

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	230291
Site Address:	1 Wheelton Close, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 7YD
Expiry Date:	3 April 2023
Site Visit Date:	22 September 2022
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of amenity land to residential garden and erection of a 1.8m high brick wall.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
Scale and Location of Development Proposals - Earley
Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
Nuclear Consultation Zone
Replacement Mineral Local Plan
Landscape Character Assessment Area
SSSI Impact Risk Zones

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 CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List National Design Guide

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
222592	Householder application for the proposed erection of an 1800mm high brick wall to the side eastern boundary.	Withdrawn 21/10/2022

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Highways – No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Landscape and Trees – No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site is a substantial area of amenity space adjacent to junction shared between Wheelton Close and Skelmerdale Way. When the estate was constructed in the 1970s onwards, purposeful amenity space was provided adjacent to the Highway to create a sense of openness and naturalness in the surrounding area. The amenity space is predominantly open grassland with a handful of mature hedgerows adjacent to the existing eastern garden wall. This form of suburbia results in a spacious environment, where properties are made pleasant and attractive to reside in. Other examples of amenity space of a similar appearance are observed on Skelmerdale Way, Melling Close and Ribbleton Close.

The creation of the amenity space in this location is important as it improves the visual connectivity and permeability of the surrounding roads. From Skelmerdale Way, the road bends across to the East, connecting both the dwellings and pedestrian routes from the North to the South. There is also a continuity of greenspace from Melling Close to Skelmerdale Way. This minimises the visual impact of the highway and limits sense of enclosure.

Proposal Description:

This application seeks approval for the proposed change of use of a section of amenity land to residential curtilage. This would be facilitated by the erection of a 1.8 metre high brick boundary wall by extending the existing boundary wall outwards by approximately 3.2 metres to the east. The total area of amenity space subject of the change of use would be approximately 40sqm.

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 within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Development Plan.

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.

Character of the Area:

The Wokingham Borough Council Local Plan sets out the requirements for sustainable development at policy CP1 of the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale, mass, layout, built form, height and character of the area and must be of high quality design. It also states that proposals should *“Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping”*.

Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan sets out that development proposals should provide for new or protect and enhance the Borough’s Green Infrastructure networks, and promote accessibility, linkages and permeability between and within existing green corridors including public rights of way such as footpaths, cycleways and bridleways. Policy TB21 of the MDD Local Plan refers that *“Proposals shall retain or enhance the condition, character and features that contribute to the landscape”*.

R1 of the WBC Design Guide states that Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards 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.

The National Design Guide section B1, paragraph 67 also states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Paragraph 68 follows on from this stating that houses and streets should establish an appropriate relationship with the pattern, sizes and proportions of existing houses in the local area.

The proposed boundary wall would be sited within immediate proximity to the footpath and maintenance equipment with no spatial relief between them. To facilitate the wall’s construction, the existing hedgerow would be removed, whereas the Whitebeam Tree and Cockspur Thorn would be retained.

The loss of the soft landscaping would have significant impact on the street scene and character of the area, since the amenity space occupies a prominent position and can be viewed from a distance while approaching from both sides of the footpath and the road. By repositioning the existing boundary wall, it would create an awkward protrusion and overall harsher boundary treatment much closer to the highway, which would be detrimental to the openness and rhythm of both the surrounding amenity space and the prevailing verdant character of the street scene.

Neighbouring Amenity:

There are no neighbouring amenity concerns.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Accurate drawings have been provided demonstrating visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m from Wheelton Close onto Skelmerdale Way. The plan shows that the proposed brick wall will not impact visibility splays, therefore WBC Highways Officer has no objection to the proposed.

Landscape and Trees:

The proposals would result in the loss of green infrastructure that positively contributes to the visual amenities of the area. This is contrary to policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan, which states that development proposals should "Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features".

Conclusion:

The proposed change of use of part of the existing amenity land to residential to include the erection of a brick wall boundary treatment, by reason of its siting closer to the adjacent public highway, would result in the loss of important visual amenity land and soft landscaping which in turn would adversely affect the spacious nature and openness of this amenity land that connects Wheelton Close and Skelmerdale Way, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the street scene and surrounding area. The proposal is contrary to the NPPF, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, and Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan and the National Design Guide.

It is therefore recommended that this application be refused.

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:	Refusal
Date:	9 March 2023
Earliest date for decision:	2 March 2023

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	9 March 2023