

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251140
Site Address:	Holme Grange School, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AL
Expiry Date:	25 July 2025
Site Visit Date:	28/05/2025
Proposal: Full application for the change of use of the building to a mixed use of residential (first floor) and facilities for educational staff, including conversion of the garage, changes to fenestration and installation of a fire escape staircase. (Retrospective).	

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 CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB24 – Designated Heritage Assets
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant Planning Application or Planning Appeal History to the current application (i.e. being substantially the same development).

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No comments received.
WBC Enforcement – No comments received.
WBC Highways – No objections.
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objections.
WBC Built Heritage Officer – No objections.
WBC CIL – No comments received.

External

Thames Water Utilities Ltd – No comments received.
South East Water – No comments received.
Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue – No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Wokingham Without Parish Council – <i>‘Wokingham Without Parish Council is disappointed that Holme Grange School have failed to follow appropriate planning procedures.’</i>
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site consists of a 1960s era former dwelling house within the grounds of Holme Grange School which is set within a wider rural setting to the south of Wokingham town.

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 proposal seeks a change of use to create a mixed-use building, comprising residential accommodation on the first floor and staff facilities associated with an educational use on the ground floor. The first floor would retain a two-bedroom residential unit, while the ground floor—formerly used for domestic purposes (e.g., living room, dining room)—would be reconfigured to accommodate meeting rooms, a reception area, staff kitchen area and a print room to support the operational needs of the school.

Core Strategy Policy CP3 (i) states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that do not result in a net loss of dwellings or other forms of residential

accommodation. The proposed internal reconfiguration would reduce the number of bedrooms within the building from five to two, representing a modest reduction in residential capacity. However, as outlined in the supporting cover letter, the building forms part of the Holme Grange School complex and was formerly occupied by the Headmaster. The first-floor accommodation would continue to provide residential space for staff, thereby maintaining its function as ancillary residential accommodation associated with the school, rather than as an independent open market dwelling. As such, the proposal would not result in the net loss of an open market dwelling and the overall impact on the housing supply through the loss of a three bedrooms would be negligible.

Furthermore, the conversion of the ground floor to provide staff facilities would support the day-to-day operations and expansion of the school. This broadly aligns with Policy CP2 (b) of the Core Strategy, which encourages proposals that address the needs of children, young people, and families, particularly where they involve improved service provision.

Therefore, on balance, the proposal is considered to be acceptable, as it would retain residential accommodation in a form that supports the school community while also delivering functional improvements for the educational use in accordance with the aims of Policies CP2 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.

The site is located outside of development limits, where Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy applies. Policy CP11 states that in order to protect the separate identity of settlements and maintain the quality of the environment, proposals outside development limits will not normally be permitted except where inter alia;

- 2) It does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings; and
- 4) In the case of residential extensions, does not result in inappropriate increases in the scale, form or footprint of the original building;

Although residential development within the countryside is unacceptable in principle, the proposals involve the residential conversion of a building that itself is already domesticated and as such is considered appropriate for such a conversion.

The proposed two-storey spiral fire escape staircase is modest in scale and functionally required to provide safe egress from the upper floor. It remains closely related to the original building, does not result in significant spread of built form into the open countryside. As such, the proposal complies with the relevant provisions of Policy CP11 and is considered acceptable in principle.

Character of the Area:

The proposed two-storey spiral fire escape staircase is a modest in scale and does not result in a disproportionate increase in scale or footprint. Given its compact form and limited visual prominence—particularly when viewed in the context of the existing school complex—the structure is not considered to harm the rural character or openness of the surrounding area.

The proposal also includes minor alterations to the fenestration, including the replacement of the existing garage door with a set of rear patio doors, and the installation of a ground floor window on the rear elevation. These changes are modest in scale and are considered to have no adverse impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

Built Heritage:

The Council's Built Heritage Officer has reviewed this application and considers that the external changes carried out to the 1960s era former dwelling house of the School's Headmaster are considered to have no undue impact on the setting to the adjacent listed building formerly called Holmes Grange, which is the main building housing the school. As such, no objections are raised to the changes made.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

The views offered from the fenestration and fire escape staircase proposed on the rear elevation would be similar to that shared from the existing arrangement therefore no unacceptable overlooking impact over and beyond the degree of privacy as existing would arise. Moreover, given the subject buildings sitting within an enclosed school ground, no nearby neighbouring amenities would be adversely impacted by the proposal.

Loss of Light and Overbearing:

The proposed two-storey spiral fire escape staircase would be suitably located and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns of overbearing or loss of light.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has revised this application and notes that the proposed building is being used by the existing staff and there is no associated increase in the number of children. As such it is not considered to be a significant impact on the highway network or parking demand as a result of the proposed change of use.

The Highways Officer also raises no objection to the conversion of the garage. There is sufficient parking retained around the building and within the wider school grounds.

Landscape and Trees:

Given the modest scope of development proposed and the distances to any mature trees within the site, the Council's Trees and Landscape Officer considers that no tree or landscape related impacts would arise from the proposed development.

Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service:

A Fire Safety Inspecting Officer on behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service Ecology has reviewed this application and considers that the proposed fire escape staircase appears to meet the basic principles of means of escape in case of fire. As such, no objections are raised.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, 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:	Approval
Date:	21 July 2025
Earliest date for decision:	13 June 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	MC
Date:	01.08.2025