



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of the **PLANNING COMMITTEE** will be held in David Hicks 1 - Civic Offices, Shute End, Wokingham RG40 1BN on **WEDNESDAY 13 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 7.00 PM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Parsonage', written in a cursive style.

Susan Parsonage
Chief Executive
Published on 5 September 2023

Note: Non-Committee Members and members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting or participate in the meeting virtually, in line with the Council's Constitution. If you wish to participate either in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams, please contact Democratic Services. The meeting can also be viewed live using the following link:
<https://youtube.com/live/buiGhTJ6d-c?feature=share>

Please note that other people may film, record, tweet or blog from this meeting. The use of these images or recordings is not under the Council's control.

Our Vision
<i>A great place to live, learn, work and grow and a great place to do business</i>
Enriching Lives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion excellent education and enable our children and young people to achieve their full potential, regardless of their background. • Support our residents to lead happy, healthy lives and provide access to good leisure facilities to enable healthy choices for everyone. • Engage and empower our communities through arts and culture and create a sense of identity for the Borough which people feel part of. • Support growth in our local economy and help to build business.
Providing Safe and Strong Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and safeguard our children, young and vulnerable people. • Offer quality care and support, at the right time, to reduce the need for long term care. • Nurture our communities: enabling them to thrive and families to flourish. • Ensure our Borough and communities remain safe for all.
Enjoying a Clean and Green Borough
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play as full a role as possible to achieve a carbon neutral Borough, sustainable for the future. • Protect our Borough, keep it clean and enhance our green areas for people to enjoy. • Reduce our waste, promote re-use, increase recycling and improve biodiversity. • Connect our parks and open spaces with green cycleways.
Delivering the Right Homes in the Right Places
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality, affordable, sustainable homes fit for the future. • Ensure the right infrastructure is in place, early, to support and enable our Borough to grow. • Protect our unique places and preserve our natural environment. • Help with your housing needs and support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.
Keeping the Borough Moving
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and improve our roads, footpaths and cycleways. • Tackle traffic congestion and minimise delays and disruptions. • Enable safe and sustainable travel around the Borough with good transport infrastructure. • Promote healthy alternative travel options and support our partners in offering affordable, accessible public transport with good transport links.
Changing the Way We Work for You
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be relentlessly customer focussed. • Work with our partners to provide efficient, effective, joined up services which are focussed around our customers. • Communicate better with customers, owning issues, updating on progress and responding appropriately as well as promoting what is happening in our Borough. • Drive innovative, digital ways of working that will connect our communities, businesses and customers to our services in a way that suits their needs.
Be the Best We Can Be
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be an organisation that values and invests in all our colleagues and is seen as an employer of choice. • Embed a culture that supports ambition, promotes empowerment and develops new ways of working. • Use our governance and scrutiny structures to support a learning and continuous improvement approach to the way we do business. • Be a commercial council that is innovative, whilst being inclusive, in its approach with a clear focus on being financially resilient. • Maximise opportunities to secure funding and investment for the Borough. • Establish a renewed vision for the Borough with clear aspirations.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Councillors

David Cornish (Chair)	Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chair)	Alistair Neal
Wayne Smith	Michael Firmager	Stuart Munro
Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey	Tony Skuse	Bill Soane

ITEM NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	PAGE NO.
23.		APOLOGIES To receive any apologies for absence.	
24.		MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 August 2023.	5 - 14
25.		DECLARATION OF INTEREST To receive any declaration of interest.	
26.		APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS To consider any recommendations to defer applications from the schedule and to note any applications that may have been withdrawn.	
27.	Maiden Erlegh	APPLICATION NO.231869 - MAIDEN ERLEGH SCHOOL, SILVERDALE ROAD, EARLEY RECOMMENDATION: Conditional approval	15 - 32
28.	Arborfield	APPLICATION NO.231148 - LAND AT MOLE ROAD, SINDLESHAM, BERKSHIRE RECOMMENDATION: Conditional approval	33 - 52

Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

A Supplementary Agenda will be issued by the Chief Executive if there are any other items to consider under this heading.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following abbreviations were used in the above Index and in reports.

C/A	Conditional Approval (grant planning permission)
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
R	Refuse (planning permission)
LB	(application for) Listed Building Consent
S106	Section 106 legal agreement between Council and applicant in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act 1990
F	(application for) Full Planning Permission
MU	Members' Update circulated at the meeting
RM	Reserved Matters not approved when Outline Permission previously granted

VAR Variation of a condition/conditions attached to a previous approval
PS
Category Performance Statistic Code for the Planning Application

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**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMITTEE
HELD ON 9 AUGUST 2023 FROM 7.00 PM TO 9.23 PM**

Committee Members Present

Councillors: David Cornish (Chair), Andrew Mickleburgh (Vice-Chair), Alistair Neal, Wayne Smith, Michael Firmager, Stuart Munro, Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey, Tony Skuse and Bill Soane

Councillors Present and Speaking

Councillors: Stephen Newton

Officers Present

Gordon Adam, Principal Highway Development Control Officer
Connor Corrigan, Head of Strategic Development
Lyndsay Jennings, Senior Solicitor
Callum Wernham, Democratic & Electoral Services Specialist

Case Officers Present

Mark Croucher
Stefan Fludger
James Fuller

16. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

17. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 12 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Michael Firmager declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 20, application number 223458, on the basis that he had formed a view on the application. Michael added that he would move to the public seating area to allow him to address the Committee as a registered speaker in the capacity of a Ward Member. Micael stated that he would leave the room after addressing the Committee, and would take no part in the debate or vote.

Bill Soane declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 20, application number 223458, on the grounds that he had close friendships with members of the golf club, including business associates. Bill stated that he would leave the room for the duration of this item and would take no part in the debate or vote.

With regards to agenda item 21, application number 231453, Alistair Neal noted that he was a Member of Earley Town Council's Planning Committee. Whilst the Committee had considered this application, Alistair stated that he was not present at this meeting and would view this application with an open mind by listening to all representations before forming a view.

With regards to agenda item 21, application number 231453, Andrew Mickleburgh noted that he was the Chair of the Council's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and was also a Member of the Corporate Parenting Board. Andrew added that

he had not formed any view on this application, and would consider this application with an open mind by listening to all representations before forming a view.

19. APPLICATIONS TO BE DEFERRED AND WITHDRAWN ITEMS

No applications were recommended for deferral, or withdrawn.

20. APPLICATION NO.223458 - LAND AT SONNING GOLF CLUB, DUFFIELD ROAD, SONNING, RG4 6GJ

Bill Sonae declared a prejudicial interest in this item and left the room for its duration.

Michael Firmager declared a prejudicial interest in this item and moved to the public seating area to facilitate him addressing the Committee as a registered speaker in his capacity as Ward Member.

Proposal: Outline planning permission for the proposed erection of up to 50 no. dwellings with public open space and revised access off Duffield Road, plus associated modifications to Sonning Golf Club including reconfiguration of golf club car parking areas and relocation of the 18th green, addition of a practice putting green, new driving nets, new short game chipping area and conversion of the west wing of the existing clubhouse to accommodate a new golf simulator practice facility, including removal of external staircase and changes to fenestration. (All matters reserved except for access).

Applicant: Sonning Golf Club Ltd, Duffield Road, Sonning RG4 6GJ

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 15 to 70.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Further clarification with regards to location sustainability;
- Further clarification with regards to there being no loss of public amenity space and that the development would not compromise the future viability and useability of the golf course;
- Reemphasis that the application site sat within flood zone 1 where the risk of flooding was low;
- Additional condition 26 with regards to submission of a detailed drainage strategy;
- Confirmation that the development would provide 40% affordable housing on site;
- Clarification that the application site is larger than that proposed within the local Plan Update, and that the 24 dwellings proposed within the Local Plan Update were in addition to the 13 units that had planning permission to the south-west.

Mark Croucher, case officer, advised the Committee of an additional recommended condition with regards to submission of details in relation to mitigation measures to prevent golf ball strikes on the proposed properties.

David Cornish noted that the Committee had undertaken a site visit, with all Members present with the exception of Bill Soane who had given apologies due to his prejudicial interest, whilst Michael Firmager attended the visit in his capacity as a Ward Member.

Trefor Fisher, Sonning Parish Council, spoke in objection to the application. Trefor thanked the previous case officer, Senjuti Manna, for meeting with the Parish Council on several occasions to discuss the details of this application. Trefor noted the quality and quantity of the objections submitted, and was of the opinion that the objections were of the highest quality. Trefor added that the Right Honourable Theresa May MP had submitted a detailed objection both as a resident and a Member of Parliament. Trefor stated that the application site shared the boundary with a site which had extant permission for 57 flats. Combined, sites in the vicinity with extant permission and this proposal would result in a 16 percent increase to the number of dwellings within Sonning. Trefor stated that the application contravened numerous policies, some of which were used to argue against the site within the draft Local Plan Update. Trefor added that the Sonning community accepted that it was required to take a fair share of new housing to help the Council achieve a five-year housing land supply, however Trefor was of the opinion that Sonning had taken its fair share of new housing and applications such as this were unsustainable. Trefor noted the change in Government policy which would prioritise development within towns and urban areas, where jobs and facilities were located, and away from countryside locations such as the development site which was unsustainable. Trefor stated that the reality of this site would mean that residents would not walk to the Brecon Road Parade shops and would instead have to drive into Woodley or Twyford. Trefor felt that this site shared similarities with the recently dismissed appeal for a site in Hurst, with unreliable bus services and high grade countryside. Trefor asked that the application be refused, as approval would result in the loss of high quality sport and leisure facilities whilst delivering an unsustainable development.

Carol Jewell, Woodley Town Council, spoke in objection to the application. Carol stated that new developments should encourage the reduction of car journeys, and cited the Inspector's comments in relation to the nearby site for 13 dwellings whereby it was stated that access to Woodley Town Centre by foot would not be attractive and as such the location would not be attractive for non-car owners. Carol added that whilst the site might meet accessibility criteria on distance, the safety of the walking routes had not been assessed. Carol stated that bus services would fall short on regularity, with services running on an hourly basis from stops between 150m and 650m away. Carol was of the opinion that the application would increase pollution, result in a loss of greenspace and reduce biodiversity in the area. Carol stated that the proposals would increase traffic on the already busy Duffield Road and would result in loss of habitats for a variety of animals. Carol urged the Committee to refuse the application.

Gordon Jones, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Gordon stated that the site was located within designated countryside and had been identified as such for hundreds of years. Gordon added that the course and its surrounding provided an important habitat for a variety of wildlife including deer, bats and a variety of birds and mammals. Gordon stated that the site was located outside of the Sonning development area, whilst additional traffic would cause a significant problem for the local community. Gordon added that shops, doctors and pharmacies were all located over a mile away, and therefore it was very unlikely that potential residents would walk to these facilities. Gordon was of the opinion that existing residents would see no benefits as a result of the proposed development, whilst the developer and golf course owner would profit from the proposals. Gordon stated that the development would lead to increased noise and light pollution for local residents.

Gordon added that the Council's focus should be the wellbeing of the existing population, and was of the opinion that this application was totally inappropriate and should be refused.

John Allen, resident, spoke in objection to the application. John stated that the application site was an integral part of the golf course, which was neither surplus to requirements or underutilised. John added that leisure and sporting facilities should not be built over, and noted that the proposed properties would be at risk of being struck by stray golf balls, which already occurred on the Charvil side of the course. John added that a net would need to be over 100 feet tall to prevent such incidents. John was of the opinion that the proposed virtual golfing area was no substitute for a practice area and driving range, and felt that this application was part of a gradual creep into the removal of leisure facilities in the wider area including the rugby club, Blue Mountain Golf Course and the Golf Course in Hurst. John stated that developing over sports and leisure facilities was against Government guidelines, and asked that the Committee refuse the application on the basis of unacceptable loss of amenity provision.

Mike Burlow, resident, spoke in objection to the application. Mike stated that the Council's vision included facilitating residents to live happy and healthy lives, which would be at odds with the removal of sporting facilities at this location. Mike stated that the NPPF was clear that development should not result in the loss of public amenity space. Mike disagreed with the sentiment within the agenda that the application would not result in the loss of public amenity space. Mike stated that the driving range was heavily used, with 24 golfers using the range for practice on one day last week. Sonning had 10 teams registered in the area who utilised these facilities, whilst professional tournaments also made intensive use of the driving range facilities. Mike added that golfing lessons were offered to local school children, whilst club members could bring their children to the driving range to learn the sport. Mike noted that Golf England's research had shown that driving ranges were a gateway for children to get involved in the sport. Mike added that there was no alternative capacity to cope with the demand, whilst provision of a virtual range was not the answer.

Tom Rumble, agent, spoke in support of the application. Tom stated that the current practice area represented only a small part of the club, whilst the remainder of the club would be unaffected by the proposals. Tom added that the application had real merits, with other applications and appeal decisions confirming that this site was situated within a sustainable area. Tom stated that the driving range was not high grade countryside, whilst the site was well contained and the application would retain mature trees in order to avoid impacts on existing properties. Tom added that this application included improved facilities for the wider site, unlike the proposal within the draft Local Plan Update. After consideration of officer and consultee responses, modifications had been made to the scheme to reduce the development area, sensitively locate dwellings to facilitate the retention of mature trees and to include the delivery of public open spaces. Tom stated that the separation gap between Sonning and Charvil would be maintained, whilst the density of the site was similar to that of the adjacent site which had permission for 13 dwellings. Tom confirmed that forty-percent affordable housing would be delivered on-site, whilst a detailed technical travel survey had demonstrated that the road network had capacity and that the proposed access would be safe. Tom was of the opinion that the proposal represented a high quality and sensitive scheme, whilst technical assessments had shown that the proposals could be accommodated satisfactorily. Tom noted that the site had been nominated as a local green space, however these nominations were only to be considered as part of the policy setting process and as such no weight should be given

to this when assessing this specific planning application. Tom stated that this site would add to the Council's housing land supply, and commented that there were no negatives that significantly and demonstrably outweighed the benefits of the application as was required via the tilted balance.

Michael Firmager, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Michael stated that he had major concerns regarding the sustainability of the site, with shops being located far away and infrequent bus services operating in the area. Michael added that whilst it was 950m to the nearest Primary School, this involved crossing a dangerous road. Michael commented that Pound Lane suffered from flooding due to poor drainage, which could be worsened via the proposals. Michael was of the opinion that the area was the subject of overdevelopment, with previous local permissions including 13 dwellings and 57 flats, which when added to this proposal would erode the separation gap between Sonning and Charvil. Michael added that the proposal would increase traffic, whilst the loss of 12 car parking spaces for the club would result in club users parking in nearby residential roads, adding to congestion. Michael was concerned regarding how tight the access to the site would be. Michael stated that the golf course was an important biodiversity haven which needed protecting. Michael was of the opinion that loss of leisure facilities should be considered as part of the tilted balance, and the lack of such an assessment could be grounds for legal challenge. Michael questioned where the evidence was in relation to the Supplementary Planning Agenda's suggestion that there would be no loss of public amenity space. Michael feared for the long term viability of the golf club as a result of this application, and urged the Committee to refuse the application.

Michael Firmager left the room.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey noted that Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) could not implore shops to open near such sites. Rachelle queried whether the roads would be adopted by WBC, and sought clarity as to how late the golf course stayed open until. Mark Croucher confirmed that WBC could not require shops to open, however the Brecon Road shops were within a medium walking distance as per the living streets guide. For a development of this size, there was not a general expectation that shops would be included as part of the development process. The issue of adoption of roads would be dealt with by a legal agreement, and would be dealt with at the reserved matters stage. Mark added that whilst he was unsure of the exact opening times of the club, the club house was situated away from the proposed development and was located closer to the 13 dwellings that had been given planning permission. Gordon Adam, Principal Highway Development Control Officer, confirmed that the developer was required to build the roads to an adoptable standard, and should they wish to retain the roads privately then fees were applicable to allow the designs and finish product to be inspected by officers.

Alistair Neal queried how the pedestrian linkages would be secured in the absence of a condition, and questioned how the green space could be described as public open space if there was no footpath linkage. Mark Croucher stated that the drawings were indicative at this stage, and to condition a pedestrian linkage may not meet the planning tests at this stage. Mark confirmed that even if the access road was a private road, it would still retain access for all who wished to use the road as it would be private only for maintenance purposes. Mark added that whilst pedestrians may not be able to pass the site and access it via a linkage, they could still access the space via the proposed main access should they wish.

Andrew Mickleburgh sought clarity as to whether the previous permissions for adjacent sites were material considerations, queried the weight that should be given to the loss of a significant leisure facility in the vein of the recent Hurst appeal decision which cited a loss of high grade agricultural land, and sought elaboration as to the comment that permitting development on a site beyond the existing settlement boundary was not considered to undermine the Council's strategic objectives in relation to planned growth in the area. Mark Croucher confirmed that permissions for adjacent sites did form a material consideration, however Members also needed to determine each application on its own merits. Mark confirmed that the situation at the Hurst appeal was different as that related to the loss of high grade agricultural land. Mark stated that the officer opinion was that the barrier between Woodley and Sonning was the railway line and wooded area, which would both be retained. Mark confirmed that in the absence of a five year housing land supply the tilted balance had been engaged, which meant that the application had to be determined in line with the NPPF rather than our outdated development plan.

Wayne Smith queried the current status of the local green space nomination. Mark Croucher confirmed that this area was not designated as a local green space, and was classified as a privately owned recreational space.

Wayne Smith commented that his understanding was that private land could be designated as local green space. Wayne cited a number of issues with the proposed development, including its location in the countryside and outside of development limits, sustainability issues including the basic need for residents to travel to Woodley by vehicle for weekly shops, and the proposals being contrary to CP11. Wayne cited the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location, which could not be accounted within WBC's five year housing land supply as we could not prove that the development was deliverable. Wayne queried whether the Committee wished to grant permission for this site on the chance that it could be added to our five year housing land supply. Wayne was of the opinion that this application would change the whole dynamic of Sonning, whilst providing no additional facilities to increase sustainability such as shopping facilities or bus services. Mark Croucher stated that this application fulfilled the medium walking distance requirement to local facilities, whilst the 13 houses approved in 2018 were approved in line with the current development plan at appeal. With regards to deliverability, Mark confirmed that whilst this was a continuing frustration, the Committee would need to be very clear as to why this site would not be deliverable, and Inspectors were historically reluctant to share this view. Connor Corrigan, Head of Strategic Development, stated that whilst there was significant frustration with regards to the five year housing supply and deliverability, schemes could not be discounted on the chance that they may not come forwards.

David Cornish commented that whilst there would be harm to the course and facilities, this was not a material planning consideration. In addition, the fundamental course would be retained. David stated that he was always concerned when CP11 was breached, however in his opinion the gap between Sonning and Woodley had all but disappeared in any meaningful sense. David raised concern over the increase in the classification of a reasonable walking distance to facilities from 800m to 1.2km, which had been accepted by an Inspector which left the Committee in a difficult situation. David felt that the Committee had to balance the reluctance to reduce the settlement gap against the potential costs and reputational damage should this application be taken to appeal. Mark Croucher stated that no site ticked all the boxes in terms of sustainability, however this site did meet the medium and high thresholds in terms of walking distance to facilities, of which the calculations were based on the chartered institute of highways surveyors. Connor Corrigan

stated that there were a number of services which were in a reasonable walking distance to the application site.

Alistair Neal raised concern that whilst on there were facilities within the living streets guide medium walking distance, the walking route was dangerous requiring pedestrians to walk over the railway bridge and navigate through areas with no pavements in order to reach bus stops. Mark Croucher stated that there were bus stops accessible on Pound Lane.

Tony Skuse was of the opinion that the approval for the adjacent 13 dwellings set a precedent and made it very difficult for the Committee to refuse this application, as it was likely that a refusal would be overturned at appeal. Mark Croucher commented that whilst the performance of this application at appeal was not a material consideration, it was a good 'stress test' to refer to when coming to a conclusion.

Andrew Mickleburgh stated his considerable sympathy with objectors concerns, however highways officers had not objected to the proposals subject to conditions, and whilst the application did not conform with CP11 the application of the tilted balance required the harms of the application to demonstrably outweigh the benefits. With regards to sustainability, Andrew commented that an Inspector had concluded that the adjacent site for 13 dwellings was sustainable, which set a precedent for this application. Andrew stated that he was minded to support a motion to approve the application, subject to additional conditions relating to ball strikes, pedestrian access from Bath Road, generic drainage conditions and a condition requiring ten percent biodiversity net gain.

Stuart Munro was of the opinion that as the application for 13 houses was approved four to five years ago, any precedent set was essentially irrelevant as policy and development had moved on considerably in that time.

David Cornish stated that any motion to refuse the application would require sufficient planning reasons, and whilst the most significant reason put forward thus far seemed to rely on the lack of sustainability, the approval of 13 dwellings at the adjacent site significantly compromised this reason.

With regards to the additional conditions as mentioned by Andrew Mickleburgh, Lyndsay Jennings, Senior Solicitor, confirmed that public rights of way access to the public open space could be secured via the heads of terms of the S106 legal agreement. Connor Corrigan confirmed that the condition 22 set out the plan for biodiversity net gain, which was deemed as sufficient. Andrew Mickleburgh thanked officers for their advice, which he accepted.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be approved in line with the officer recommendation, additional condition 26 requiring submission of a detailed drainage strategy as set out in the Supplementary Planning Agenda, and additional condition with regards to the mitigation of ball strikes and amendment to the heads of terms of the S106 legal agreement to secure public rights of way access to the public open space as resolved by the Committee. This was seconded by Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey.

RESOLVED That application number 223458 be approved subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 47 to 58, additional condition 26 requiring submission of a detailed drainage strategy as set out in the Supplementary Planning Agenda, and additional condition with regards to the mitigation of ball strikes and

amendment to the heads of terms of the S106 legal agreement to secure public rights of way access to the public open space as resolved by the Committee.

21. APPLICATION NO.231453 - 29 STANTON CLOSE, EARLEY, WOKINGHAM
Michael Firmager and Bill Soane re-entered the room.

Proposal: Full application for change of use from a residential dwelling house to children's home.

Applicant: Wokingham Borough Council

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 71 to 86.

The Committee were advised that updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda included:

- Removal of condition 4;
- Minor amendment of the wording of conditions 1 to 3.

Nathan Whitley, on behalf of the applicant, spoke in support of the application. Nathan stated that the proposal would facilitate one member of staff and a maximum of two children to live in the property. The home would only accommodate one child, who was already in situ, unless there was an emergency which required a second child to be accommodated for a short period of time. Nathan added that at present, some children in the Borough were placed many miles away from their family, which had huge impacts on their wellbeing whilst also having a significant financial cost associated. Children often felt isolation and abandonment when placed far away from their families, and provision of this facility would allow a child, or a maximum of two, to be placed and cared for locally. Nathan added that it was difficult to support the health and wellbeing needs of children who were placed out of Borough. Nathan stated that this application was supported by CP2, whilst the property would be supported by an assistant manager solely for this property and a general manager who would oversee three total properties. Nathan confirmed that the home would be staffed twenty-four hours per day, whilst OFSTED would confirm the occupancy levels. Nathan concluded by confirming that the property was already accommodating the child in situ, and the application would not change current staffing levels.

Stephen Newton, Ward Member, spoke in objection to the application. Stephen stated that he was a foster carer, and therefore had first hand experience in supporting vulnerable children. Stephen added that whilst he supported the premise of this application there were clear differences between the planning application and the assurances he had been given by Children's Services Officers. Whilst these conversations had given assurances of one child being accommodated at the property, the documentation within the agenda pack allowed for up to two children and the Supplementary Planning Agenda removed any reference to occupancy numbers. Stephen stated that nearly all looked after children were impacted by trauma, and may at times be noisy. With regards to parking, Stephen raised concern that the on-street parking situation was already very busy, and the accommodation of two children could worsen this via additional visitors. In the event of approval of this application, Stephen asked that should two children be accommodated on a long-term basis then conditions be applied to provide three car parking spaces and

installation of soundproofing or sufficient community engagement to mitigate noise concerns.

Bill Soane queried reference to vulnerable adults in condition 4, and commented that it may be possible for side by side parking could be provided in place of tandem parking. James Fuller, case officer, confirmed that condition 4 and therefore the reference to vulnerable adults had been removed in the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Michael Firmager sought additional detail regarding parking provision, and queried whether the site would be staffed round the clock. James Fuller confirmed that highways officers had assessed the application and had not requested that an additional space be provided. Connor Corrigan, Head of Strategic Development, stated that there was potential to accommodate three cars parking side by side. James Fuller confirmed that the site would be staffed round the clock.

David Cornish voiced his frustration that the Ward Member had been told one version of occupancy levels, whilst the agenda and subsequent Supplementary Planning Agenda had amended those assurances two-fold. David asked that such numbers be confirmed in advance of agenda publication in future.

Andrew Mickleburgh queried whether the property could accommodate individuals up to the age of 18 or also care leavers. Nathan Whitley confirmed that the property would only be occupied to children aged 17 and below unless further permission was arranged to arrange their transition.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that additional conditions be added, requiring the applicant to submit details outlining how three cars could be accommodated on-site, requiring the applicant to monitor noise levels and review mitigation measures to limit impact on neighbours, and requiring the applicant to ensure ongoing engagement with the local community to ensure the success of the home.

After some discussion and advice from officers, Andrew Mickleburgh was content to propose the first suggestion as a condition and the following two as informatives.

Andrew Mickleburgh proposed that the application be approved in line with the officer recommendation, Supplementary Planning Agenda, additional condition requiring the applicant to submit details outlining how three cars could be accommodated on-site as resolved by the Committee, and additional informatives asking the applicant to monitor noise levels and review mitigation measures to limit impact on neighbours and recommending the applicant ensure ongoing engagement with the local community to ensure the success of the home as resolved by the Committee. This was seconded by Anthony Skuse.

RESOLVED That application 231453 be approved, subject to conditions and informatives as set out in agenda pages 79 to 80, removal of condition 4 and minor amendment to the wording of conditions 1 to 3 as set out in the Supplementary Planning Agenda, additional condition requiring the applicant to submit details outlining how three cars could be accommodated on-site as resolved by the Committee, and additional informatives asking the applicant to monitor noise levels and review mitigation measures to limit impact on neighbours and recommending the applicant ensure ongoing engagement with the local community to ensure the success of the home as resolved by the Committee.

22. APPLICATION NO.213610 - HATCHGATE AND KENTONS, KENTONS LANE, REMENHAM

Proposal: Full application for the erection of a 2 storey Estate management buildings including gardeners accommodation and underground tunnel linking the estate buildings and ancillary to the main house on Strowdes estate, following demolition of 3No dwellings, 1No pool house, garages and outhouses, stables and hay barn.

Applicant: C/O Avison, Young, Bristol

The Committee considered a report about this application, set out in agenda pages 87 to 124.

The Committee were advised that there were no updates contained within the Supplementary Planning Agenda.

Andrew Mickleburgh commented that this was a large and important site within the countryside and greenbelt. Andrew Mickleburgh commented that he would have expected more detail for a full application such as an integrated estate management plan. However, Andrew accepted that this application had very special circumstances that outweighed any material harm that may be caused by the development.

Rachelle Shepherd-DuBey proposed that the application be approved in line with the officer recommendation. This was seconded by Andrew Mickleburgh.

RESOLVED That application number 213610 be approved, subject to conditions as set out in agenda pages 103 to 107.

Agenda Item 27.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
231869	03/10/2023	Maiden Erlegh	Maiden Erlegh;

Applicant	Wokingham Borough Council
Site Address	Maiden Erlegh School, Silverdale Road, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 7HS
Proposal	Full application for the proposed change of use of building to educational use, including internal and external alterations (part retrospective).
Type	Full
Officer	Baldeep Pulahi
Reason for determination by committee	Applicant is Wokingham Borough Council

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 13 September 2023
REPORT PREPARED BY	Assistant Director – Place and Growth
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL subject to conditions and informatives

SUMMARY

The Borough has a pressing and established need for a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school to serve both Wokingham and Reading borough residents, which is set out in detail within Executive reports of 31 January 2019 and 24 September 2020. The Council has a statutory duty to provide appropriate education for children with special educational needs.

The existing building for which this application relates is located within the existing school grounds and would assist meeting the identified pressing need for additional SEN provision within the Borough.

The proposed internal and external alterations are considered to be acceptable on character grounds. There are also no significant impacts to nearby residents or the operation of Maiden Erlegh School. Therefore, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions listed.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
TEMP/1995/61176	Change of use of bungalow to reception and office (temporary for two years)	Approved 20/05/1995
F/1996/63928	Single storey extension for classroom extension	Approved 04/07/1996
F/1997/65553	Two storey extension to PE Room	Approved 20/06/1997
F/2000/0600	Pitched roof to the humanities building	Approved 06/04/2000
F/2001/5052	Single storey extension for use as arts area	Approved

		15/12/2001
F/2002/7643	Single storey extension for use as arts area	Approved 19/12/2002
F/2003/0832	School extension and pitched roof	Approved 18/02/2004
O/2003/0871	Redevelopment of School Campus	Approved 15/12/2004
F/2004/1729	Two storey extension to sixth form building	Approved 07/07/2004
F/2004/3018	Garage and six bay store	Approved 10/11/2004
F/2005/4403	Sixth form block and sports facilities	Approved 30/08/2005
F/2005/6088	Science and general teaching classrooms	Approved 07/03/2006
F/2015/0915	Infill extension and the re-modelling of existing reception area and office	Approved 22/06/2015

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION	
Site Area	463.90 m2
Existing Use	F2 Community Use
Proposed Use	F1 Education Use
Number of jobs created	6 – 1 teacher and 5 teaching assistants
Existing parking spaces	120
Proposed parking spaces	120 (no change)
CONSTRAINTS	Major Development Location Contaminated Land Consultation Zone Bat Roost Habitat Suitability Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone Nuclear Consultation Zone SSSI Impact Risk Zones JCEB Mineral Safeguarding Areas

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Environmental Health	No objection
WBC Highways	No objection
WBC Health and Wellbeing	No comments received at time of writing
WBC Education (School Place Planning)	No comments received at time of writing

REPRESENTATIONS	
Earley Town Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comments due 7 September 2023 (to be appended to supplementary agenda)
Ward Member(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No comments received at time of writing of the report

Neighbours	<p><u>One neighbour comment received at the time of writing and is listed below:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the intention to upgrade the Silverdale Community Centre to a new SEN unit for Maiden Erlegh School however installation of new gas boiler does meet not material planning considerations. • The Council instead should install ground sourced heat pump which has the potential to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions. • This change would be in line with the Council's development of "a local plan that specifies net zero construction and infrastructure".
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<p>PLANNING POLICY</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework National Design Guide National Planning Practice Guidance</p> <p>Core Strategy (CS)</p> <p>CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals</p> <p>MDD Local Plan (MDD)</p> <p>CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character</p> <p>Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)</p> <p>DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species DM9 - Protecting Health, Safety and Amenity DM10 - Flood Risk DM15 - Site History</p> <p>Other</p> <p>Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List</p>

PLANNING ISSUES

Site Description

1. The application relates to an existing building formerly used as nursery located within the grounds of Maiden Erlegh School. The building is surrounded by existing school buildings and playing fields. The pre-school has moved location and previously accommodated between 24 - 32 children (1 staff member to 6-8 children. The building is therefore redundant.

Proposal Description

2. The proposal seeks planning permission (part retrospective) for the proposed change of use of an existing building (Use class F2) to educational use (Use class F1), including internal and external alterations. The submitted Planning Statement states '*The existing building although a community centre was used as a nursery for years and therefore arguably the space, or at least a portion of the space, was used for educational purposes*'.
3. The proposed alteration works includes the reconfiguration of the external walls to reduce the overall area of the external window/doors and the installation of two new windows and front door. The existing felt roofing system will be replaced with a new insulated single ply membrane with the walls, insulation both between and externally to the timber structure. The building will have a silicone render coating finish.
4. The proposed internal layout of the building will comprise classrooms, communal areas, store rooms, staff rooms, therapy room, sensory room, clock room/locker room and WC's.
5. The applicant has confirmed the proposed SEN classroom will be used as part of Maiden Erlegh School and not as a separate entity.
6. The previous pre-school (nursery) operating from the building has ceased and moved onto a new location, therefore it is acceptable to take on pupil at the application site as admissions. The pre-school pupil number could have accommodated approximately 24-32 children, on a ratio of a maximum 1 staff member to maximum 8 kids. In this case, the classroom is to accommodate up to 25 pupils which is a neutral increase when compared to the pre-school pupil numbers.
7. The applicant has confirmed the staff ratio to be 1 teacher and 5 teaching assistants.

Principle of Development

8. 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 (MDD) 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.

9. The site is located within the major development location of Earley within defined settlement boundary and as such, the residential development would be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy.
10. The Borough has a pressing and established need for a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school to serve both Wokingham and Reading borough, which is set out in detail within Executive reports of 31 January 2019 and 24 September 2020. The Council has a statutory duty to provide appropriate education for children with special educational needs. These reports clearly demonstrate a requirement for a SEN provision to meet these statutory needs, both in terms of insufficient existing local capacity and the associated costs with facilitating out of borough provision.
11. The applicant has submitted a SEN Supporting Statement which outlines the following:
 - Lack of specialist local provision to meet increasing need.
 - Appropriate provision is required locally.
 - The council currently commissions a disproportionate amount of high-cost placements in the independent sector which has contributed to the significant financial deficit experienced in the local system.
 - It has been identified that a new 25 place SEND resource base is to be commissioned for pupils.
12. The Maiden Erlegh Trust have identified the Silverdale Centre (application site building) as the proposed venue for the pupils to benefit from a dedicated resource space, therapy room, sensory room, and specialist SEN classrooms. The benefits of this would include:
 - Increased specialist provision available within the local area for pupils living within the Borough (25 additional places).
 - Reduction in the number of pupils that need to travel outside of Wokingham area to access specialist SEND provision.
 - Benefits for the wider school community (including pupils and staff) who will be able to access the resource and specialist staff as required.
 - Increased local employment opportunities for staff working with pupils with SEND
 - Building will still provide a benefit to local community.
13. In addition, Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy states new development should contribute to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs. Planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:
 - (b) Children, young people, and families including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs.

14. In this case, the proposal would meet the requirements of children who require specialist services to meet their additional needs and thus complies with the aims of Core Strategy Policy CP2.

Loss of F2 Community Use

15. Paragraph 93 of the National Planning Policy Framework places an emphasis on the need to provide the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs. It states that Planning decisions should 'A) Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses, and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments'
16. The proposed change of use from F2 to F1 would result in the loss of a local community use (Community Centre) thus conflicting with part j) of the CP3 of the Core Strategy which states that planning permission will be granted on schemes that *'do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.'*
17. In this case the building has been vacated by the previous nursery use which has relocated, would not result in the loss of any existing occupier, and would only realistically be occupied by a community use compatible on an existing school campus. The proposal would meet the requirements of children who require specialist services to meet their additional needs for education purposes without having to send children outside of the Borough. Whilst it is acknowledged to be a minor policy conflict, this outweighs the loss of the community centre use and thus the principle of the change of use is acceptable in planning policy terms.
18. Given the building's location on an existing school campus, it is considered reasonable and necessary to restrict the use of the building for the delivery of Special Educational Needs (SEN) only. This is secured by planning Condition 3.

Sustainability of location

19. Policies CP1 and CP6 of the Core Strategy require that development be sustainable, in terms of enhancing the quality of the environment and achieving zero carbon developments with a reduction in the need for travel and the promotion of sustainable transport.
20. In this case, the site is located within a Major Development Location and is in close proximity to facilities, services, and public transport. From a sustainability perspective, it is within a suitable location and is acceptable in terms of the principles stated in the Core Strategy.

Character of the Area

21. 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.

22. The alteration works to the existing building includes the reconfiguration of the external walls to reduce the overall area of the external window/doors and the installation of two new windows and front door. The existing felt roofing system will be replaced with a new insulated single ply membrane with the walls, insulation both between and externally to the timber structure. The building will have a silicone render coating finish.
23. The submitted drawings show details of the external materials which includes Upvc windows with steel frame bracing, metal grills to be powder coated in a grey colour finish, aluminium capping to parapet wall. The use of materials are acceptable and will be secured by a planning condition.
24. The existing building including the proposed external alterations would not appear at odds with regards to its design in relation to other buildings located within the school grounds and is appropriate for its intended use and appearance to its surroundings.
25. It is acknowledged due to its location within the existing school grounds, the existing building has restricted views from the public realm.
26. Overall, the external alterations to the existing building will have a minimal visual impact when considered in the context of its immediate surroundings within the school site, as well as the surrounding area. As such, the proposal would not result in a detrimental impact upon the character of the surrounding area, and therefore would accord with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Neighbour Amenity

27. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity.
28. The existing building maintains sufficient separation distances to the nearby residential properties, with there being at least 30 metres to the property along Sevenoaks Road and in excess of 100 metres to the properties along Avalon Road and the Crescent. Therefore, no impact on residential amenity is envisaged on grounds of overlooking, overbearingness or loss of light or privacy.
29. The applicant has confirmed the building is to be in use during school hours, furthermore no objections are raised by the Council's Environmental Health Officer on noise grounds.

Highway Access and Parking Provision

30. Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off street parking standards, including provision for charging facilities.
31. The Council's Highways Officer has commented that previous use of the building consisted of a community centre and children's day nursery and that the

cessation of this use could reduce external vehicle movements to/from the school site and reduce parking demand.

32. The proposed change of use to a SEN unit associated with the school will not have a significant impact on the local highway network. Additionally the proposal would not have an impact on access or level of parking, therefore no objections are raised by the Council's Highways Officer.

Flooding and Drainage

33. Section 10 of the NPPF, Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy and Policies CC09 and CC10 of the MDD requires flooding protection, sustainable drainage methods and the minimisation of surface water flow.

34. The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is suitable for development. The site is at a low risk from surface water flooding. As the building is an existing structure, no concerns are raised on flood risk or surface water run-off.

Landscape and Trees

35. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

36. Due to the nature of the proposal, there would be no impact upon the existing trees and landscaping.

Sustainable Design and Climate Change

37. Wokingham Borough Council has declared a Climate Emergency and prepared a Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP, third progress report, 2022) which guides the Council's actions in response to climate emergency. In December 2022, WBC has also published a Climate Change Interim Policy Position Statement (CCIPPS) which defines the Council's position relating to climate change as applicable to the planning process.

38. Policy CC04 of the MDD Local Plan covers sustainable design and construction and Policy CC05 of the MDD encourages renewable energy and decentralised energy networks. R21 of the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD requires that new development contribute to environmental sustainability and the mitigation of climate change.

39. It is acknowledged the proposal would include the installation of a new gas boiler over a renewable source of energy, however the energy performance of a building is controlled by Building Regulations and planning applications cannot be refused on this ground unless policies explicitly require that.

40. The applicant has submitted a Building Control Certificate for the *Refurbishment of existing Silverdale community centre to create SEN unit for school* under ref:

23/0770/COMFP. At the time of writing, a decision is pending on the Building Control Certificate.

Conclusion

41. The proposed change of use from a community use (Class F2) to an educational use (F1) is considered acceptable in principle, as the proposal would make a positive contribution to help meet an identified pressing need for additional SEN provision within the Borough. Whilst the proposal includes the installation of a new gas boiler, this environmental shortcoming does not outweigh the social benefits of the scheme. As such, the proposal would accord with national and local planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

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.

The building is intended to provide support and resources for children with additional needs and this is acknowledged in the consideration of the application.

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.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions and Informatives

APPROVAL subject to the following conditions and informatives:

1. Approved Details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered:

Location Plan, General Arrangement Drawing -BR01 J, Proposed Elevations – BR10 C, Existing GA, and Site Block Plans – E-02 and Planning Statement received on 02/08/2023.

Existing Elevations – E-01 Rev A and Childrens Services Supporting Statement received on 08/08/2023.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

2. Materials

The materials to be used in the development are to be in accordance with those specified on the approval drawings and submitted application form.

Reason: To ensure the appearance of the development is satisfactory. Relevant policy Core Strategy policies CP1 and CP3

3. Restriction of Change of Use

The premises shall be used only for the delivery of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and for no other purpose, including any other purpose in Class F1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning [Use Classes] Order 1987 (as amended) or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order [with or without modification].

Reason: In granting this permission the local planning authority has had regard to the special circumstances of this case, being the delivery of Special Educational Needs, and wishes to have the opportunity of exercising control over any subsequent alternative use in the interests of the amenities of the area. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policies CP1 & CP3.

Informatives.

1. The applicant is reminded that should there be any change from the approved drawings during the build of the development this may require a fresh planning application if the changes differ materially from the approved details. Non-material changes may be formalised by way of an application under s.96A Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

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Location Plan

Site Address: Maiden Erlegh School, Silverdale Road, Earley, RG6 7HS

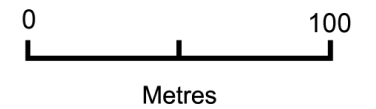
Date Produced: 02-Aug-2023

Scale: 1:2500 @A4

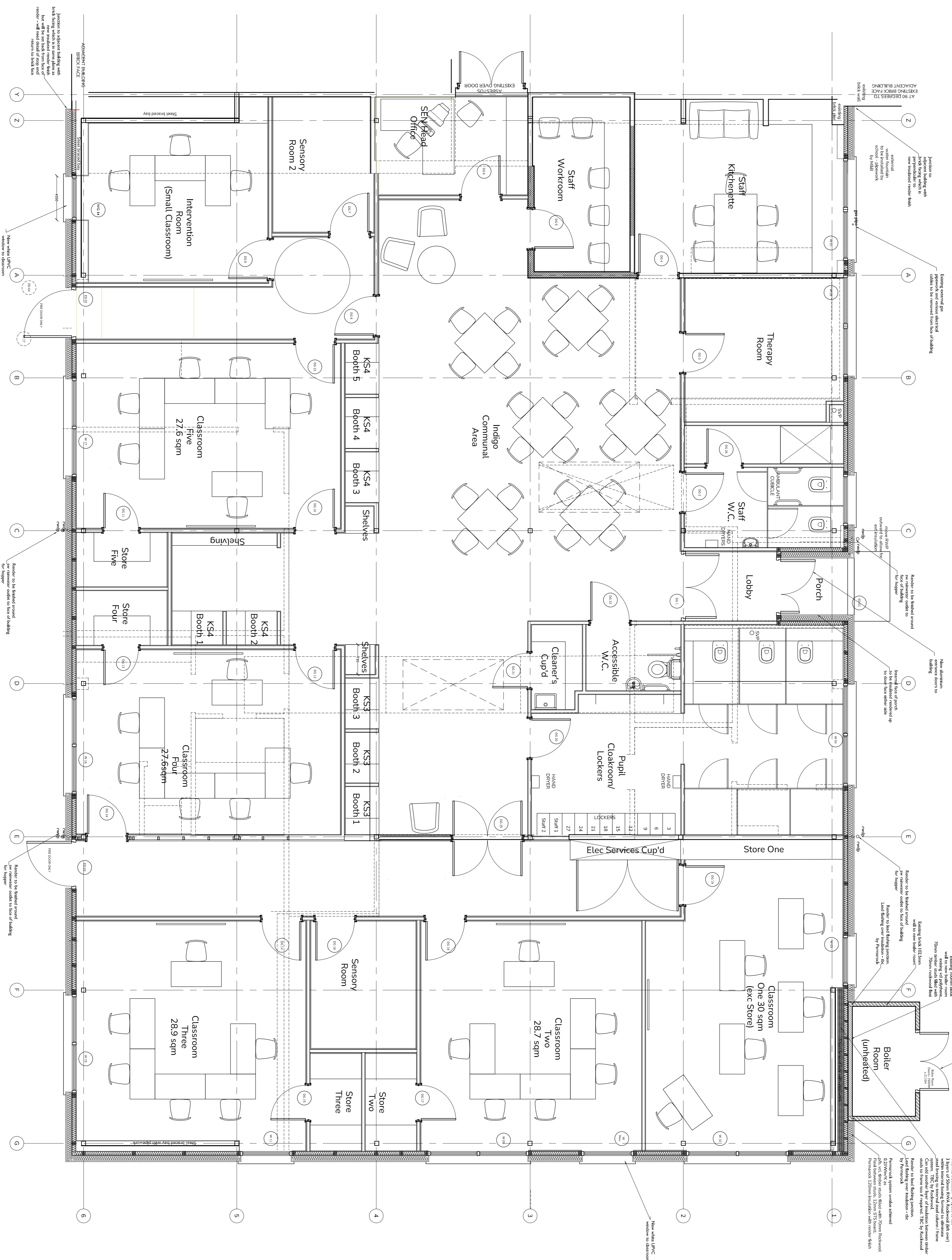
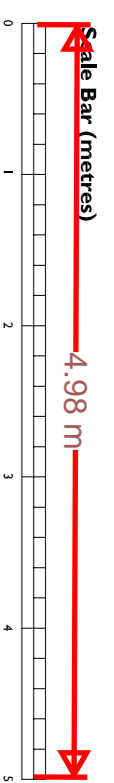
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Planning Portal Reference: PP-12321520v1



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- THE DRAWING REMAINS COPYRIGHT OF MORRIS AND BLUNT
DO NOT SCALE FROM THE DRAWINGS
- 16.05.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 23.05.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 25.05.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 26.05.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 13.06.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 28.06.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 03.07.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.
 - 01.08.23 Issued for planning application. All dimensions are to be confirmed with the contractor. Amended locations of windows to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841. Amended locations of doors to comply with BS 6841.

NOTES



Morris & Blunt Ltd
 CLIENT
 Silverdale Centre
 Maiden Erlegh School
 Extensions and Alterations to
 Silverdale Centre
 Silverdale Road
 Berks RG6 7HS

General Arrangement Drawing

DWG DATE: 09.12.22 SCALE: 1:50@A1 DWN BY: DW AG
 JOB No: TBC DWG No: BR01 REV: J

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Agenda Item 28.

Application Number	Expiry Date	Parish	Ward
231148	18/09/2023	Arborfield and Newland CP	Arborfield;

Applicant	Mr Gareth Jones
Site Address	Land at Mole Road Sindlesham Berkshire
Proposal	Full application for the creation of a vehicular access including erection of boundary wall features and gates. (Retrospective)
Type	Full Application
Officer	Tariq Bailey-Biggs
Reason for determination by committee	Listed by Councillor Gary Cowan – Concerns that the proposal would adversely impact the character of the area and countryside.

FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Planning Committee on Wednesday, 13 September 2023
REPORT PREPARED BY	Operational Lead Development Management
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL subject to conditions and informatives

SUMMARY

This application seeks retrospective planning permission creation of a vehicular access including the erection of boundary wall features and gates to serve an agricultural field.

Although the boundary wall and gates deviate from the conventional characteristics of a traditional agricultural use, the proposals are modest in scale, simple in design and the material palette would be in keeping with the general vernacular of this rural area. A significant portion of the proposed gates and boundary wall would also be allowed under permitted development rights; this represents a valid fall-back position in this instance which is a relevant material consideration.

The proposals would be acceptable in principle and no harm is identified regarding neighbouring amenity or Highways issues. There would be no adverse harm on trees and landscape, subject to condition 2. The proposal is therefore recommended for approval.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Application Number	Description	Decision & Date
081887	Proposed erection of one dwelling with garages and staff accommodation.	Refused, 07/08/2008

DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION

CONSTRAINTS

Modest Development Location
 Countryside
 Thames Basin Heaths - Special Protection Area – 5.7 km
 Archaeological Site

CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
WBC Highways	No objections.
WBC Trees and Landscape	Objects to proposed development.
WBC PROW	No objections – subject to no impact on any PROW.

REPRESENTATIONS

Town/Parish Council:

Arborfield and Newlands Parish Council Object to the proposed development on the following grounds

- The proposals would adversely impact the character of the area – not appropriate for rural setting.
- Loss of rural landscape.
- Would result in highway issues along Mole Road.
- The close-boarded fence that surrounds the site is at odds with the rural character of the area. *Officer comment: This application seeks retrospective permission for the creation of a vehicular access including erection of boundary wall features and gates. The close-boarded timber boundary fence with surrounds the wider site does not form part of this application.*

Local Members:

Councillor Gary Cowan – Concerns that the proposal would adversely impact the character of the area and countryside.

Neighbours:

RG41 5DL (Property address provided)

- The development has resulted in a loss of landscaping (hedgerow).
- Concerns with the level of new hardstanding introduced.
- Concerns that the wider site is for habitation or non-agricultural storage which would require planning permission. *Officer comment: This is not a material consideration under this planning application.*

The Street, Eversley, RG27

- The proposals would adversely impact the character of the area – not appropriate for rural setting and instead, would have an urbanising impact.
- Concerns regarding the requirement for a new access and associated hardstanding.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework
National Design Guide
National Planning Practice Guidance

Core Strategy (CS)

- CP1 – Sustainable Development
- CP3 – General Principles for Development
- CP6 – Managing Travel Demand
- CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
- CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- CP11 – Proposals Outside Development Limits (Inc Countryside)

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
- CC07 – Parking
- TB21 – Landscape Character

Other

Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING ISSUES

Site Description:

1. The application site is part of an agricultural field situated north of Ellis's Hill in Sindlesham and is bordered by Mole Road to the west and to the south by an unclassified road - Ellis Hill. The character of the wider countryside consists of individual dwellings, open fields, hedgerows and areas of woodland.

Proposal:

2. This application seeks retrospective planning permission for the formation of a vehicular access, boundary walls and gates located at the southwestern corner of the agricultural field. The access is laid to gravel and is achieved from Ellis Hill.

Principle of Development:

3. 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.
4. The application site is located outside the settlement boundary and in the countryside, where the restrictions of Core Strategy Policy CP11 are applicable. Policy CP11 indicates that proposals outside of development limits will not normally be permitted except where it contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises within the borough, or in the case of other countryside-based

enterprises and activities, it contributes and/or promotes recreation in, and enjoyment of, the countryside. Any new development should not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion of development away from the original buildings.

5. As highlighted in the supporting planning statement, the formation of a new access, boundary wall and gates are required to allow the applicant with a new access to the site for the countryside-based activities, following the recent subdivision of the agricultural land. Access to land is not considered to conflict with the requirement that such development contributes to diverse and sustainable rural enterprises. There are no existing buildings within the application site; however, the boundary wall, gates and laid hardstanding (gravel) are modest in scale and footprint and does not lead to excessive encroachment or expansion into the undeveloped landscape as required by Policy CP11. The proposals would therefore be acceptable in principle.

Impact on the character of the area

6. Section 12 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.
7. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy development plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment.
8. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy 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”.
9. Section 8.2 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide advises that in rural settings new development and associated landscape should retain, incorporate, and enhance features that contribute towards the landscape character and biodiversity of the area.
10. The proposed development includes the formation of a vehicular access located at the southwestern corner of the application site. The access is laid to gravel and is achieved from Elliss Hill – an unclassified road. The boundary wall is primarily constructed from red brick and extends along the south-eastern side of Mole Road and the northwestern side of Ellis hill at a height of 0.85 metres before rising to a height of 2 metres to connect with brick pillars and a 2.2 metre high block close boarded, black entrance gates.
11. It is deemed that the majority of the boundary wall could be constructed under permitted development though Class A, Part 2, Schedule 2 and therefore granted planning permission by Article 3 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015. Class A relates to the erection, construction, maintenance improvement or alteration of a gate, fence, wall or other means of enclosure and development is subject to certain limitations. Limitation A.1. states that such

development is not permitted if (a) the height of any gate, fence, wall or means of enclosure, erected or constructed adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic, would, after the carrying out of the development, exceed (ii) “1 metre above ground level.”

12. In the instance, the boundary wall and gates are separated from Mole Road, owing to its physical separation distance (approximately 2.5 metres) and intervening features such as mature trees and hedgerow, therefore, would be viewed as adjacent to the Highway. With regards to Ellis Hill Road, the portion of the boundary wall and gates which exceed 1 metre in height are sited considerably back from the edge of Ellis Road (approximately 3.6 metres). As such, this location is sufficiently distant from the highway that as a matter of fact and degree, it is not adjacent to a highway used by vehicular traffic.

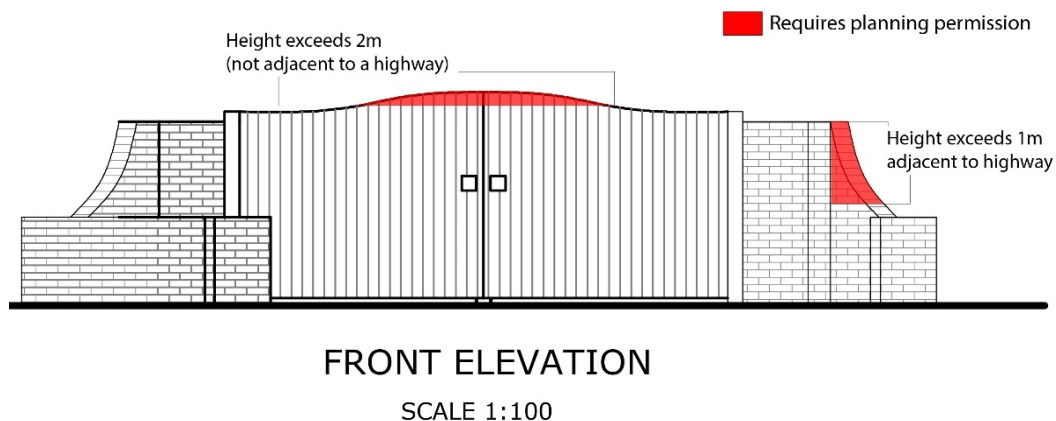


Figure 1 – illustrates the elements of the boundary wall and gate (highlighted in red) that requires planning permission.

13. Limitation A.1 (b) of states that development is not permitted by Class A if the height of any other gate, fence, wall or means of enclosure erected or constructed would exceed 2 metres above ground level. The proposed gates have a height of 2.2 metres, therefore, would only exceed this requirement by 20cm. Consequently, a significant portion of the gates and boundary wall would be allowed under permitted development rights, and this represents a valid fall-back position in this instance which is a relevant material consideration.
14. It is recognised that the boundary wall and gate do have a suburban appearance and that this development is not typical of a traditional agricultural operation or access to a field. Typically, in such circumstances short metal field gates; timber-built posts and rail fencing are more common. There are however several examples of brick-built boundary walls and timber gates and fences which front Mole Road. In this case, the proposal is simple in design and the material palette is in keeping with the general vernacular of the area as mentioned. Furthermore, the tallest portions of the development, which include the brick pillars and close boarded gates are set well back from the main adopted highway (Mole Road) and is mostly screened by mature hedgerow, shrubs and trees. The proposals are only perceivable whilst traveling along Mole Road or Ellis Hill from south-west to north-east, and at close proximity. This lessens the visual harm of the development on the wider area.

15. Taking into account the fall-back position which would have a similar visual impact as this application, it is considered that the proposed development does not result in a visually prominent or incongruous form of development and instead, is considered to have a neutral impact on the rural character of the area. Consequently, the proposals do not conflict with to the aims of Policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity:

16. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity. Principle R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties.
17. The proposed development is appropriately situated and of modest proportions, thus avoiding any adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenities, such as loss of light, overbearing presence, or overlooking.

Impact on Highways:

18. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy aims to protect neighbouring amenity. Principle R23 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that extensions relate to neighbouring properties.
19. The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application in detail and concludes that as the gates are set back sufficiently from Ellis Hill, this enables vehicles to pull clear so as not to cause any obstruction at the junction of Mole Road. Consequently, the Highways Officer believes that the proposed access works has no impact on the public highway.
20. The proposed development abuts Ellis's Hill – a public right of way (Byway ARBO8) The Council's Public Rights of Way and Capital Projects Officer (PROW) has reviewed this application and is of the view that any construction works should not impact this Byway and that any reinstatement would need to be like for like. The PROW also advises that all plant equipment used in constructing the development should be stored within the site location. The Case Officer notes that this application seeks retrospective planning permission; the existing access, boundary wall and gates are set well back from Ellis Hill and all equipment related to the sites agricultural use are stored well within the site.
21. As such, the proposal development does not impact this Byway and is considered to be acceptable on PROW grounds.

Impact on Trees and Landscape:

22. Policy CC03 of the MDD Local Plan aims to protect green infrastructure networks, promote linkages between public open space and the countryside, retain existing trees and establish appropriate landscaping and Policy TB21 requires consideration of the landscape character.

23. The application site is a green field site, within countryside, classified as wood pasture between a public highway and Greenway Route A and Byway open to all traffic ARBO8.
24. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer has reviewed this application and notes that some trees and hedges sited on a mound adjacent to Mole Road have been either damaged or removed to facilitate the development. Based on the submitted red line plan, there is scope to introduce landscaping along the north-western side boundary shared with Mole Road to compensate for the lost trees and hedges – in accordance with policy CC03 (e) of the MMD Local Plan which states that development proposals should “incorporate high quality, ideally, native planting and landscaping as an integral part of the scheme.
25. The Council's Trees and Landscape Officer is of the view that proposed boundary wall and gate is out of character in this countryside location. However, as established in this report above, a significant portion of the proposed boundary wall and gate could be built under permitted development rights under Class A, Part 2, Schedule 2 of the GPDO. There are no limitations within Class A which restricts the type of built materials, design or colour scheme of new gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure. This retrospective planning application allows these factors to be considered and enables the council to control and enhance the scheme through the use of reasonable conditions – such as soft landscaping details in this instance.

Whilst the proposals are not typical of a traditional agricultural operation or access to a field, it is modest in size, minimalistic in design and is set considerably back from Mole Road. The proposals incorporate high-quality, aesthetically pleasing traditional materials, with a preference for red brick and timber due to its superior visual appeal when compared to less attractive materials like tubular steel, which would otherwise be permissible. Consequently, it is the view of officers that the local character would not be unduly altered, and the scheme is considered to be acceptable.

26. Subject to the conditioning of landscaping details, the proposal development is acceptable on trees and landscape grounds.

Conclusion

27. Taking into account the fall-back position which would have a similar visual impact as this application, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle and would not adversely impact the character of the area, highway network or trees and landscaping subject to a suitable condition. As such, the proposed would accord with national and local planning policies and is therefore recommended for approval.

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 the protected groups 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 upon protected groups as a result of the development.

APPENDIX 1 - Conditions and informatives:

Conditions:

1. Approved details

This permission is in respect of the submitted application plans and drawings numbered 001 REV A, 002 Rev A and 003 REV A received by the local planning authority on 13/05/2023 and 26/05/2023. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details unless other minor variations are agreed in writing after the date of this permission and before implementation with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the application form and associated details hereby approved.

2. Landscaping

Within 3 months of the date of this decision 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 building(s).

Any trees or 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.

Reason: To ensure adequate planting in the interests of visual amenity. Relevant policy: Core Strategy policy CP3 and Managing Development Delivery Local Plan policies CC03 and TB21 (and TB06 for garden development)

Informative:

1. Approved & No Discussion/Amendment Required

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF.

APPENDIX 2 - Parish Council Comments

Arborfield & Newland Parish Council - comments received on 22/06/2023:

“Retrospective Planning application for vehicular access and boundary walls.

Arborfield and Newlands Parish council strongly object to this planning application. The already built access gate and boundary fencing is not in keeping with the agricultural use of the land. Included inside the compound is further hard standing and a 2m high boundary fence visible from Mole Road, which resulted in the hedge onto Mole Road being removed for the fencing to be erected.

The design and massing of the vehicular access is not in keeping with the rural nature of the agricultural land and the boundary walls and additional 2m high close board fencing are visible from Mole Road and again not in keeping with the agricultural use of the land.

The application will result in the loss of rural greenspace, which contravenes CP1 ‘maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment’

CP3 – general Principles for development section a) ‘are of an appropriate scale and mass’ the size and massing of the proposal is out of scale with the agricultural nature of the land use. there is no need for 3m high gates and a 2m high wall for agricultural land.

CP3 section d) ‘maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support flora and fauna’ – in this application being retrospective, a hedge line was altered significantly to allow for the building of the access gate and boundary wall and subsequent fenceline.

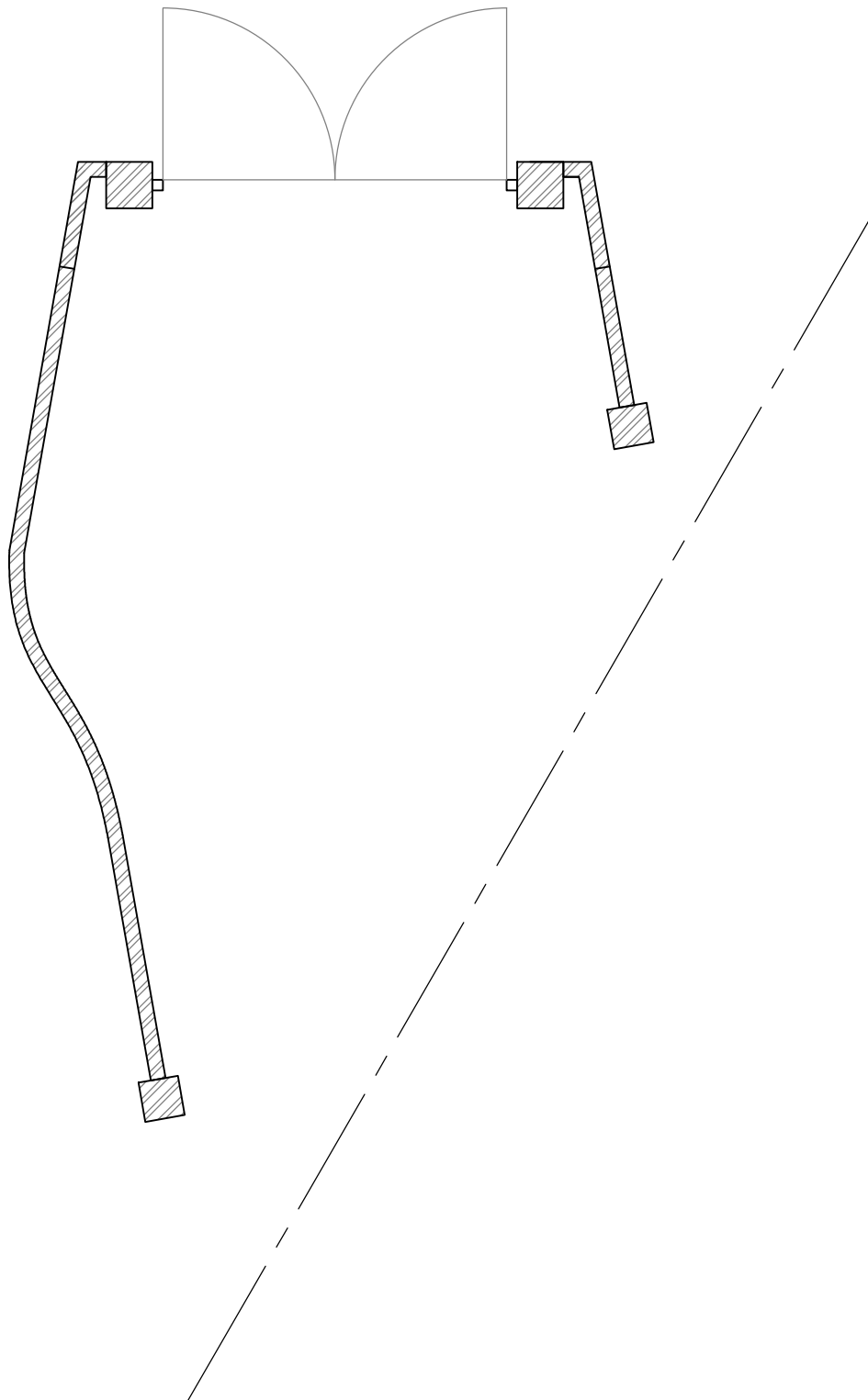
CP6 – managing travel demand section f ‘enhance road safety’ the siting of the access gate will mean vehicles intending to access this site will stop on Mole Road and loiter while undertaking a turn to the gate and likely block Mole Road which is a 50mph limit through that section with limited sight lines.

Within the planning application supporting document section 4.6 states the proposal has been designed to fit in with the rural design language of the surrounding area, this is not true the design and construction is at odds with the rural nature of the location and is visible from some distance due to the massing of the structure.

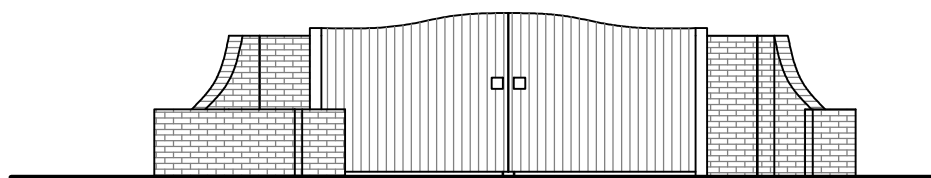
Furthermore the supporting document section 5.5 to contribute to the sustainable rural enterprise, this structure as built contributes very little to the rural nature of the location and is at odds with the nature of any enterprise at that location. This section goes onto state that this structure contributes to recreation and enjoyment of the countryside which again is at odds with the structure as built, due to the limiting of sight lines in the location by virtue of a 3m high solid gate and 2m high close board fence around the parcel of land.

In summary ANPC strongly object to this retrospective application for the reasons stated above. The structure as built is not in keeping with the rural nature of the location. The structure as built is not in keeping with any intended agricultural use of the land.”


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GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1:100



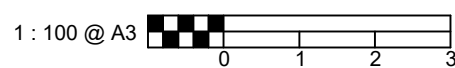
FRONT ELEVATION
SCALE 1:100



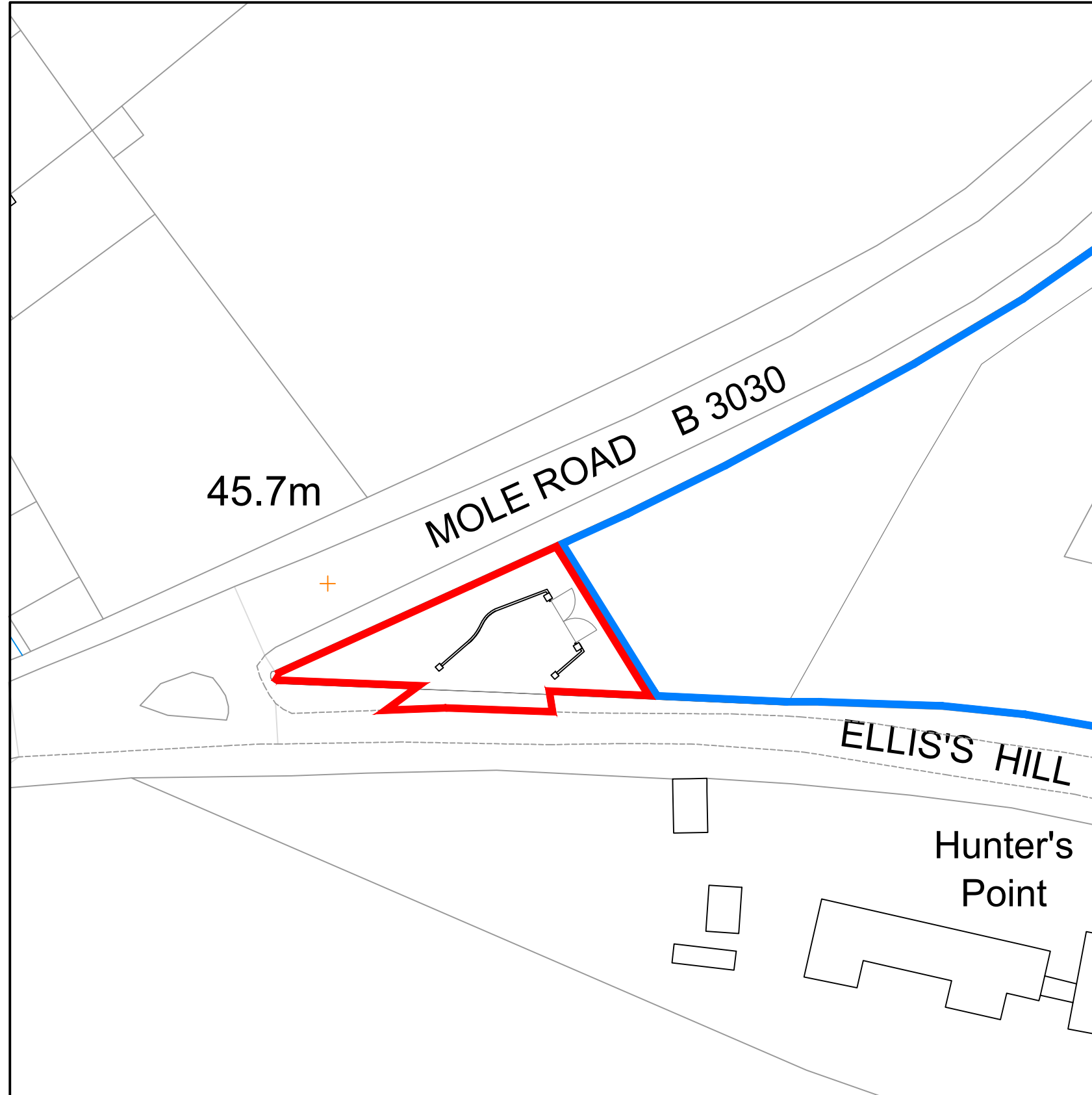
JAKE UNDERWOOD

PLANNING & BUILDING DRAWINGS

<small>PROJECT:</small>	
MOLE ROAD, ARBORFIELD, RG2 9JQ	
<small>DETAIL:</small>	
PROPOSED PLANS	
PLANNING PERMISSION	
<small>JOB No:</small> 2315	<small>DRG No:</small> 003
<small>SCALE @ A3:</small> 1:100	<small>REV:</small> A
<small>CONTACT:</small>	
JAKE UNDERWOOD	
Web: www.jakeunderwood.com	
Email: info@jakeunderwood.com	
Phone: 07784927778	

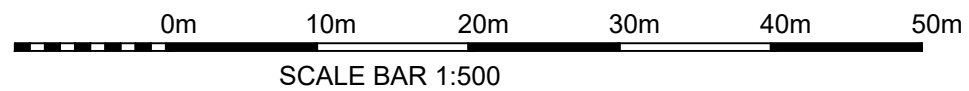


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SITE PLAN - PROPOSED
SCALE 1:500



PROJECT:
MOLE ROAD, ARBORFIELD, RG2 9JQ

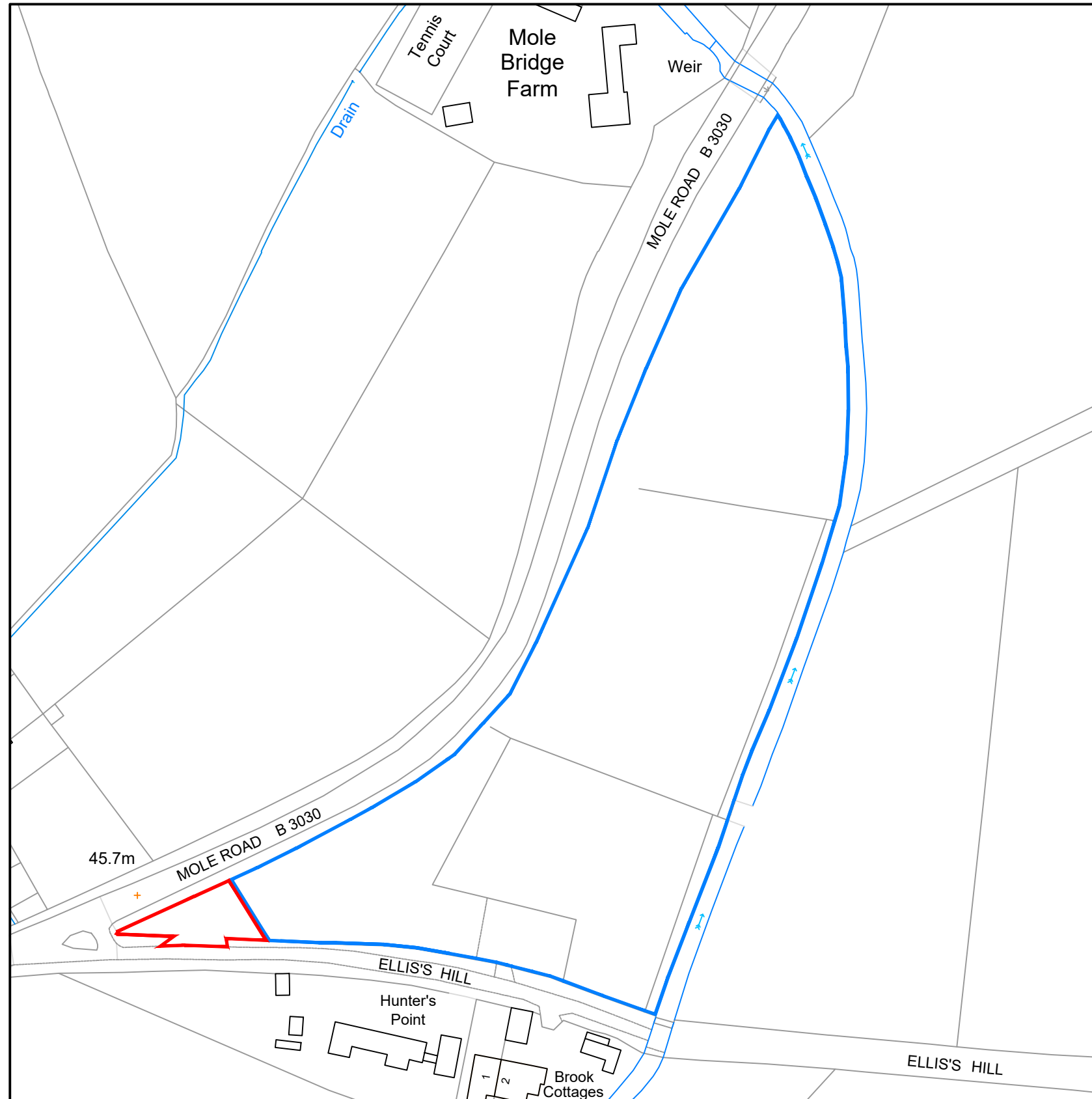
DETAIL:
SITE PLAN

PLANNING PERMISSION

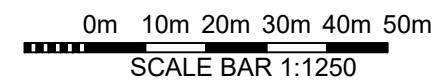
JOB No: 2315	DRG No: 002
SCALE @ A3: 1:500	REV: A

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LOCATION PLAN
SCALE 1:1250



47



JAKE
UNDERWOOD
PLANNING & BUILDING DRAWINGS

PROJECT:
MOLE ROAD, ARBORFIELD, RG2 9JQ

DETAIL:
LOCATION PLAN

PLANNING PERMISSION

JOB No: 2315	DRG No: 001
SCALE @ A3: 1:1250	REV: A

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