



Chartered Town Planners
Royal Town Planning Institute

ATLAS

PLANNING GROUP

PLANNING STATEMENT

93 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4RD

June 2026

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the retention of the existing bungalow at 93 Reading Road, Finchampstead.
- 1.2 Planning permission was granted at appeal (Ref: APP/X0360/W/19/3223708, appendix 1) for the demolition of the existing bungalow and erection of a replacement dwelling. The replacement dwelling has now been substantially completed. This application seeks permission to retain the existing bungalow, which is currently subject to Condition 10 of the appeal decision requiring its demolition.
- 1.3 The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and is therefore located within the countryside for planning policy purposes. Whilst the proposal does not accord with the exceptions contained within Core Strategy Policy CP11, planning law requires applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 1.4 Several significant material considerations support the proposal. Most notably, Wokingham Borough Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with a substantial shortfall against its housing requirement. The proposal would therefore contribute towards housing delivery within the Borough through the retention of an existing lawful residential use which is available for immediate occupation.
- 1.5 The proposal would also make a positive contribution towards housing choice and mix through the retention of a modest one-bedroom dwelling suitable for single occupants, downsizers and smaller households. Importantly, the proposal does not involve the construction of a new dwelling or any further encroachment into undeveloped countryside. Rather, it seeks to retain an established lawful dwelling that has formed part of the built frontage along Reading Road for many decades.
- 1.6 Since the replacement dwelling is almost complete, the actual built development can be assessed rather than the predicted outcome considered by the Inspector in 2019. The completed development demonstrates that the replacement dwelling remains visually discreet and hidden from the public realm. Since the replacement dwelling has been constructed, it is evident that the coexistence of both dwellings has not resulted in any material harm to the character or appearance of the area, residential amenity, highway safety or the wider environment.



Figure 1: Current character of the area with the replacement dwelling not being visible from the street

1.7 The proposal also delivers important environmental benefits. The bungalow's retention would avoid unnecessary demolition, reduce construction waste and conserve tonnes of embodied carbon emissions that would otherwise be lost through demolition and disposal. The proposal therefore supports the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework and Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Emergency commitments.

1.8 The Planning Statement concludes that whilst there is conflict with countryside policies, the proposal would result in no material harm. Instead, the development delivers a range of significant social, economic and environmental benefits. These benefits substantially outweigh any limited policy conflict. Accordingly, the development constitutes a sustainable form of development, and planning permission should be granted.

INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This Statement has been prepared by Atlas Planning Group to accompany a full planning application for the retention of an existing dwelling at 93 Reading Road.
- 2.2 The application site has permission for a replacement dwelling under application LPA Ref: 182633 allowed at appeal (Ref: APP/X0360/W/19/3223708). The replacement dwelling is almost complete, and it is now proposed to retain the bungalow which is subject to condition 10 requiring its demolition.
- 2.3 This Statement will assess the development against both local and national planning policy found within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) and the Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Document.

SITE DESCRIPTION

- 3.1 The application site is positioned on the southwestern side of Reading Road and relates to a small single storey dwelling together with an access which runs between the side boundaries of the adjacent properties fronting Reading Road.
- 3.2 Beyond the application site lies a triangular shaped parcel of land, where the dwelling approved under application 182633 is positioned and almost complete. This new dwelling is not visible from the public realm and views can only be achieved within the site itself.
- 3.3 The existing building is not listed, nor is the site positioned in a Conservation Area or any nationally recognised landscape character.

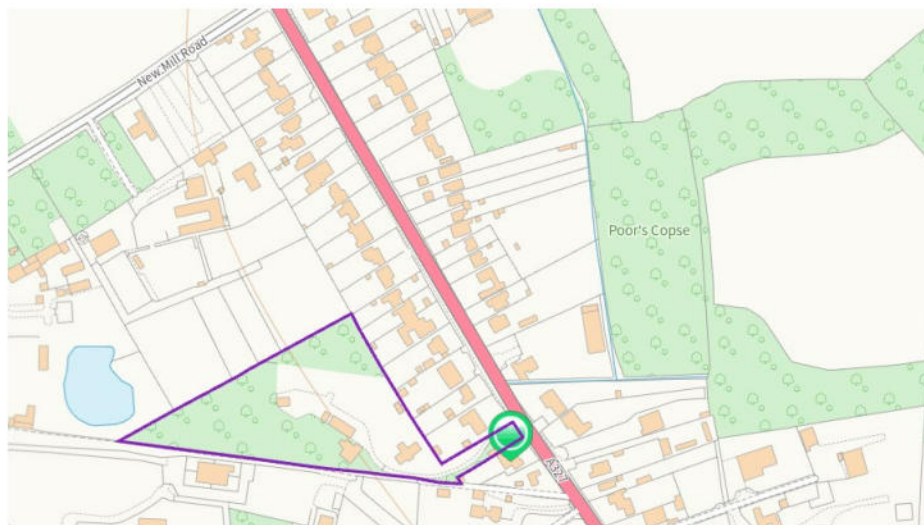


Figure 2: Site Context



Figure 2: Aerial image



Figure 3: Replacement dwelling almost completed



Figure 4: Existing dwelling

PLANNING HISTORY

APPEAL REF: APP/X0360/W/19/3223708

4.1 In June 2019, an appeal was allowed for the demolition of existing 1 bed bungalow and erection of a four-bed dwelling, landscaping and associated works.

4.2 The Inspectorate concluded that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the local area. The proposal did not conflict with Policies CP1, CP3 and CP11 of the adopted Core Strategy, Policies CC01-03, TB06 and TB21 of the Local Plan and the NPPF.

4.3 Condition 10 of the appeal decision states:

Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby permitted the buildings shown to be demolished on Plan 17-104.BEA-03 Rev F shall be removed and the demolished material removed from the site, unless an alternative timescale is first agreed with the local planning authority



Figure 5: Approved Site Plan

THE PROPOSAL

5.1 The description of development would be as follows:

“Retention of existing bungalow, landscaping and associated works”

5.2 The proposal involves the retention of the single storey 1 bedroom dwelling that fronts Reading Road. A small and proportionate garden is to be created to the rear of the bungalow, where parking is provided for 2 cars.

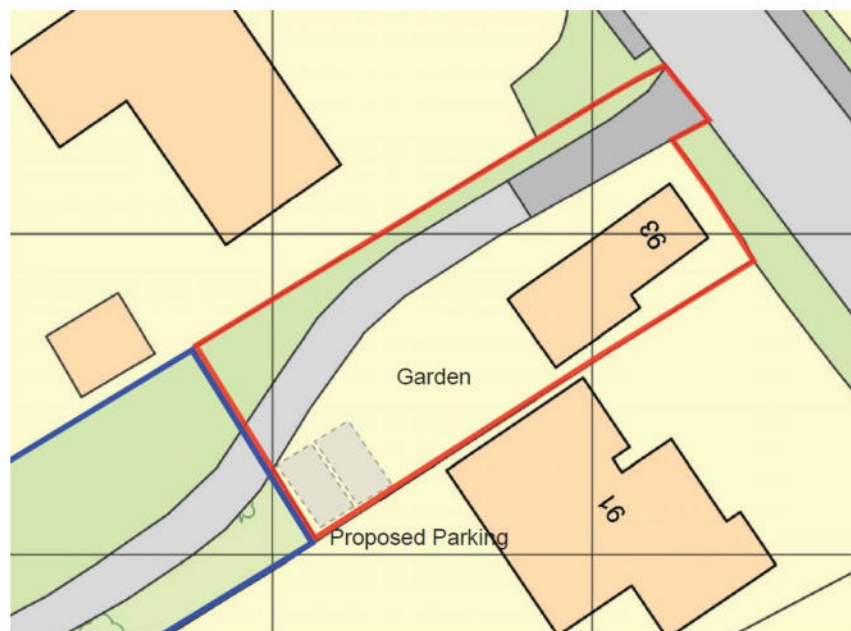


Figure 3: Proposed Site Plan

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The Development Plan includes the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010) (the 'Core Strategy'); and the Wokingham Borough Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Document (February 2014) (the 'Local Plan').
- 6.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides a national tier of policy and decision-making guidance for the planning system and forms a material consideration for planning decisions.

- 6.3 The policy and guidance contained within the statutory Development Plan Documents and all other relevant material considerations have been reviewed to determine if the proposal is an appropriate form of development for the application site.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.4 The application site is positioned in the open countryside in planning policy terms, and it is proposed to retain the existing dwelling which is conditioned to be demolished as part of an approved application for a replacement dwelling.
- 6.5 Core Strategy Policy CP11 highlights that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted unless certain criteria are met. The policy indicates that this is in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment.
- 6.6 Whilst the proposal would not accord with any of the exceptions for development in the countryside under Policy CP11, planning law requires planning applications to be determined against the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.7 In this case, the material considerations which justify the proposal include:
- The Council not being able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply;
 - The proposal seeking the retention of an existing lawful residential use;
 - The proposal contributing to the supply of small-sized homes;
 - The proposal constituting the sustainable reuse of existing built form;
 - The proposal avoiding unnecessary demolition;
 - The proposal not harming the identity of settlements or quality of the environment.
- 6.8 The Council has agreed at appeal that the current level of housing supply is 2.5 years with a shortfall of 3,454 dwellings against the standard method. This is a substantial shortfall against a 5-year requirement¹.
- 6.9 Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is therefore applicable and the ‘tilted balance’ should be engaged. This states that, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are

¹ APP/X0360/W/25/3361360

most important for determining the application are out-of-date, for example through the inability of the authority to demonstrate the required housing land supply, granting permission unless:

- i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong 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, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

6.10 Local Plan Policy CC01 sets a presumption in favour of sustainable development and whilst its wording is not identical to that in paragraph 11 of the NPPF, Inspectors have confirmed that the thrust of the policy carries full weight.

6.11 The site is not located within an area designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Green Belt, Local Green Space, or Heritage Coast, there are no identified irreplaceable habitats at the site, it is not a designated heritage asset, and it is not within an area at risk of flooding. The site is not located within the National Landscape nor a Conservation Area. Therefore, the proposal will not have an impact upon any of these protected areas or assets of particular importance.

6.12 Instead, the proposal represents a sustainable form of development with several benefits, as outlined below:

HOUSING SUPPLY

6.13 In appeal APP/X0360/W/25/3361360 (Land West of Limmerhill Road, Wokingham), the Inspector accepted that housing delivery remained a matter attracting substantial weight in the planning balance notwithstanding countryside policy considerations.

6.14 Whilst the appeal proposal relates to a single dwelling and therefore, its contribution is inevitably modest in numerical terms, the NPPF makes clear that small sites can make an important contribution towards housing delivery, particularly where they can be delivered quickly and without significant environmental harm.

6.15 In this respect, the retained bungalow would represent an immediately available residential unit within a Borough experiencing a severe housing land supply deficit. Moreover, due to its size as a

1-bedroom unit, the development contributes positively toward housing choice and mix, including accommodation suitable for single occupants, downsizers and lower-cost market housing.

- 6.16 The removal of a readily available dwelling from a Borough with a significant housing deficit is therefore counterintuitive and runs contrary to the Government's intention to maximise the efficient use of land and boosting the supply of housing. Indeed, replacing or rebuilding housing stock is significantly more expensive and time-consuming than retaining and maintaining existing dwellings. Therefore, the proposal should be viewed favourably in this regard.

EFFICIENT USE OF LAND

- 6.17 As highlighted, the NPPF places considerable emphasis on making effective use of land in meeting housing needs whilst protecting the environment. In this respect, the proposed development does not seek to erect speculative new-build housing schemes in open countryside. Rather, the bungalow already exists, is capable of continued occupation and forms part of an established residential setting.
- 6.18 Within Appeal Ref. APP/X0360/W/20/3251601 (Appendix 2), the Inspectorate attached moderate weight to the effective use of land in circumstances where a site formed part of the existing built environment despite its countryside designation. The proposal represents an even more efficient use of resources because it seeks to retain an existing dwelling rather than construct a new one. Therefore, again, the proposal should be viewed favourably.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- 6.19 The retention of the bungalow also ensures that the proposal accords with both national and local planning policy regarding climate change and reducing embodied carbon emissions through the retention and reuse of existing buildings.
- 6.20 Paragraph 161 of the NPPF seeks to support the transition to a low-carbon future and shape places in ways that contribute to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The unnecessary demolition of a structurally sound dwelling would result in the loss of embodied carbon and additional carbon emissions arising from demolition activities, the transportation and disposal of waste materials. The retention of the dwelling would avoid these unnecessary impacts and minimise waste generation.

6.21 Within Wokingham Borough Council's Climate Emergency declaration, the Council has recognised the Climate Emergency as a material planning consideration and seeks to promote sustainable development that contributes towards carbon reduction. The retention and continued use of the existing dwelling represents a more sustainable outcome than its demolition, reflecting the waste hierarchy's preference for reuse over disposal and supporting the efficient use of existing resources. As such, the proposal makes a positive contribution towards climate change mitigation and is consistent with both national and local policy objectives.

CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF THE AREA

6.22 Finally, whilst the Inspector highlighted at appeal that it would be necessary to demolish the bungalow to ensure the character and appearance of the area was protected, the context and planning balance has materially changed since the original permission was allowed.

6.23 At that time, the Inspector imposed the condition because the appeal proposal was presented and assessed as a replacement dwelling scheme. However, since the determination of appeal 3223708, there has been a material change in circumstances which justifies a fresh assessment of the planning merits of retaining the bungalow.

6.24 Most notably, the replacement dwelling has now been substantially completed, allowing the actual built development to be assessed rather than the predicted outcome considered by the Inspector. The completed development demonstrates that the replacement dwelling is visually discreet and does not result in harm to the character or appearance of the area when viewed alongside the retained bungalow. The reasoning for the bungalow's removal is therefore no longer justified, particularly as no harm to the character and appearance of the area would arise from its retention.

6.25 At appeal, the Inspector found no harm from the existing dwelling itself. Therefore, there is no reason why the existing dwelling cannot be retained. Moreover, as discussed above, Wokingham Borough Council's housing land supply has worsened since the appeal, thus justifying an additional dwelling in this location.

CONCLUSIONS ON MATTERS OF PRINCIPLE

- 6.26 Whilst the proposal does not accord with the strict wording of Core Strategy Policy CP11, the circumstances of this case are exceptional and are supported by a number of significant material considerations. These include the Borough's substantial housing land supply shortfall, the retention of an existing lawful dwelling, the contribution towards housing choice and mix, the efficient use of land and existing built assets, the avoidance of unnecessary demolition and associated embodied carbon losses, and the absence of any material harm to the character and appearance of the area.
- 6.27 Wokingham Borough's housing land supply position has significantly deteriorated since the appeal decision and the Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, a matter that attracts substantial weight in favour of housing delivery. When considered in the context of paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF, the benefits of the proposal clearly outweigh the limited conflict with countryside policy, and the principle of development is therefore considered acceptable.

IMPACT ON CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE OF AREA

- 6.28 Policy CP3 outlines that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.
- 6.29 The character of the area has been described in appeal 3223708, where the Inspector commented that there is an almost continuous built frontage along both sides of Reading Road in the vicinity of the site with a wide variety of individual dwellings, together with a staggered building line.
- 6.30 The existing bungalow accords with these established characteristics and importantly, the proposal would not result in any additional built form beyond that which already physically exists on the site. There would be no further encroachment into undeveloped countryside, no extension of the residential curtilage into open land, and no materially greater visual impact than the current situation.



Figure 4: Photographs of the existing site

6.31 The existing bungalow forms part of the established built development frontage along Reading Road and has done so since the early 20th century. In fact, it is one of the original dwellings built in the area - The 1909 historic OS Map shows the application building along Reading Road.

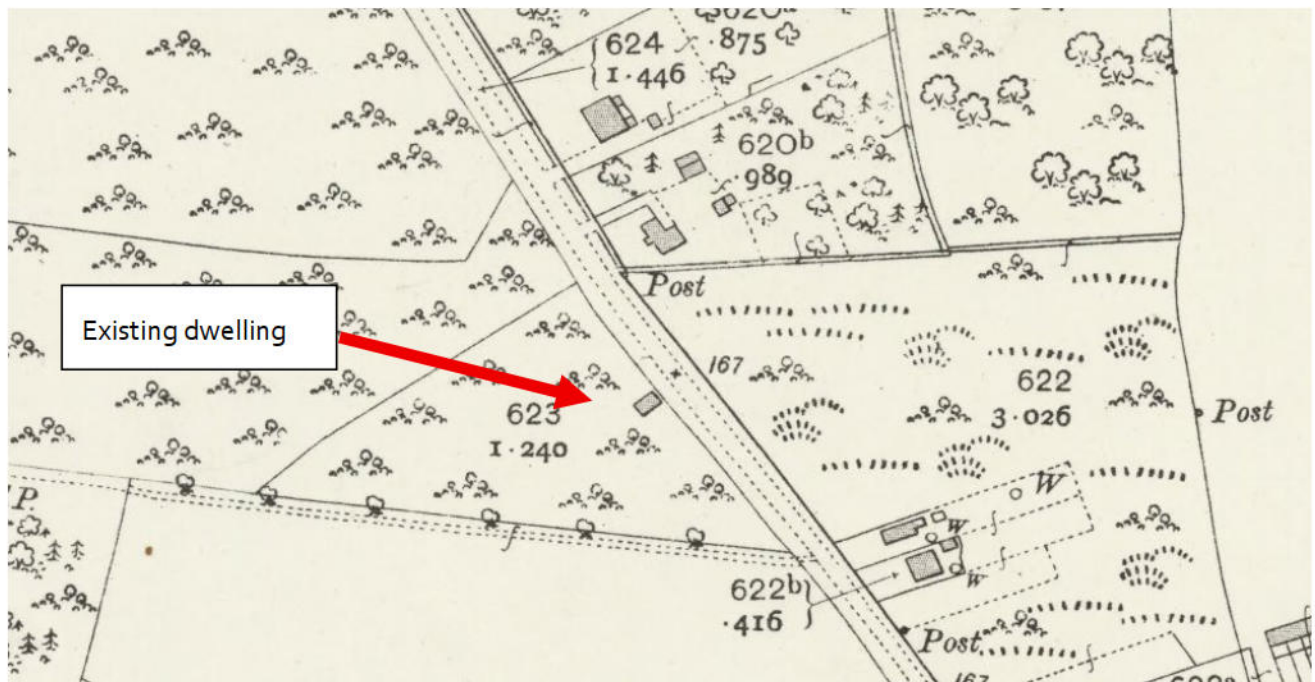


Figure 5:1909 OS Map

- 6.32 Given its size and assimilation into the landscape, its retention would not introduce an unfamiliar or visually prominent form of development into the countryside.
- 6.33 It is acknowledged that Condition 10 was imposed by the Inspector to ensure that the cumulative amount of built form on the site would not harm the character and appearance of the countryside. However, the circumstances now materially differ from those which existed at the time of the original appeal decision.
- 6.34 Most importantly, the replacement dwelling has now been substantially completed and is not visible from Reading Road or the wider public realm. The Inspector previously concluded that the replacement dwelling itself would “*not be widely seen*” and “*would not appear visually intrusive*”. The replacement dwelling has now been built, and the existing situation confirms that the assessment of the Inspector was correct – the dwelling is discreetly positioned behind the existing frontage buildings along Reading Road and not noticeable to the public eye.
- 6.35 Given that the replacement dwelling is visually well-contained within the site, any feared harm of both dwellings co-existing together has not materialised. Indeed, the actual visual impact of the completed development demonstrates that it is almost impossible to tell that there is an additional dwelling on land to the rear of the bungalow.

6.36 Importantly, the Inspector did not conclude that the existing bungalow was harmful in itself, nor that its continued presence would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. Rather, Condition 10 was imposed because the appeal proposal was presented and assessed as a replacement dwelling scheme.

6.37 The completed development demonstrates that the coexistence of both dwellings does not result in visual harm or harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with policy CP3.



Figure 6: Photograph showing that the replacement dwelling is not visible from Reading Road

IMPACTS ON RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

6.38 Policy CP3 outlines that permission will be granted for proposals which do not detrimentally affect the amenities of adjoining land users, whilst the Design Guide outlines that reasonable levels of privacy is required between new and existing properties.

6.39 The proposal would not give rise to any unacceptable impacts upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. After all, the existing bungalow is an established dwelling along Reading Road which has had a longstanding relationship with other neighbours without any harm. Indeed, the bungalow is a modest single storey dwelling and therefore, there are no opportunities for overlooking, loss of sunlight or overbearing issues.

- 6.40 The retention of the bungalow would not also affect the reasons why the replacement dwelling was approved. The Inspector concluded that there would be no material harm arising from overlooking or loss of privacy associated with the replacement dwelling and the retention of the bungalow would not alter this position.
- 6.41 In addition, the proposal would not result in significant additional activity beyond that already associated with lawful residential occupation of the site, as well as the business that operates on the land to the rear. Any increase in comings and goings associated with retention of the one-bedroom bungalow would be extremely modest and would not materially affect neighbouring living conditions.
- 6.42 A new clearly defined garden space has been provided for the bungalow, which is proportionate to the size of the dwelling. Therefore, occupiers will continue to enjoy a good standard of living.
- 6.43 For the reasons given above, the retention of the bungalow would not give rise to any impacts on residential amenity.

HIGHWAYS & PARKING

- 6.44 Core Strategy Policy CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy sets out the council's approach to transport and accessibility in relation to new development. The policy seeks to ensure that development is located and designed to reduce the need to travel, particularly by private car, and to encourage more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling, and public transport.
- 6.45 Managing Development Delivery Policy CC09 complements this strategic approach by providing detailed guidance on parking provision for new development. It requires that all development proposals make adequate parking provision in line with the council's adopted parking standards, taking into account the nature of the use, location, and accessibility by sustainable transport modes.
- 6.46 The proposal would not result in any adverse impact on the local highway network or highway safety and would accord with CP6 and CC09.

6.47 Indeed, the proposal retains the existing entry point onto the highway, which is used by both the existing occupiers and the business use on the adjoining land. The proposed development would not materially alter existing traffic patterns or intensify the access to a detrimental extent. Moreover, adequate on-site parking and turning areas are available within the site to accommodate the 1-bedroom dwelling and to ensure that vehicles can enter and leave the site in a safe manner.

6.48 In terms of sustainability, it is acknowledged that the application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary and therefore is positioned in open countryside in planning terms. However, as recognised by the Inspectorate in Appeal Ref. APP/X0360/W/20/3251601(Appendix 2), which was determined at no. 72 Reading Road, the physical characteristics of sites in this locality do not necessarily reflect the wider countryside designation.

6.49 In that case, the Inspector concluded that although the site was outside the settlement boundary, it was located between existing development and physically separated from the open countryside. The Inspector further acknowledged that future occupiers would be reliant upon the private motor vehicle and that such locations do not fully accord with the objectives of Core Strategy Policy CP6. Nevertheless, the decision found that the resulting harm was limited because the vehicular movements associated with a single dwelling would be somewhat negligible in the context of the surrounding area. The Inspector concluded that the harm arising from the site's accessibility credentials was minor in nature and therefore attracted only modest weight in the planning balance.

6.50 Given the close proximity of that appeal site to the application site, the Inspector's conclusions are considered highly relevant and carry significant weight in the assessment of the current proposal.

6.51 Overall, the development is considered acceptable and accords with the objectives of Policies CP6 and CC09.

ECOLOGY

6.52 The proposal seeks solely the retention of the existing bungalow and does not involve demolition, extension works, vegetation clearance or any other operations with the potential to adversely affect protected species.

6.53 The original appeal (APP/X0360/W/19/3223708) included ecological mitigation measures associated with the proposed demolition of the bungalow, including requirements relating to bats.

The current proposal avoids the need for demolition and therefore removes the potential ecological impacts associated with the loss of the existing structure.

6.54 No trees or habitats of ecological value would be affected by the development, and the proposal would not result in any material change to the existing ecological conditions of the site. Accordingly, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any adverse ecological impacts and complies with the objectives of the NPPF relating to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

7.1 This Statement has been submitted in support of the retention of an existing dwelling, which is conditioned to be demolished under appeal APP/X0360/W/19/3223708.

7.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.3 In this case, it is acknowledged that the proposal would not comply with Core Strategy Policy CP11 because it would result in an additional dwelling in the countryside. It is also acknowledged that the site does not represent a wholly sustainable location in transport terms and therefore gives rise to limited conflict with Policy CP6. However, Inspectors at appeal have confirmed that whilst the location of the site could not be construed as being sustainable, the harm caused by this matter would only be marginal and consequently, only a modest amount of weight is attached to it.

7.4 In contrast, significant weight should be afforded to the fact that the proposal relates to the retention of an existing lawful dwelling. After all, the proposal would deliver a range of important benefits, including:

- the retention of an existing lawful residential unit;
- a contribution towards housing supply within a Borough experiencing a substantial housing land supply shortfall;
- the retention of a small one-bedroom dwelling contributing towards housing choice and mix;
- the efficient use of an existing building;
- the avoidance of unnecessary demolition and construction waste;
- the retention of embodied carbon and associated climate change benefits;
- no material harm to the character and appearance of the area;

- no material harm to residential amenity; and
- no adverse impact upon highway safety or parking provision.

7.5 Importantly, the replacement dwelling has now been substantially completed. The replacement dwelling remains visually discreet and hidden from the public realm. The coexistence of both dwellings has not resulted in any material harm to the character or appearance of the area. Whilst the Inspector concluded that the existing dwelling subject to this application should be demolished to preserve the character and appearance of the area, the existing situation demonstrates that the concerns which originally justified the demolition condition have not materialised.

7.6 Accordingly, the proposal would retain an established lawful dwelling, deliver an immediately available home within a Borough experiencing a severe housing land supply shortfall, contribute towards housing choice and mix, avoid unnecessary demolition, conserve embodied carbon and result in no material harm to character, residential amenity or highway safety. The only identified harm relates to limited conflict with countryside policy. However, in these circumstances, the adverse impacts of the development do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits, and planning permission should be granted. As such, we commend the proposal to you.

Appendix1



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 May 2019

by Lynne Evans BA MA MRTPI MRICS

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th June 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/19/3223708

93 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4RD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr & Mrs A Beasley against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref: 182633 dated 24 September 2018, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2018.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing 1 bed bungalow and erection of a four bed dwelling, landscaping and associated works.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of existing 1 bed bungalow and erection of four bed dwelling, landscaping and associated works at 93 Reading Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham RG40 4RD in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref: 182633 dated 24 September 2018 subject to the conditions set out in the schedule at the end of the decision letter.

Preliminary Matters

2. A tree survey report and landscaping plan (18/11/204/LAN_01) have been submitted with the appeal, neither of which formed part of the original application. I have taken this information into account and the landscaping plan in so far as it indicates the landscaping objectives for the site.

Main Issue

3. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site includes a small single storey dwelling fronting the south west side of Reading Road together with an access which runs between the side boundaries of the adjacent properties fronting Reading Road and the land then opens up to the rear of Nos 95 and 97 Reading Road. The main part of the appeal site where the new dwelling would be sited is an irregular area of open land to the rear of properties on Reading Road. I am advised that this land has previously been used as a vegetable patch as part of an extended rear garden to the existing house. Beyond the appeal site, the adjoining triangular shaped land is in the same ownership comprising a mix of open mown grassland,

together with an assortment of buildings and structures in varying states of repair, accommodating the Appellants' commercial business. There is a public footpath running along the southern boundary of the appeal site joining with Reading Road, further to the south east.

5. The site and surrounding area lie outside of a settlement boundary and therefore for planning purposes within the countryside. There is an almost continuous built frontage along both sides of Reading Road in the vicinity of the appeal site with a wide variety of individual dwellings, together with a staggered building line. There are also a number of places where there is evidence of development set further away from the road, including both residential and commercial development. Some of these developments are clearly visible from the main road whereas others are more obscured and set deeper into the plots.
6. The proposal would seek to demolish the existing single storey dwelling together with some smaller outbuildings to its immediate rear and build a new larger two storey dwelling to the rear of the boundary with Nos 95 and 97 Reading Road.
7. Policy CP11 of the adopted Wokingham Core Strategy 2010 (Core Strategy) states that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, development outside of the development limits, will not normally be permitted with a number of exceptions, including replacement dwellings but providing they bring about environmental improvements or do not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building.
8. There is no dispute that the proposed dwelling would be larger than and would not be on the same footprint as the existing dwelling, even when account is taken of the additional outbuildings to be demolished. Policy CP11 does not provide further clarification on what might constitute an inappropriate increase in the scale, form or footprint of the dwelling, including the basis of the assessment. Both the Appellant and the Council has referred to guidance in the Borough Design Guide SPD (SPD). The SPD indicates that replacement dwellings will generally be expected to be in the same location as the existing dwelling although it recognises that there may be circumstances where a different location may be preferable. I accept that the existing siting is extremely constrained and even with the removal of the outbuildings to the rear, would create a long but very narrow site to the side of the access drive. In relation to the site available the proposed siting would, in practical terms, be the closest area of land to site the replacement dwelling.
9. The SPD further indicates that a 50% increase in volume is acceptable when compared with the original building. The proposed dwelling would exceed this guidance. It would introduce a greater mass of built form compared with the existing but in terms of the wider impact on the character and appearance of the local area, I consider that this increase needs to be considered in the context of the surrounding development. Given the variety of dwelling sizes in the local area, including many two storey dwellings, it would not in my view appear materially different in scale, form or footprint than many of the surrounding dwellings in the locality, compared with the small size of the existing dwelling. The existing dwelling is an anomaly in terms of its size and restricted plot size in the street scene.

10. Considering the other part of criterion CP11 in so far as it relates to replacement dwellings, I agree with the Appellant that there would be the opportunity for some localised environmental improvements at the site frontage. I am advised that Reading Road is part of a Green Route where Policy CC03 of the adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (Local Plan) seeks, amongst other things, for new development to demonstrate proposals to provide new or protect and enhance the Borough's Green Infrastructure networks. The removal of the existing property, which appears very cramped within its plot and close to the adjoining property would provide an opportunity for additional planting close to the Reading Road as well as further into the site. Whilst the benefit of this environmental improvement, on its own, would not be conclusive in determining this proposal, it adds weight in support.
11. The proposal would not be widely seen and would not be seen from Reading Road. The indication of further built development, consistent with other development in the vicinity, would be signposted by the entrance and access road leading off the main road into the site, and would, therefore, be no different to the existing situation and would continue the existing pattern of development. There would be limited views from the surrounding properties given the spacing between the existing and the siting of the proposed. There is a public footpath running along the southern boundary of the site from which views of the new dwelling would be gained. The Appellant has indicated the introduction of further fencing and planting to screen views into the site from the footpath. Even if views were available, I do not consider that the proposed dwelling would appear visually intrusive but would be part of the pattern of scattered built form to the rear of Reading Road.
12. In terms of the character and appearance of the local area, the dwelling would be set deeper into the plot. Whilst the majority of the development in the vicinity fronts both sides of Reading Road, there are other examples of development set back from the main road, or to the rear of other development. The siting of the proposal would not therefore, in my view, be out of character with the general pattern of development in the locality.
13. There may be associated residential paraphernalia within the plot proposed as there would be with any residential dwelling, but this would be contained within the confines of the proposed site area. I do not consider that a concern of spreading development beyond the site confines would be a valid basis for concern or for withholding planning permission.
14. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the local area. It would not in my view harm the separate identity of settlements being contained by existing development, or the quality of the environment which are two of the key objectives of Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy. Although not raised in the reason for refusal, the Council has raised a concern that permitting this proposal would make it more difficult to resist similar schemes and that the cumulative impact would erode the countryside. However, each proposal must be judged on its individual merits and the particular circumstances of this case lead to permission being granted. I see no reason why the decision in this case would set a precedent for other proposals.
15. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the local area. There would be no conflict with Policies CP1, CP3

and CP11 of the adopted Core Strategy and Policies CC01, CC02, CC03, TB06 and TB21 of the Local Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework, all of which seeks for a high quality of development which respects the character and appearance of the local area. It would not fully accord with all the detailed guidance in the SPD, but this is guidance, and in the particular circumstances of this case and for the reasons set out above, I am satisfied that there would be justification for an exception to be made to this part of the SPD.

Other Considerations

16. I have noted the concerns of the immediate neighbours in Reading Road regarding overlooking and loss of privacy. However, given the proposed orientation of the dwelling with no windows in the flank elevation looking towards the rear of properties in Reading Road, I am satisfied that there would be no material harm in this regard. The proposed landscaping and boundary treatment to the common boundary could further assist in this regard.

Conditions

17. I agree with most of the conditions proposed by the Council in the event that planning permission is granted. I agree that conditions in respect of materials, landscaping and tree protection are required in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the local area. I shall also add a condition to list the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.
18. The Appellant submitted a landscaping scheme at the appeal stage and has invited this to be approved as part of the permission. The Council has not commented upon it as part of its appeal statement. Given the location of the site and in particular the frontage of the site forming part of a Green Route, I consider that it would be preferable to allow the Council to consider and approve the final landscaping scheme. However, I consider that both the submission and approval of the landscaping scheme and the materials do not require to be pre-commencement but prior to any development above ground floor level and they would still protect the character and appearance of the local area.
19. A full tree report has been submitted but it indicates the requirement for an Arboricultural Method Statement, Tree Protection Plan and a Schedule of Arboricultural Supervision to be submitted and approved. In order to be effective, it is my view that this condition requires to be a pre-commencement condition. In accordance with Section 100ZA (5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and The Town and Country Planning (Pre-Commencement Conditions) Regulations 2018, I have therefore requested and received the Appellant's written agreement to the imposition of this condition.
20. A Bat Survey and Mitigation Report has been submitted and in the interests of biodiversity and protected species, it is necessary to impose a condition to ensure that the recommendations and mitigation proposals are carried out in full. The parking and turning areas should be provided prior to occupation of the dwelling in the interests of highway safety.
21. Although not proposed by the Council I also consider it necessary to require the demolition of the existing property and outbuildings prior to occupation of the new dwelling, to ensure that the character and appearance of the local area is

protected and to accord with the terms of the proposal. Although this has not been previously seen by the Appellant, I am satisfied that there would be no prejudice to any party as it reflects the submissions made and is shown on the approved plans.

Conclusion

22. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, including in representations, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

L J Evans

INSPECTOR

Schedule of Conditions (Nos 1- 11 inclusive):

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 17-104.BEA-01 Rev B; 17-104.BEA-02 Rev B; 17-104.BEA-03 Rev F; 17-104.BEA-04 Rev G; 17-104.BEA-05 Rev H; 17-104.BEA-06 Rev I; 17-104.BEA-08 Rev C; 17-104.BEA-09 Rev C and 17-104.BEA-010 Rev B.
- 3) No development above ground level (excluding demolition) shall take place until details and samples of the proposed external facing and roofing materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and samples.
- 4) Notwithstanding the details shown on Plan 17-104.BEA-03 Rev F, no development above ground level (excluding demolition) shall take place until full details, of both hard and soft landscape proposals, including details of the proposed boundary treatments have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved landscape scheme (with the exception of planting, seeding and turfing) shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved and thereafter retained.
- 5) All planting, seeding or turfing approved shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the development or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. Any trees or plants which, within a period of five years after planting, are removed, die or become seriously damaged or diseased in the opinion of the local planning authority, shall be replaced in the next available planting sooner with others of similar size, species and number, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
- 6) No site clearance, preparatory work or development shall take place until a scheme for the protection of the retained trees (the Tree Protection Plan) and the appropriate working methods (the Arboricultural Method Statement) in accordance with British Standard BS 5837: Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations (or in

an equivalent British Standard if replaced) together with a Schedule of Arboricultural Supervision, all pursuant to the recommendations of the Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated January 2019 by Hellis Arboriculture & Landscape Design, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme for the protection of the retained trees shall be carried out as approved.

- 7) No equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought onto the site for the purposes of the development until fencing has been erected in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan as approved. Within any area fenced in accordance with this condition, nothing shall be stored, placed or disposed of above or below ground, the ground level shall not be altered, no excavations shall be made, nor shall any fires be lit, without the prior written consent of the local planning authority. The fencing shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details, until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been moved from the site.
- 8) No trees within the site which are shown as being retained in the Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment dated January 2019 by Hellis Arboriculture & Landscape Design shall be felled, uprooted wilfully damaged or destroyed, cut back in any way or removed without previous written consent of the local planning authority; any trees, shrubs or hedges removed without consent or dying or being severely damaged or becoming seriously diseased within 5 years from the completion of the development hereby permitted shall be replaced with trees, shrubs or hedge plants of similar size and species unless the local planning authority gives written consent to any variation.
- 9) The demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings shall not commence until a licence for development works affecting bats has been obtained from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England) and a copy has been submitted to the local planning authority. Thereafter the mitigations measures approved in the licence together with the recommendations, and in particular the Mitigation Strategy, in the Bat Survey Report and Mitigation Strategy by AE Ecology dated July 2018, shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details, prior to first occupation of the dwelling hereby permitted and thereafter maintained.
- 10) Prior to the first occupation of the dwelling hereby permitted the buildings shown to be demolished on Plan 17-104.BEA-03 Rev F shall be removed and the demolished material removed from the site, unless an alternative timescale is first agreed with the local planning authority.
- 11) The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.

Appendix 2



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 November 2020

by Martin Chandler BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/W/20/3251601

Land Adjacent to 72 Reading Road, Finchampstead RG40 4RA

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Ex-Army Builders Ltd against the decision of Wokingham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 193229, dated 5 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is erection of detached 2 bed dwelling and associated access and parking.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of detached 2 bed dwelling and associated access and parking, at Land Adjacent to 72 Reading Road, Finchampstead RG40 4RA, in accordance with the terms of application Ref: 193229, dated 5 December 2019 and subject to the conditions in the attached schedule.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - i) whether the appeal site is in a sustainable location for residential development;
 - ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - iii) the effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

Reasons

Location

3. The appeal site is located outside of the defined settlement boundaries established by the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) (CS). Accordingly, for the purposes of the development plan, the site is located within the countryside. Despite this, and as a previous Inspector found¹, the situation on the ground does not fully reflect this designation. Instead, the site is located between development and is physically separated from the open countryside.

¹ APP/X0360/W/17/3187333

4. The location of the site was a matter of significant discussion in the previous decision. It was found that the site is removed from day to day facilities and services, and that as a consequence, future occupiers of the site would be heavily reliant on the private motor vehicle. Based on the evidence before me, this situation has not materially changed.
5. Policy CP6 of the CS relates to managing travel demand and promotes development which provides for sustainable forms of transport to allow choice. As with the previous decision, the proposal would continue to fail in meeting this requirement. However, this would be no different to the numerous other dwellings close to the appeal site. In addition, as noted before, the vehicular movements associated with a single dwelling would be somewhat negligible and have very little effect on the movements associated with the broader surroundings. As a consequence, the harm associated with the location of the site would be minor in nature.
6. Despite this, however marginal the harm, based on the evidence before me, I have no reason to depart from the findings of the previous Inspector on this matter. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal site would not be a sustainable location for residential development. It would therefore fail to comply with Policy CP6 of the CS which seeks to provide for sustainable forms of transport. Nevertheless, due to the minor nature of the harm identified, this is a matter to which I only attach modest weight.

Character and appearance

7. The appeal site is a parcel of land with an irregular shape. It is located between two existing dwellings, both of which are substantially set back from the road. However, despite this set back, the neighbouring houses have materially different relationships with the highway, with those to the left of the appeal site angling away from it, and those to the right fronting it in a perpendicular manner. The appeal site is therefore located in an area whereby the immediate grain changes from a more loose and varied grain, to the more uniform character of semi-detached dwellings. Accordingly, although the general pattern of development is that of dwellings set back from the street, contained within deep linear plots, I find that the street scene exhibits a distinct variety in terms of building size, orientation, and architectural appearance.
8. The proposal would see the introduction of a detached dwelling that would be set forward of No 72, but would seek to replicate its perpendicular relationship with the road. As a consequence, it would be angled away from No 74. The dwelling would have private amenity space to the rear, with space between the building and side boundaries as well as generous space for car parking and turning to the front of the property. Based on the evidence before me, the dwelling has reduced in size from that previously proposed, and due to the space about it, and the set back from the road, I am satisfied that the dwelling would not appear cramped, incongruous or contrived within the street scene. Instead, it would represent a suitably respectful and sensitive infill form of residential development that would be complementary to the surrounding context.
9. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore comply with Policies CP1 and CP3 of the CS, Policy TB06 of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (2014), and guidance

contained within the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2012). Taken together, these seek amongst other things, high quality design.

Special Protection Area

10. The appeal site lies within 5km of the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA). Accordingly, the requirements of the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2017 apply (the Regulations). This requires that I, as the competent authority, must ensure that there are no significant adverse effects from the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other projects, that would adversely affect the integrity of the European Site.
11. The SPA is an important resource that can be affected by recreational activity. The proposal would increase the local population in the area. Therefore, taking a precautionary approach, and when combined with other development within the area, I am satisfied that the proposal would result in an increase in such recreational activity which would lead to a likely significant adverse effect on the integrity of the SPA.
12. Due to this effect, the Regulations place a duty on competent authorities to make an appropriate assessment of the implications of the development proposed in view of the site's conservation objectives. In this respect, the appeal has been accompanied by a Section 106 legal agreement which would require the appellant to make a financial contribution to mitigate the impact of the development.
13. Based on the evidence before me, I am satisfied that the legal agreement provided would enable the delivery of suitable mitigation that would address the level of harm likely to be caused by the development. In this respect, the agreement is compliant with Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Accordingly, subject to the necessary mitigation, I conclude that the proposal would not result in a significant harmful effect on the integrity of the SPA.

Planning Balance

14. I have found that the location of the site could not be construed as being sustainable. However, for the reasons identified above, the harm caused by this matter would only be marginal and consequently, I only attach a modest amount of weight to it.
15. Despite this, I have also found that the proposal would not harm the character or appearance of the surrounding area. In addition, it would make efficient use of a site that is firmly located within surrounding built form and make a small but helpful contribution to local housing supply. Whilst not truly a sustainable location, the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) promotes the effective use of land and therefore, this is a matter to which I attach moderate weight.
16. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that decisions be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Due to the lack of harm on the character and appearance of the area, and the effective use of land, I find that these matters outweigh the marginal harm caused by the location of the appeal site. Accordingly, I am satisfied that based on the evidence before me, material considerations indicate a decision contrary to the development plan.

Conditions

17. In light of my findings set out above, conditions 1 and 2 are necessary in the interests of precision to establish the time limit for commencing development, as well as to confirm the approved drawing numbers. Condition 3 is necessary to ensure that the development is sensitive to its surroundings and condition 4 is necessary to safeguard the privacy levels of neighbouring properties.
18. Condition 5 is necessary to ensure a suitable drainage scheme is provided for the development proposed and conditions 6, 7, 8 and 9 are necessary in the interests of highway safety and to encourage alternative means of transport. Condition 10 is necessary to ensure biodiversity enhancements can be delivered, and conditions 11 and 12 are necessary in the interests of visual amenity.
19. The Council have also suggested that permitted development rights be removed for the new dwelling, however, when assessed against the requirements of the Framework, there is insufficient justification for such a restriction. Accordingly, I have not attached this condition.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons identified above, the appeal should be allowed, and planning permission be granted.

Martin Chandler

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
- 2) This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered Partial Street Elevation Revised 866/04, Revised Proposal 866/03A and Proposed Location Plan 8624-PL-01 received by the local planning authority on 15/01/2020. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.
- 3) Prior to their installation, samples and details of the materials to be used in the construction of the building shall have first been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. Development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the so-approved details
- 4) The first floor window in the side elevation of the development hereby permitted shall be fitted with obscured glass and shall be permanently so-retained. The window shall be non-opening unless the parts of the window which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the finished floor level of the room in which the window is installed and shall be permanently so-retained.
- 5) No construction shall take place until details of the drainage system for the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. The details shall include how the site currently drains and will be drained after proposed development with consideration to SuDS.
- 6) The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the vehicle parking and turning space has been provided in accordance with the approved plans. The vehicle parking and turning space shall be retained and maintained in accordance with the approved details and the parking space shall remain available for the parking of vehicles at all times and the turning space shall not be used for any other purpose other than vehicle turning.
- 7) The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be occupied until secure and covered parking for cycles has been provided in accordance with the approved drawing(s)/details. The cycle parking/storage shall be permanently so-retained for the parking of bicycles and used for no other purpose.
- 8) The dwelling hereby permitted shall not be occupied until visibility splays of 2.0 metres by 2.0 metres, have been provided at the intersection of the driveway and the adjacent footway. (Dimensions to be measured along the edge of the drive and the back of the footway from their point of intersection). The visibility splays shall thereafter be kept free of all obstructions to visibility above a height of 0.6 metres.
- 9) No building shall be occupied until the vehicular access has been surfaced with a permeable and bonded material across the entire width of the access for a distance of 5 metres measured from the carriageway edge.
- 10) Prior to the occupation of the dwelling, details of bio-diversity enhancements to include bird and bat boxes, tiles or bricks on and around the new dwelling and wildlife friendly landscaping shall be submitted and to

and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed and maintained.

- 11) Prior to the commencement of the development there shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees/shrubs to be planted, and any existing trees or shrubs to be retained.

Planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the dwelling.

Any trees, plants which within a period of 5 years from the date of the planting (or within a period of 5 years of the occupation of the buildings in the case of retained trees and shrubs) die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species or otherwise as approved in writing by the local planning authority.

- 12) a) No development or other operation shall commence on site until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Scheme of Works which provides for the retention and protection of trees, shrubs and hedges growing on or adjacent to the site in accordance with BS5837: 2012 has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. No development or other operations shall take place except in complete accordance with the details as so-approved (hereinafter referred to as the Approved Scheme).

b) No operations shall commence on site in connection with development hereby approved (including any tree felling, tree pruning, demolition works, soil moving, temporary access construction and or widening or any other operation involving use of motorised vehicles or construction machinery) until the tree protection works required by the Approved Scheme are in place on site.

c) No excavations for services, storage of materials or machinery, parking of vehicles, deposit or excavation of soil or rubble, lighting of fires or disposal of liquids shall take place within an area designated as being fenced off or otherwise protected in the Approved Scheme.

d) The fencing or other works which are part of the Approved Scheme shall not be moved or removed, temporarily or otherwise, until all works including external works have been completed and all equipment, machinery and surplus materials removed from the site, unless the prior approval in writing of the local planning authority has first been sought and obtained.