

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	242160
Site Address:	203 Beech Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 5UP
Expiry Date:	8 November 2024
Site Visit Date:	24 September 2024
Proposal: Householder application for proposed part single and part double storey rear extensions to existing dwelling.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Local Authorities
Affordable Housing Thresholds
Borough Parishes
Scale and Location of Development Proposals
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Borough Wards
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones
JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Minor

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
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC07 – Parking
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
PD/314/59	Alterations	Approved 07/08/1959
PD/566/59	Garage	Approved 12/01/1960
231022	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed replacement of existing thatched roof	Refused

	with concrete roof tiles.	16/06/2023
231810	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed replacement of existing thatched roofing materials with concrete roof tiles.	Refused 20/09/2023
232796	Application for a certificate of lawfulness for the proposed replacement of existing thatched roofing with insulated roof tiles.	Refused 25/06/24

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways: No objection subject to conditions

WBC Built Heritage: Refsue

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council: Objects 1. The design of the proposals fails to maintain or enhance the quality of the environment; and by virtues of their inappropriate bulk, mass, appearance and choice of materials the proposals are out of character with the host dwelling, and are not of a high quality of design, contrary to Policy CP3. 2. The resultant building is not beautiful, contrary to Para.131 in the NPPF (Dec.23). It does not add to the quality of the area, nor is it visually attractive; is not a good architectural solution; is not sympathetic to the character of the host dwelling, all contrary to Para.135 of the NPPF (Dec.23). 3. As the development is not well designed and does not reflect the character of the host dwelling, and is contrary to Borough Design Guidance, it should be refused in accordance with Para.139 of the NPPF (Dec.23)
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	201 Beech Lane: Objects, overlooking and loss of privacy. 205 Beech Lane: Objects. Very large extension – going significantly passed the line of the houses at the back. Very close to boundary and would touch my fence. The main impact of the extension will be on my lounge and increase chance of damp.

APPRAISAL

Site Description: Detached thatched cottage

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.

Character of the Area

Policy & Guidance

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Section 12 of the NPPF emphasises the requirement for good design to achieve sustainable development.

Paragraph 131 refers to good, high quality and beautiful design of buildings and places.

Paragraph 135 refers to planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive place.

Paragraph 139 states, development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

Part 2 of The National Design Guide refers to context and states *‘well-designed new development responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary. It enhances positive qualities and improves negative ones.’* It also states at para 39 that well design places are *‘integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them’*.

R1 design principle within the Borough Design Guide states that *‘residential development should be designed to contribute positively toward the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing’*.

R6 and R11 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that housing ensure a coherent street character, including materials and colour, RD6 states the elevations are to be well composed, proportioned and detailed and RD7 requires that materials, colours and details respond to the distinctive elements of the locality.

Design Policy R23 of the Borough Design Guide (BDG) states that alterations and extensions to building should:

- be well designed
- respond positively to the original building
- contribute positively to the original building; and
- relate well to neighbouring properties

R23 of the Borough Design Guide requires rear extensions to be limited to 4m in depth and extensions to be stepped down from the main ridge. It also seeks to achieve a coherent and well-designed approach that influences and responds to the original building.

Assessment

The current dwelling includes painted render and thatched roofing, creating the appearance of the thatched cottage. The existing building has an attractive thatch roof whereas the proposed roof materials will be profiled concrete roof tiles, and the eaves treatment will not match. To the front the house would appear as a traditional thatched cottage, whereas the extension to the rear would appear as modern/contemporary extension, which would relate poorly. The drastic changes in roof material does not relate well or gel well and would result in harm. Therefore, the proposal would not comply with R6 and R11 of the BDG.

Furthermore, the proposal materials utilises facing brick work whereas the current dwelling is painted render. The proposed materials would appear unsympathetic and would not relate well to the existing dwelling, thus causing harm and would not comply with R6 and R11 of the BDG.

The proposed two-storey double dual pitch rear extension is more than 4m in depth and is not stepped down from the main ridge. Furthermore, the roof form would not

be considered to be coherent and well- designed approach that influences and responds to the original building and the interpretation of the original dwelling would be largely lost, therefore not complying with R23 of the BDG. Additionally it is unclear how the roof would physically attach to the existing thatched roof and this interaction between the two parts of the building will affect its appearance and the coherence of the extension when reading the building as a whole.

The two-storey double dual pitch rear extension does not match the pitch roof of the fully pitch roof existing house and conflicts with para 4.11 of the BDG which states *'the roof form of the extension should take its form from the main building.'* The fenestration at first floor level has an unbalanced appearance particularly where the windows abutting the eaves which gives a cramped appearance and inappropriate roof pitch that is indicative of poor design. The proposed alterations substantially alter the side and rear of the building and result in the loss of the extant architectural detail and form and results in an unsympathetic and jarring design. The proposal is not proportional to the host, unbalanced and would result in a preponderant form. The proposed alteration does not relate well to rhythm, massing, dimensions, scale and proportions of the existing dwelling, thus resulting in harm.

Overall, the two-storey double dual pitch rear extension, would result in contrived and incongruous appearance that does not relate well to the existing property. It cannot be considered good design and would harm the character and appearance of the dwelling and the immediate area. Whilst the development would not be highly prominent, it would still be seen by neighbouring residents and would also harm the character of the immediate area - national and local policies refer to the 'character' of an area as well as its appearance. The proposed development is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CP1 & CP3, MDD Local Plan Policy CC01, The Borough Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking: The proposal includes two first floor en-suite window at first floor level facing no.201 and a landing window facing no.205. These windows will be conditioned obscured glazed to prevent overlooking. Furthermore, along the rear boundary and side boundary there is mature and established vegetation which acts as natural screening.

The windows to the rear would overlook onto the garden and such overlooking is common within residential gardens, thus no harmful overlooking.

Loss of Light: The proposed two storey rear extension would project approx. 6.50 metres from the existing rear elevation. The neighbouring houses (no.201 & no.205) broadly aligns with the application property and the proposed two-storey rear extension would extend significantly beyond the rear of this property in close proximity to the boundary. The visible two-storey flank brick wall would be a very prominent, unneighbourly and imposing feature from the neighbouring rear patio/amenity area. It would also result in a loss of light to this area in afternoons and evenings.

With regard to the loss of light from rooms served by the rear windows, the BRE 2022

guidance “Site layout planning for daylight and sunlight” states that development should not breach the 45-degree rule at the centre point of floor to ceiling window 1.6m above ground level, in both plan and elevation form. From the plans submitted there would be a breach for no.205 and thus not acceptable.

Overbearing: The proposal exceeds the recommendations for extension depth outlined in the Borough Design Guide, which states “*rear extensions should not project more than four metres from the main rear wall where they are close to a side boundary.*” The proposal would be largely two storeys in height and be approx. 6.50 metres deep and conflicts with this guidance.

The two-storey section of the rear extension would also still be positioned close to the boundary. Overall, the fact that a 6.30m high rear extension would be immediately on the boundary, would result in an overbearing and unneighbourly feature to the occupiers of no.201 and no.205. Furthermore, given the close proximity of the two-storey rear extension to the boundary of the neighbouring dwellings, especially no.205 being 1m, thus resulting in overbearing impact.

In summary, the proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring houses 201 & 205 Beech Lane by reason of an overbearing and unneighbourly impact and a detrimental loss of light. The development is contrary to Policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, CC01 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD and section 12 of the NPPF.

Built Heritage: NPPF para 209 states ‘*the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.*’

The proposed development consists of the erection of a part single and part two storey extension, as well as internal alteration to no. 203 Beech Lane. The building is really very interesting, being an extremely rare surviving historic structure in the now heavily developed Earley. The building – historically two cottages – dates from at least the early 19th century, and possibly earlier. Historically known as ‘Homefarm Cottages’, the thatched building is understood to contain a number of historic timbers and a considerable central brick chimney stack. By virtue of its age, architectural and historic interest, as well as the positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area, 203 Beech Lane is identified as a non-designated heritage asset (NHDA). Given this, the application is mandatorily required to provide an assessment of the heritage asset’s significance and thus the proposal’s impact upon this significance – known as a heritage statement – as per the requirement of para. 200 of the NPPF (Dec 2023). Such an assessment should be undertaken by an adequately qualified and experienced heritage professional.

Notwithstanding the absent heritage assessment, any proposals should be informed by, and should respond sensitively to, those aspects of the heritage asset which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. It is important to note that character and appearance is not restricted to the public realm but encompasses the entire area as a whole.

Part of the significance of the building is drawn from that fact it was simple workers cottages, modest in size, but decorative in appearance. The proposed alterations substantially alter the side and rear of the building and result in the loss of the extant architectural detail and form. Whilst the building has been altered, this does not equate to a carte blanche for future alteration. To the contrary, where alterations – some of which unsympathetic – have occurred in the past, there is a greater emphasis in preserving the remaining significance and thus managing alterations appropriately and in line with local policy and guidance.

The increased massing and footprint of the two-storey element would seek to dominant and engulf the existing simple building and, as a consequence, impact the neighbouring properties. The relative simplicity of the rear (and side) elevations and thatched roof pitches form part of the NDHA's significance, and thus to extend it by this amount, would severely overly aggrandise and erode the character. The form and thus interest of the thatched roof would be lost, along with important original architectural details such as the original rear walling. The proposals are not proportional to the host, unbalanced and would result in a preponderant form, harming the significance of the building and setting of others. Any proposed alteration should respond sensitively to the design of (a historic) building, for example in terms of the pattern of openings within it, its rhythm, massing, dimensions, scale and proportions, its horizontal or vertical emphasis, and the complexity or simplicity, humble nature, and formality or informality of its design.

Given the identified harm, the proposed development would have a harmful impact on this non designed heritage asset. The proposal would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy, section 16 of the NPPF and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan.

Amenity Space: The proposal reduces the amount of amenity space available to the property but it would still be roughly rectangular in shape, receive sunlight for part of the day and be able to accommodate typical garden activities as set out in the Borough Design Guide. Therefore, the reduction in amenity space is not considered to have a harmful impact on the amenity of the occupier.

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.

Conclusion:

The proposal is contrary to development plan and the NPPF and would result in material harm for the following reasons:

1. The proposal would result in a contrived and incongruous form of development, having a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the property and the area by reason of design, scale, massing, height and bulk. The proposed development will conflict with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, The Borough Design Guide, section 12 of the NPPF and

sections C and I of the National Design Guide.

2. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring houses 205 Beech Lane by reason of an overbearing and unneighbourly impact and a detrimental loss of light. The development is contrary to policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, CC01 of the MDD Local Plan, the Borough Design Guide SPD, section 12 of the NPPF.
3. The proposed development would significantly impact the historic form and legibility of the early 19th century thatched cottage, detrimentally degrading and eroding its value as a non-designate heritage asset and its significance. This harm would not be outweighed by any public benefits. The proposal would conflict with Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy, section 16 of the NPPF and Policy TB24 of the Managing Development Delivery local plan.

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:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refused
Date:	5 November 2024
Earliest date for decision:	8 October 2024

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	8 November 2024