

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	260910
Site Address:	Caretakers Bungalow, The Bulmershe School, Chequers Way, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 3EJ
Expiry Date:	3 July 2026
Site Visit Date:	17 June 2026
Proposal: Full application for the proposed change of use of the bungalow to educational space (Use Class F1) with associated external alterations.	

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP5 – Housing Mix, Density and Affordability CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP15 – Employment Development CP17 – Housing Delivery
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development ER9 – Woodley town centre and Lower Earley district centre FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage DH2 – Safeguarding amenity HC2 – Community infrastructure
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no previous planning history relating to the bungalow, however there are a small number of historic planning applications to the main school buildings and grounds. These can be found on the Wokingham Borough Council's website.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Property Services - No comments recieved.
WBC Environmental Health - No objection.
WBC Drainage - No objection subject to conditions.
WBC Highways - No objection.
WBC Landscape and Trees - No objection.
WBC Health and Wellbeing - No comments recieved.
WBC Education (School Place Planning) - No comments recieved.
WBC Ecology - No comments recieved.
WBC Waste Services - No comments recieved.

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Woodley Town Council has no objections.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site comprises a vacant single-storey three-bedroom dwelling with a kitchen and living space. The building is constructed of brick, consistent in appearance with the main school buildings and has a floor area of approximately 90sqm.

The bungalow is located within the established boundaries of the school site, which lies within the parish of Woodley, immediately to the south of the M4 motorway. The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character.

The site is not located within a conservation area and there are no listed buildings in the immediate vicinity.

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 Core Strategy. 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.

The existing bungalow benefits from a lawful residential (Use Class C3) use. The proposal would therefore result in the loss of an existing dwelling. Notwithstanding that the bungalow is currently vacant and not in active use, it remains a lawful residential unit and its loss would represent a reduction in the Borough's housing supply. It is also acknowledged that the caretaker historically associated with the dwelling may occupy alternative accommodation within the market housing stock, meaning that the proposal has the potential to result in a net decrease of one dwelling in the Borough's overall housing provision.

Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) resists development proposals that would result in a net loss of dwellings. This policy does not distinguish between different types of residential accommodation and applies to all existing units irrespective of size, type or occupancy. The proposal is therefore in conflict with the adopted development plan insofar as it would lead to the loss of one dwelling.

However, the characteristics of the existing unit are also relevant to the application of planning judgement. The bungalow is located entirely within an operational school site, does not benefit from independent access, and historically functioned as a caretaker's dwelling linked intrinsically to the school's operation. These factors limit its relationship with the general housing market when compared to typical market residential properties.

The proposed development would facilitate additional educational floorspace within an established school. The provision and expansion of educational facilities is a material consideration and forms part of the infrastructure required to support existing and future communities. National policy recognises the role of planning decisions in supporting such community facilities.

Accordingly, the proposal is in conflict with adopted Policy CP3 due to the loss of a dwelling. This must be considered alongside the specific characteristics of the unit and the benefits arising from additional school provision. The overall acceptability of the proposal as a whole is therefore a matter of planning judgement, taking into account the development plan and other material considerations.

Under Policy H2 of the emerging Local Plan Update, the proposal would result in the loss of one dwelling. However, the unit is located within an operational school site, lacks independent access, and has historically functioned as a caretaker's dwelling, such that its contribution to the general housing stock is materially constrained. The proposal would also facilitate additional educational floorspace. On this basis, the loss is capable of being justified under Policy H2.

Although the proposal results in the loss of a single dwelling and conflicts with policy, this is reduced by the limited scale of loss and the role the unit plays due to its location and function, together with the benefit of additional school space.

Character of the Area: The proposed external changes, including the alteration of windows, are small in scale and would not harm the appearance of the building. They would provide a more suitable layout for the proposed use and improve the visual appearance a building that has been vacant for some time.

The building would remain largely unchanged and continue to fit in with the surrounding school site, with no harmful visual impacts.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in design terms and complies with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, and the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity: The proposal is not expected to harm neighbouring amenity. The building is within an existing school site, and the changes are limited to small external alterations and a change of use. There would be no change in the building's size, height or position, and no overlooking, loss of light or overbearing impact to nearby properties.

While the use would change, it remains part of the established school and would operate within an existing institutional setting. As such, it is not expected to result in unacceptable noise, disturbance or activity beyond what already occurs on the site.

Overall, the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity and complies with Policy CP3 of the CS, Policy CC06 of the MDD and the provisions of the NPPF.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: The proposal would not alter the existing access arrangements or parking provision on site. The planning statement confirms that the proposal would not result in an increase in pupil or staff numbers on the site. The Highway Authority has raised no objection. The development is therefore considered acceptable in highway terms and accords with Policy CP6 of the CS and CC07 of the MDD and the provisions of the NPPF.

Flooding and Drainage: It is noted that the Lead Local Flood Authority has requested a drainage condition. However, the proposal relates primarily to a change of use, with only minor external alterations that would not increase the building footprint or areas of hard surfacing. As such, there would be no material change to surface water runoff or flood risk on the site.

In these circumstances, it is not considered that a drainage condition meets the national policy tests, which require conditions to be necessary and directly related to the development. As no increase in flood risk has been identified, the condition is not considered necessary in this case. The application is in accordance with Policy CC09 of the MDD and the provisions of the NPPF.

Landscape and Trees: The proposal would not affect any nearby trees or vegetation. The Council's Landscape and Tree Officer has raised no objection. The development is therefore considered acceptable and in line with Policy CP3 of the CS, Policy TB21 of the MDD, and the provisions of the NPPF.

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

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010): In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Planning Balance and Conclusion: The proposal would result in the loss of one lawful residential dwelling and would therefore conflict with Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy in this respect. However, the harm arising from this conflict is limited as the dwelling is located within an operational school site, does not function as a conventional open market dwelling, and has historically served as caretaker accommodation associated with the school.

The proposal would bring a vacant building back into use and provide additional educational floorspace within an established school site, which carries positive weight in the planning balance. No adverse impacts have been identified in respect of character and appearance, neighbouring amenity, highway safety, parking, flooding, drainage, landscape or trees.

Overall, the limited harm arising from the loss of one dwelling within the school grounds is outweighed by the benefits of the proposal and the absence of any other material planning harm. The application is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve subject to conditions
Date:	29 June 2026
Earliest date for decision:	9 May 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	MC
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Date:	30.06.2026
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