, including a "no-dig" construction approach and more detailed demolition methodology, is required. The AMS should be updated accordingly, alongside clarification of material storage areas and protection

of retained boundary vegetation.

Revised tree information was submitted by the agent on 22/01/2026 addressing the above concerns. The Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed this information and considers it to be satisfactory. As such, no objections are raised, subject to suitable conditions.

Ecology:

Bats

The site is located in habitat which matches where bat roosts have previously been found in the borough and is surrounded by a habitat suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats including large, connected trees that border Drift Lane.

The supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Pro Vision Ecology, March 2025, ref: 8780) identified bat droppings in the roof void of the main dwelling, confirming it as a bat roost requiring further surveys. A follow-up Ecological Assessment (July 2025) confirmed soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats roosting in the building. Demolition will destroy these roosts, so a Natural England Mitigation Licence is required before work commences. A suitable condition requiring this licence to be obtained prior to any construction works will be attached to any approval.

Great Crest Newts

The application site is within an amber impact risk zone, indicating an area of suitable habitat and potential great crested newt presence. There are five ponds within 500m, the nearest of which is 130m north-west of the site. There are no records of great crested newts within this area.

A District Licensing Officer, acting on behalf of NatureSpace, has reviewed the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA; Pro Vision Ecology, July 2025). The PEA concludes that, given the small scale of the development, the limited suitability of habitats to be affected, the distance to the nearest pond, and the low density of ponds within the surrounding landscape, impacts on great crested newts are unlikely. The District Licensing Officer concurs with this assessment. As such, no objections are raised.

Environmental Health:

The Council's Environmental Health Officer has reviewed the application and advises that the proposal constitutes a like-for-like residential replacement and is not anticipated to give rise to any significant environmental health impacts. Standard controls relating to construction-phase noise, dust, and working hours should be adhered to in order to minimise disturbance to neighbouring residents. In the event that any unexpected contamination is encountered during demolition or groundworks, works should cease immediately and an appropriate investigation undertaken.

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	
Conditions agreed:	Yes
Recommendation:	Approval
Date:	10 December 2025
Earliest date for decision:	5 November 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	29.01.2026