

Planning Design & Access Statement

Erection of a replacement dwelling with associated parking and landscaping at:

High Ridge, Caversham Heights, Reading, RG4 7ED

This planning design and access statement has been prepared by STL Architecture & Planning to support the detailed planning application submitted on behalf of our clients Mr and Mrs Bartlett, for the erection of a replacement dwelling with associated parking and landscaping.

This statement has been prepared in the context of the Reading Borough Councils Local Plan, adopted November 2019 and will cover the history and context of the proposal and outline the necessary information required to provide a determination by Reading Borough Council planning officers.

The resulting conclusion is that key material considerations, including, impact on; character, neighbour amenity and highways safety, as well as impacts on ecology and designated heritage assets, are acceptable and the wider objectives of the relevant local and national planning policy are therefore met. In addition to this statement, the application is accompanied by the relevant planning application forms and ownership certificate and drawings. The relevant application fee has also been submitted via the online planning portal.

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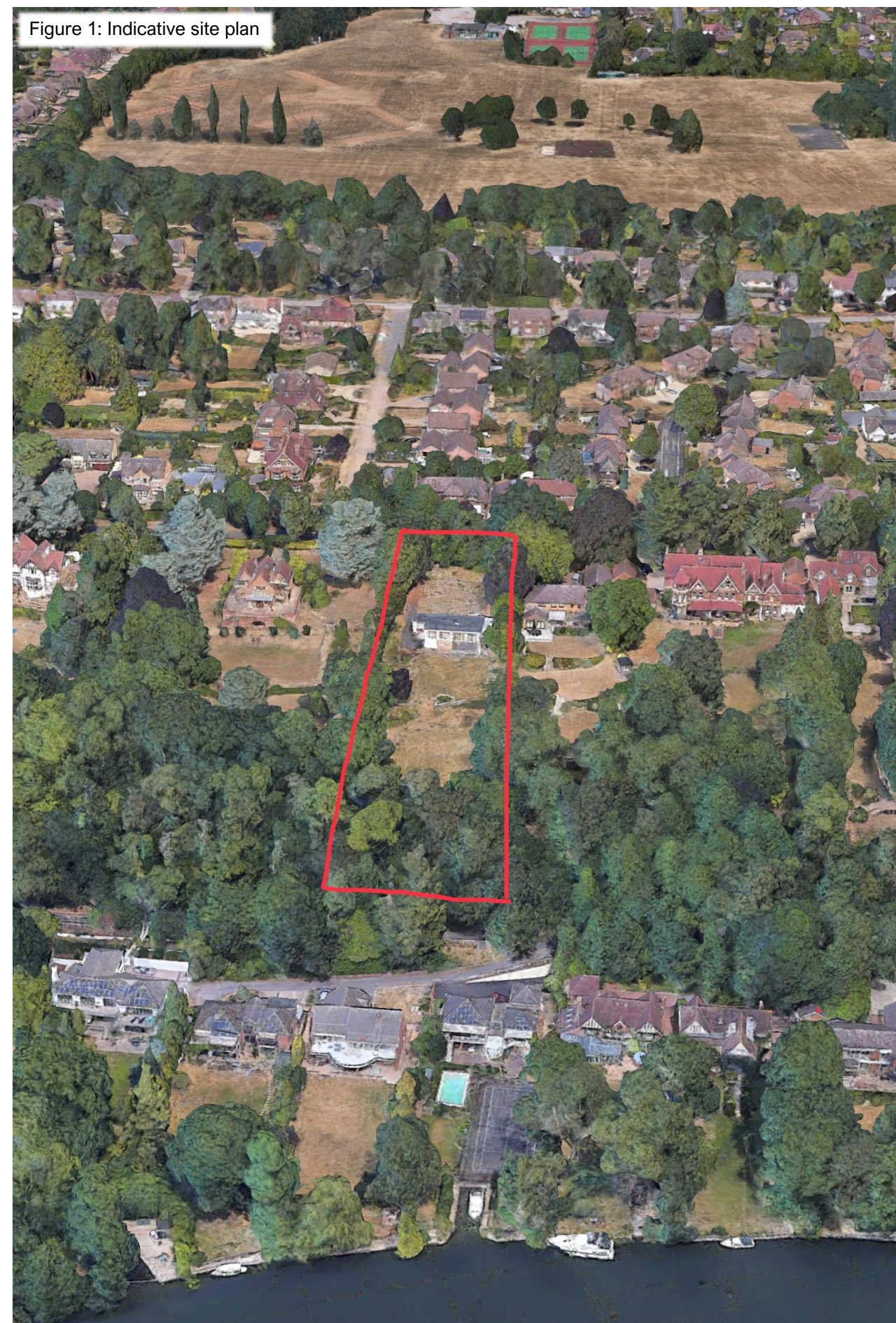


Figure 1: Indicative site plan



Existing Site and Context

The application site is located in Caversham Heights, north of The Warren and the River Thames. It is also partially located within the Warren Woodland Escarpment. The site has always had a residential land use but enabling works commenced on the site in recent years, for a new education facility which was latterly abandoned. The site was left in poor condition by the previous landowners to include incomplete excavation works to the front driveway and partial demolition of High Ridge itself. The site has remained in this derelict state ever since. There is an existing access gate of approximately 1.2 metres in height, which connects to a much taller palisade fencing, typical for the use of school fencing which runs down both flank boundaries in closest proximity to Upper Warren Avenue. The site slopes down significantly from Upper Warren Avenue down to the Warren Wood Escarpment and the Warren. This existing house is engineered into the slope of the site which is to be the case with the proposed dwelling.

Figure 2: Site frontage



Figure 3: Existing rear elevation



The application site will be utilised for residential purposes and the replacement dwelling will be sited in broadly the same location as the existing. The proposal will provide a five-bedroom contemporary dwelling with garaging and landscaping and will sit in close proximity to Upper Warren Avenue, as with neighbouring dwellings on the southern side of the road. The site is distanced approximately 0.9 miles from shops and services located in Caversham, 0.4 miles to the nearest bus stop and 0.2 miles to Mapledurham Playing Fields.



Planning History

The following applications are relevant to the site:

- 160339 – Works to trees – 04/04/2016
- 130366 – Two- storey side extension – 12/04/2013

Planning Policy

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National

National Planning Policy Framework 2019;

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards; 5

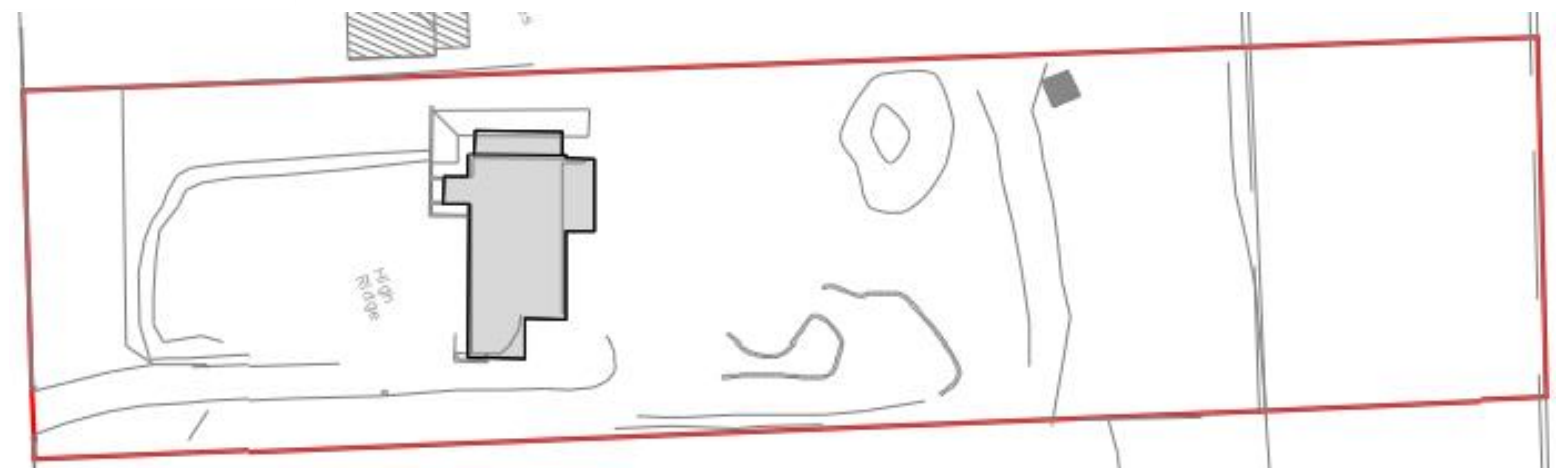
RBC Local Development Framework

Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)

- CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC5: Waste minimisation and storage
- CC6: Accessibility and the intensity of development
- CC7: Design and public realm
- CC8: Safeguarding amenity
- EN14: Trees, hedges and woodlands
- EN18: Flooding and sustainable drainage systems
- H1: Provision of housing
- H3: Affordable housing
- H5: Standards for new housing

- 121783 – Two storey rear extension lower level infill extension, extension at first floor level with covered balcony, new garage and link extension, with associated car parking – 12/04/2013
- 120714 – Side/rear extensions at ground floor and lower ground floor levels, external alterations with new rear balcony and new car parking area – 18/12/2012

Figure 4: Site survey



- H7: Protecting the existing housing stock
- H10: Private and communal outdoor space
- TR3: Access, traffic and highway-related matters
- TR5: Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Affordable housing (2013)
- Revised parking standards and design (2011)
- Planning obligations under section 106 (2015)
- Sustainable design and construction (2011)

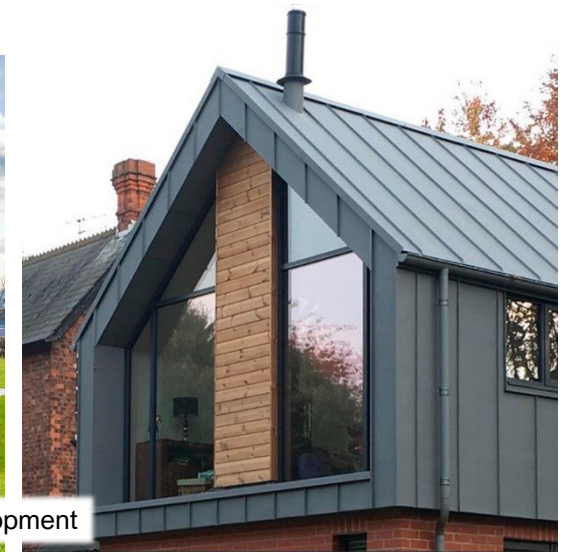
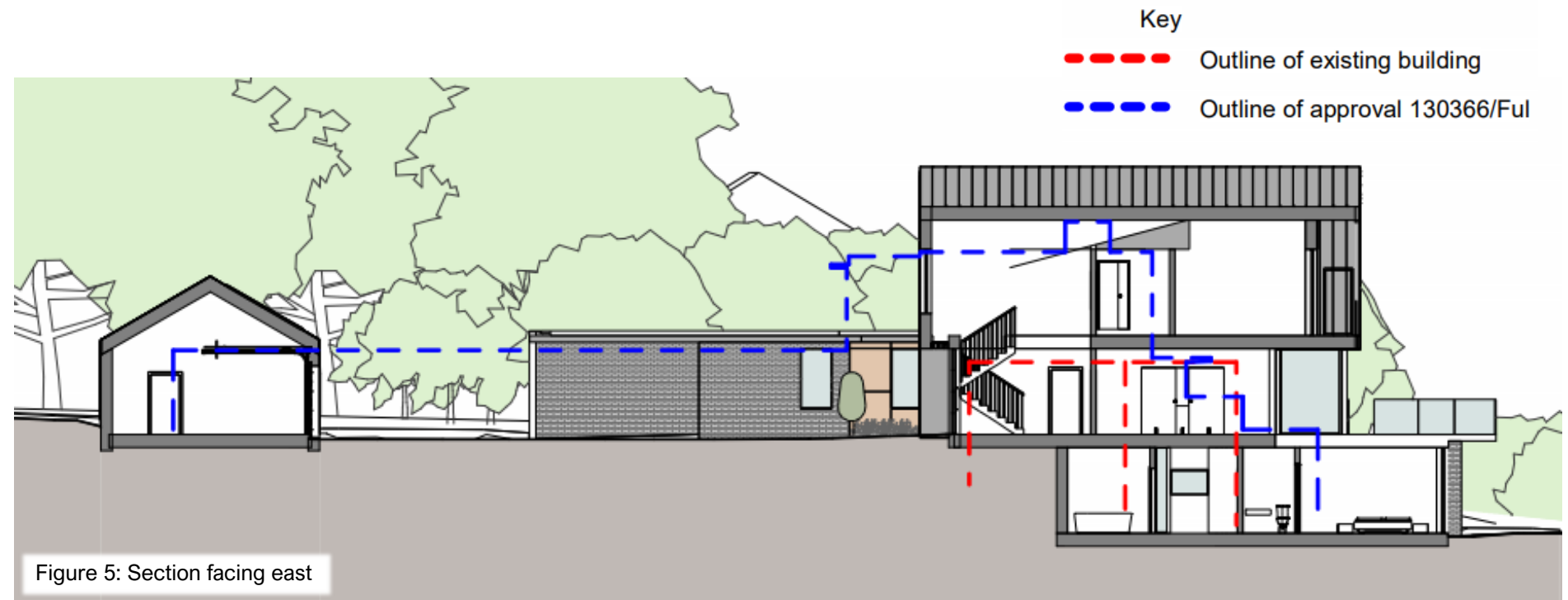


Scale and Appearance

The proposed dwelling will be split over the first floor, ground floor and subterranean lower ground floor level, engineered into the sloping gradient of the site. This is more clearly demonstrated in Figure 5 section drawing. The proposed cut and fill operations permit the dwelling to benefit from a first-floor primary suite, whilst being broadly in accordance with the previously permitted extension outlined in a dashed blue line in Figure 5 and Figure 8.

The maximum height of the dwelling is proposed at approximately 8.5 metres, exceeding the permitted scheme by 2.5 metres, owing to the change in roof formation from flat to pitched. The proposed increase in height is more consistent with the prevailing scale of development along Upper Warren Avenue. The maximum width is proposed at approximately 22.5 metres, exceeding the permitted scheme by 0.5 metres.

The combination of materials, differing roof heights and form, with minor elevation offsets and cantilevered elements, break up the overall mass and bulk of the dwelling resulting in an exceptional example of contemporary architecture which will contribute and compliment the character of the area and markedly improve the existing character of the site.



Amount and Layout

The site is occupied by a single dwelling which is to be replaced with another single dwelling. There would be no change in the number of dwellings, location, or orientation thereof. The proposed dwelling includes an increase in floorspace, approved by ref: 130366/Ful, which means there will not be a loss of residential accommodation. The proposed floor space of the dwelling is proposed to be 171 sqm more than permitted scheme, commensurate with the large neighbouring dwellings located on Upper Warren Avenue.

The proposed dwelling will be located 6.5 metres at its closest point from Pantiles and 30 metres, at its closest point from Four Corners. It will overlay the footprint of the existing dwelling maintaining appropriate separation between boundaries. The proposed garage is located some 11 metres from Upper Warren Avenue to the north and the proposed lower ground rear elevation is some 75 metres from The Warren, to the south. A single storey three bay garage is located to the front of the site, perpendicular to the proposed carport, facing inward resulting in a courtyard arrangement, with an area of associated hard and soft landscaping.

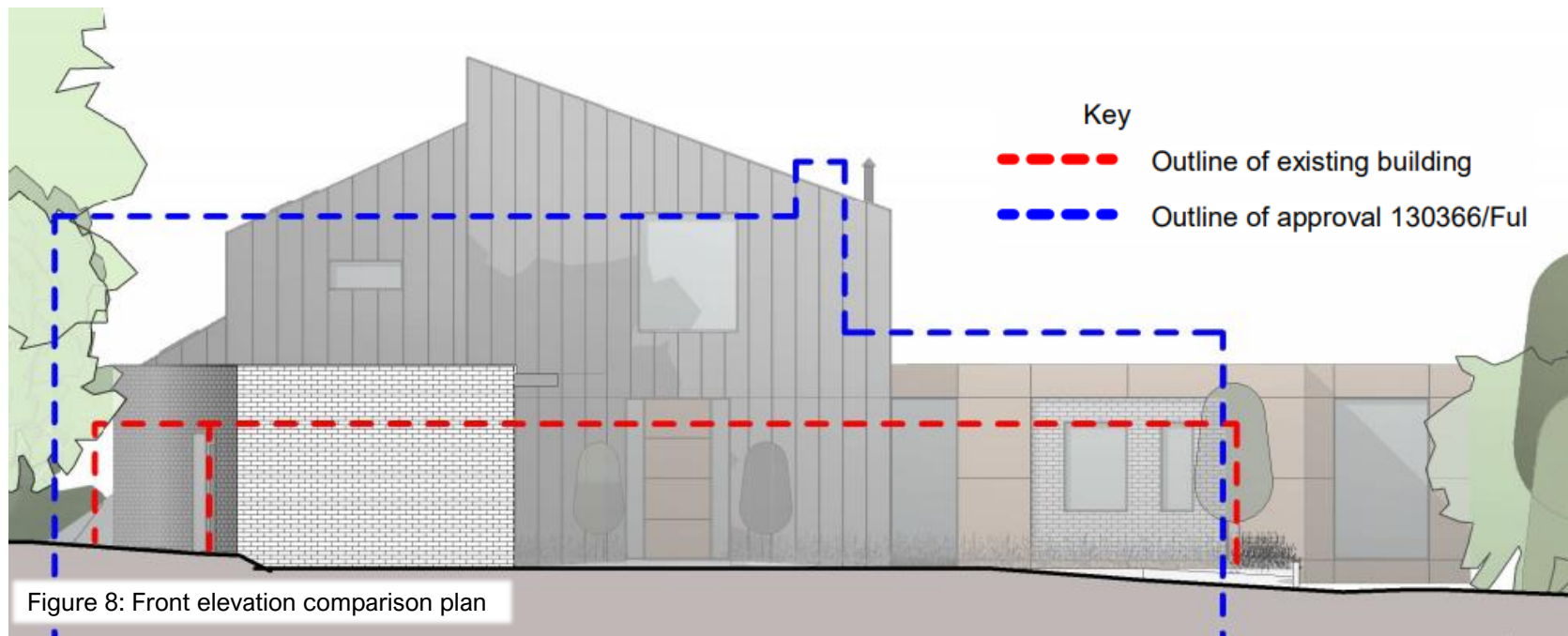


Figure 8: Front elevation comparison plan

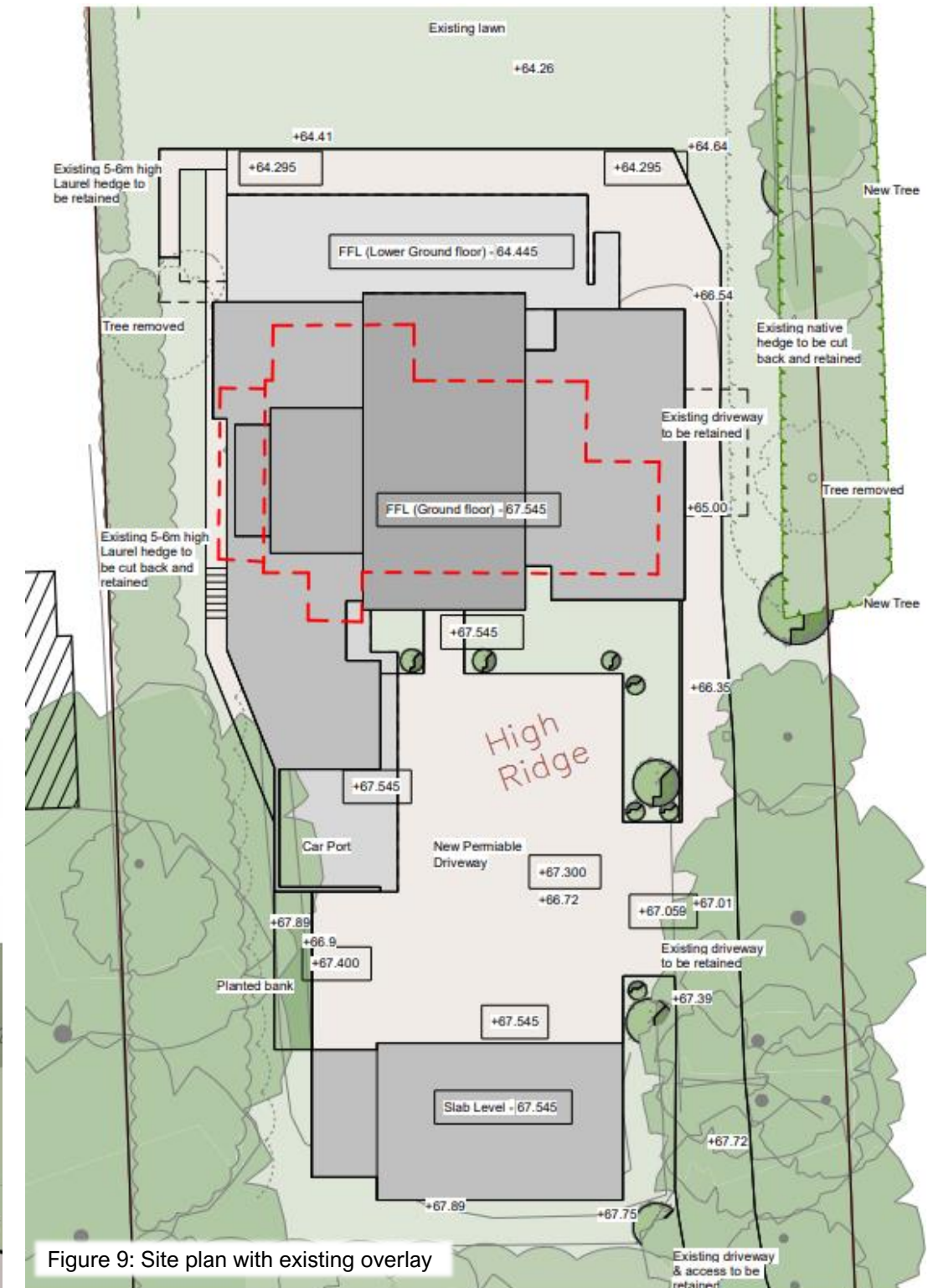


Figure 9: Site plan with existing overlay



Landscaping and Trees

Figure 10: Exposed and damage tree roots to be protected



Figure 11: Existing frontage palisade fencing to be replaced



Figure 11: Warren Woodland Escarpment to be protected



Figure 12: Existing side palisade fencing to be replaced



As outlined in the Arboricultural Report, trees are a material consideration in determining planning applications. The submitted report has been drafted to provide the required information to enable Council officers to meet the duty placed upon them by s.197 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).

One small plum tree is to be removed to facilitate the proposals. Three others are to be removed due to their poor condition, regardless of the application.

The new building sits within the existing built form and disturbed site footprint. No excavation into sensitive RPA areas is proposed.

Provided the tree protection strategy is implemented as outlined in the submitted method statement, it is considered the application is of low arboricultural impact, and thus acceptable.

Should the council wish to see more onerous tree protection methods, this can be ensured via an appropriately worded planning condition and should not be the basis for a reason for refusal. Correct adherence to the tree protection strategy proposed within the submitted report is critical for ensuring the tree is successfully protected through the construction process.

Included, to support the proposals for a replacement dwelling at High Ridge, are:

- A BS5837:2012 compliant tree survey
- An arboricultural impact assessment
- A tree protection strategy including a method statement and protection plan



Access and Parking

The proposal will deliver a 3-bay garage plus car port and sufficient associated hardstanding to provide turning and visitor spaces to adopted standards. The garage building is measured at 10 metres by 6 metres.

There is a small extension connected to the garage providing adequate space to accommodate bin and cycle storage. Bin collection will be achieved to the access and bin presented on to Upper Warren Avenue as with the existing arrangements for the site.



Figure 13 : 3D impression of garage

There is an existing gated access which is proposed to be retained. The width of the access is therefore in accordance with highways standards and provides appropriate visibility splays onto Upper Warren Avenue. All frontage landscaping can be conditioned to be maintained to ensure there are no future obstructions to the existing visibility splays. There is an existing driveway which runs down the western boundary of the site and provides direct access to the rear of the house.

The existing cantilevered element of High Ridge is to be incorporated into the new scheme which enables the applicants to retain this driveway space. The proposed hardstanding materials for the parking courtyard and driveway will include permeable block paving and cobbles. All parking spaces meet the minimum parking standards.



Figure 14: Existing access to be retained



Figure 15: Existing driveway to be retained



Drainage and Sustainability

The proposal seeks to introduce a number of measures across the site to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the dwelling. As shown in Figure 16 a row of 18 individual solar panels will be located on the south facing roof slope of the garage. This extent of solar panel usage will allow the development to provide a total output of 6,818 kWh of on-site generated electrical energy, per annum. For assessment/comparison purposes, the average household in the UK consumes approximately 3k kWh per annum.

This is supplemented by approximately 143 square metres of green roof space, providing rainwater buffers, air purification, reduction in ambient temperature, regulation of indoor temperatures and will save energy and encourage increased biodiversity across the site. Other measures include, electric vehicle charging points, use of sustainable building materials, additional tree planting and maximisation of solar gains through appropriate glazing.

The proposal will utilise the existing drainage infrastructure, enhanced by the chalk geology of the site and can be improved as considered appropriate by pre-commencement condition.

Figure16: Proposed green roofs



Figure 17: Example of successful green roofs



Figure 18: Example of successful green roofs





Heritage Asset - Four Corners

Figure 19: Location of heritage assets

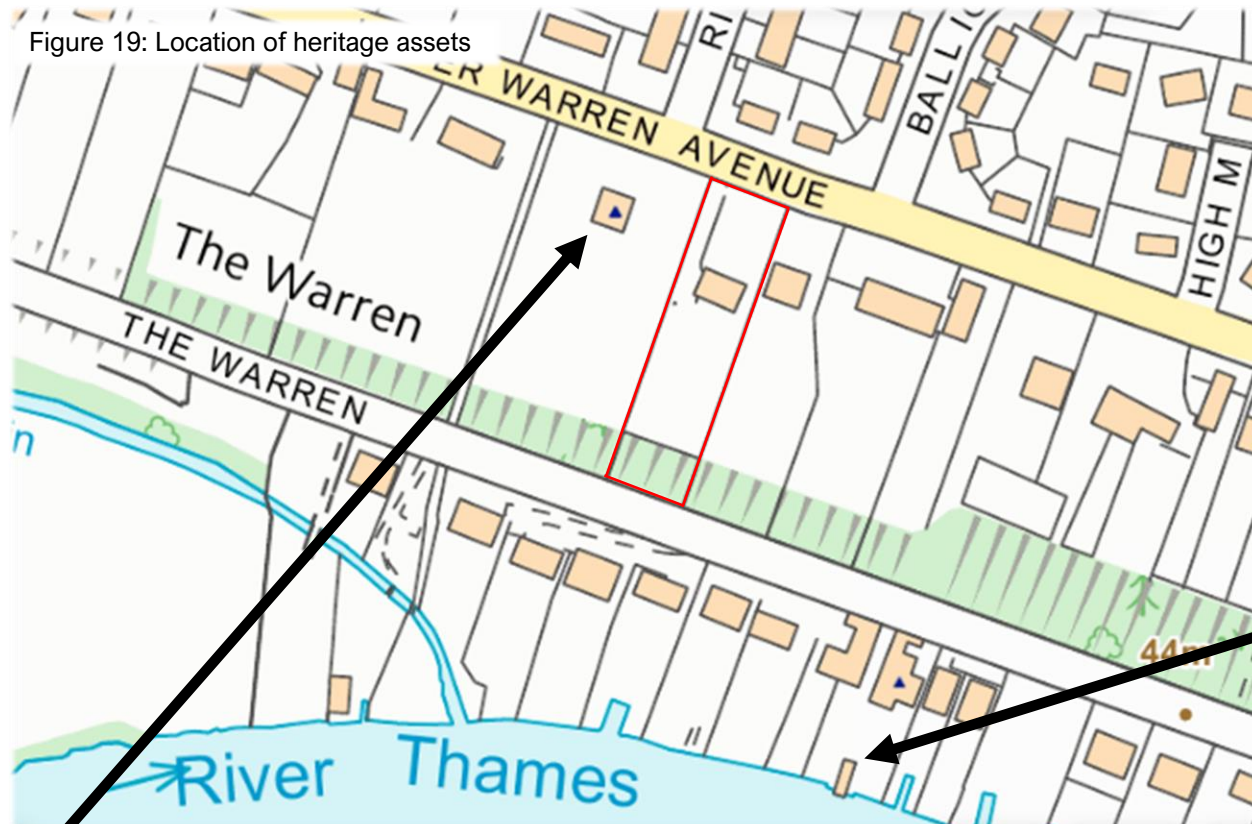


Figure 20: Image of Listed Building "Four Corners"



Four Corners, is a suburban detached house built between 1918-22 designed by the architect Percy Westwood. It is designated at Grade II for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural design: for its careful massing and elevational treatment, also the integrated design of its garden terraces and good quality interiors, all in an Arts & Crafts idiom;
- * Materials: for the quality of the principal building material, hand-made red bricks, and the detailing of the pewter door furniture and the craftsmanship with which they are employed;
- * Intactness: a house which is largely unaltered from its original early C20 form and retains its strong relationship with the garden.

The Shanty is a Grade II Listed boathouse villa, circa 1905. The structure has an attic and basement with the principle gable end addressing the river. The structure is of weatherboard and thatched construction with an overwater veranda, with rustic wooden posts, thatch roof and small gable window above.

Figure 21: Image of Listed Building "The Shanty"





Ecology and Biodiversity

The Warren Woodland Escarpment is sited at the very rear of the application site, with The Warren located beyond. The woodland forms part of the prominent chalk escarpment which descends from the site down towards the River Thames serving as an important wildlife corridor along the escarpment.

Providing wildlife corridors and connections between green spaces enables wildlife to travel and find new food sources, water sources and mates which is essential for urban diversity. Any fencing proposed will be wildlife friendly allowing free passage between gardens to feed and breed.

The woodland comprises mainly native broadleaved species including sycamore, ash and oak. The westerns area has more Yews, whereas the eastern area is more Elm, Dogwood and Privet.

The proposal seeks to limit the extent of mowed lawn in the lower garden. The applicants will seek to undertake organic maintenance methods to ensure as much food and shelter is available to wildlife, including essential bacteria.

Maintaining existing ecological value and improving net gain is material consideration in planning and as such an ecological report with mitigation measure supports this application, providing assessments of Badgers, Bats, Birds, Great Crested Newts and Reptiles.





Development Contributions

In accordance with Reading Borough Councils CIL charging schedule, the proposed development does not attract any CIL liabilities as the applicants seek to live in the dwelling full time for the indefinite future

As the proposed dwelling is a replacement, it is not subject to affordable housing contributions, in accordance with Policy H3 of the Local Plan.

Planning Justification

Principle of Development

The existing dwelling has been left in a condition unfit for purpose. Notwithstanding this, the existing architectural merit of High Ridge was limited prior to the works undertaken by the previous landowner. The proposal site is partially located in the Caversham Escarpment and neighbours a Grade II Listed Building (Four Corners). The site does not form part of a conservation area or any other landscape designation. The site is surrounded by residential development at all sides and as such, there should be no objection to the replacement of a single dwelling with another single dwelling - Subject to all other material planning considerations being acceptable.

Impact on Character

The overall character of the area is varied, with a mix of traditional and modern architecture. Of particular relevance is, Heath Point which has successfully delivered a contemporary dwelling in recent years. The proposed dwelling would be larger than the previous dwelling by 171 square metres. However, it would only be marginally wider and higher than application ref: 130366 previously permitted. It is understood this permission has now expired, but it is considered the constraints and policy expectations relevant to the development of the site remain largely as before.

Although wider than the previous dwelling, the proposal seeks to retain the existing driveway along the western boundary. This will retain the gap of 6 metres between the dwelling and this common boundary, which is a characteristic indicative of the area. The access and partial driveway are the only features of the site which can be viewed from the road, owing to location of the access itself and adjacent mature vegetation. This will contribute to the sense of spaciousness between plots when viewed from the street scene and will ensure there is a 30 metre separation distance retained between the proposed dwelling and neighbouring Four Corners.

As shown on drawing *Elevations Sheet 2 – West* the gradient falls by some three metres from the ground floor level of car port to the ground floor level of bedrooms 2, 4 and 5. This particular drawing also shows the proposed height difference with Pantiles. This perspective has been slightly altered to show the comparative height differences - The mature vegetation that supplements this common boundary is actually far denser and taller, making views into the site from the first floor of Pantiles limited.

The inclusion of a first-floor primary suite is possible due to the topography of the site. The floorspace of this floor has been limited to accommodate only the primary suite so as to break up the overall massing and bulk. Drawing *Elevations Sheet 2 – West* clearly shows the form of this storey. To better understand the proposed massing and architectural articulation of the first floor, this drawing should be read in conjunction with Elevations Sheet 2- South, which demonstrates the mono-pitch and the minimal massing required to accommodate the proposed first floor floorspace.

Local Plan policy CC7 outlines development must be of a high design quality and should maintain or enhance the character and appearance of the area. Although views into the site will remain limited, the contemporary design of the replacement dwelling would not be considered harmful to the street scene and would certainly deliver a more positive contribution to the street and application site than what currently exists.

Whilst the proposal would alter the character of the plot due to the change in style and the increase in the amount of developed area, the change would not be so significant as to harm the character of the area and the appearance of the area would be maintained, in accordance with the aims of Policy CS7.



In terms of the architectural design, the proposal represents a high-quality example of contemporary design with appropriate, form, massing and detailing. As previously mentioned, the character and appearance of Upper Warren Avenue has no dominating scale, design or architectural influence. Heath Point was recently awarded planning permission for a contemporary design, similar to the aspirations of this proposal. The constraints in character impact terms between these two sites are broadly the same and as such it would not be appropriate for officers to resist a contemporary design approach at High Ridge.

Amenity of Future Occupiers

The replacement dwelling would provide an exceptional standard of accommodation, with large and regular shaped rooms providing favourable verdant outlooks, natural lighting and ventilation throughout. The internal floorspace exceeds the minimum gross internal floor area required by national guidance and the rear garden also far exceeds the relevant requirements.

Neighbour Amenity

The only first floor western side facing window, distanced approximately 13 metres from the common boundary, is limited to the dressing room, overlooking the partially cantilevered green roof and screened from any views into the neighbouring garden by dense mature vegetation. A dressing room is not considered to be a habitable room and any existing planting on the site can be conditioned to be retained and replanted if felling were to be required. An additional side facing window is proposed to the west, this is proposed to be non-opening and high level, some 2.5 metres above floor level. These windows are the only matters for consideration when assessing a loss of privacy to the west.

Although the eastern elevations have a number of openings, they are not considered to result in any overlooking opportunities. It is proposed to include two skylights to serve the first-floor primary ensuite and ground floor kitchen area and a further three openings at ground floor level. However, these three windows are again proposed to be non-opening and high level. The dining room and pantry windows will be positioned 2 metres above floor level and the study window 1.5 metres above floor level. This elevation also provides external access to the utility area by way of a single paned door at ground floor level.

As described, the site benefits from a good level of privacy owing to existing landscaping features along all boundaries. The extent and scale of this landscaping, coupled with proposed distances between neighbours, provides no concerns with respect to loss of light or overbearing effects. The applicant seeks to retain the existing boundary landscaping in perpetuity and therefore accepts any condition relating to such safeguarding. The proposal further complies with Local Plan policy CC8 by not resulting in any undue harm by way of, outlook, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes, smell, crime and safety or wind.

Highways and Parking

The site is understood to be located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Councils' adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. As such the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD requires an on-site parking provision of 2.0 space for a 4+ bedroom dwelling. The proposal will provide a three-bay garage with ample space in the front driveway for turning and visitor parking. The garage structure will also have enough space to accommodate 2 secure cycle spaces in accordance with the Councils Parking Standards and Design SPD.

Bin storage will be located in the side extension of the garage, which will comply with Manual for Streets and British Standards 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings. All refuse bins will be presented onto Upper Warren Avenue on the respective days, as with the existing arrangements, to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods.

Local Plan policy TR3 requires accesses to meet the adopted standards. In this case, there are no alterations proposed to the access and driveway into the site. The proposal will provide a single electric vehicle charging point as shown on drawings Ground Floor Plan & Garage Plans in accordance with Local Plan policy TR5. For the reasons outlined above the proposal is considered to comply with the relevant Transport policies and standards.



Landscaping and Trees

In accordance with Local Plan policy EN14; individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and vegetation forming part of the Warren Escarpment will be protected from damage and removal, except where necessary and enhanced with supplementary and replacement planting. As addressed earlier the boundary landscaping is a feature of the site the applicant wishes to retain, to safeguard and maintain neighbouring amenity relationships and street scene character. The proposal also seeks to contribute to carbon reduction through the implementation of solar panels and will cater for ecology on the site. New planting is proposed for the site, however, should a more comprehensive landscaping plan be required - this can be secured by pre-commencement condition.

Biodiversity and Ecology Impacts

An Ecological Report has been prepared in support of the application by Turnstone Ecology which is summarised as follows:

Badgers: A badger set has been identified in the southern end of the garden on the escarpment. Recent use by badgers have been identified with trails into garden. The garden provides a habitat suitable for commuting, foraging and sett creation by badgers. A 30m buffer area recommended around the identified sett to minimise the chance of damage or disturbance. All planned works are located well outside of this buffer area.

Bats: Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared bats have been previously recorded within 2km of the application site. The garden is suitable for use by foraging bats and is directly linked to the tree lines which allow them to commute. Long eared bat droppings were found throughout the house. The house is considered to have Moderate to High suitability for use by roosting bats and the lower levels of the building have potential for hibernating bats. Two activity surveys have been undertaken and no emergences were detected from the house. The first survey identified Soprano Pipistrelles only and the second survey identified Pipistrelle and Brown Long Eared bats. A static detector was located in the dwelling itself between surveys for 9 nights which recorded no bat activity. Given the dwelling is to be demolished there is potential for bat roost destruction. As such a European Protected Species (EPS) license from Natural England will be obtained. Details of mitigation measures to be included in the licence are outlined fully in the submitted ecological survey

Birds: The hedgerow has suitability for nesting birds; however the size of the site makes it unlikely that large or important breeding birds would be present. However additional habitat creation, enhancement and management is proposed by way of planting native trees, along with two nest boxes appropriate for House Sparrows to be installed in the new building and immediately next to the bat box to be located in the tree on site.

Great Crested Newt: There is a pond located in the rear garden of Pantiles which is considered to have poor suitability for Great Crested Newts. This is due to it being maintained as an ornamental fish pond with relatively low water quality. As such, no specific mitigation measures are proposed. However, the detailed method statement outlines that work will cease if the presence of a Great Created Newt is identified.

Reptiles: Reptile species have previously been recorded within 2km of the site, including Slow Worm in a nearby site. As such, Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) will be undertaken to minimise the risk of reptiles being on site and the risk of an offence occurring. Details of which are outlined fully in the submitted ecological survey.

Local Plan policy EN12 states, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should therefore:

- Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and
- Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable. In accordance with the submitted mitigation strategy, the proposal will deliver new native planting, bird and bat boxes and seeks to keep the lower part of the garden adjacent to the Escarpment un-landscaped, to encourage continued ecological permeability.



Heritage Impacts

As a replacement dwelling would only impact to the setting of Four Corners, it is considered the proposal would have *less than substantial harm* to its significance. In accordance with paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the harm on the setting, should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. In this case the redevelopment of the application site will result in an improved appearance on which currently exists. The proposal will deliver net biodiversity gains across the site as well as creating jobs throughout the construction process.

This impact of a larger structure on the site was previously assessed by officers in application 130366/FUL. It concluded, the distance between buildings and existing vegetation on this boundary will ensure the proposed dwelling will not have prominence in the setting of Four Corners. The increase in scale and floorspace was therefore considered to be acceptable in the setting of the Grade II Listed Building and in accordance with the relevant local plan policy. The assessment of this relationship is not considered to be materially different and as such is considered to protect the significance of Four Corners and accord with Local Plan policy EN1 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF.

Sustainability

Local Plan policies CC2 and CC3 require new developments to take account of climate change and incorporate measures to adapt to such effects. The proposal is considered compliant with these policies by incorporating solar panels, electric vehicle charging points, use of sustainable building materials, inclusion of approximately 143 square metres of green roof space, additional tree planting and maximising solar gains.

The proposal will utilise and upgrade the existing drainage system for the dwelling and details of this can be confirmed by a suitably worded sustainable drainage condition.

Conclusion

This Planning Design and Access Statement has demonstrated the replacement dwelling is acceptable in principle. Material planning considerations have been analysed and it has been demonstrated the site can be developed as proposed without adverse effect on the character of the area, amenity of neighbouring dwellings, highway safety, adjacent heritage asset, existing landscape features and ecology.

Overall, the proposal is compliant with the relevant local and national policy and guidance and has sought to respond positively to policy and planning context. It is understood officers have been unable to undertake site visits in previous months. We would be happy to accompany any officers who feel our attendance may be useful on site. Should there be any issues which officers' feel can be addressed by minor revisions or pre-commencement conditions, we ask you to contact us ahead of issuing a decision.