

16 OCTOBER 2018 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6a	18/0378	Reg'd:	09.05.18	Expires:	08.08.18	Ward:	BWB
Nei.	31.05.18	BVPI	Minor	Number	23/13	On	No
Con.		Target	dwelling -13	of Weeks		Target?	
Exp:				on Cttee'			
				Day:			

LOCATION: Woodlands, Sheerwater Road, West Byfleet, KT14 6AH

PROPOSAL: Erection of a three storey building and detached two storey building to the rear comprising a total of 10x self-contained flats (9x two bedroom & 1x one bedroom) following demolition of existing dwelling and ancillary buildings and provision of associated bin and cycle storage, parking, retaining walls and landscaping

TYPE: Full Planning Application

APPLICANT: Mr Guarino

OFFICER: David Raper

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE:

Councillor Boote referred this application to Planning Committee, noting that the site is a large corner plot but raises concerns about the impact on the street scene.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal is for the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a three storey block of flats, along with a two storey structure to the rear with a flat above car ports below. 10x self-contained flats are proposed in total. The proposed building would adopt a traditional architectural style and the rear portion of the building would be set-down from the main body of the building due to the change in levels from the front to the rear of the site. The existing vehicular access onto Woodlands Avenue would be utilised and a total of 15x parking spaces would be provided within the site along with bin and cycle storage.

Site Area:	0.312ha (3120sq.m)
Existing units:	1
Proposed units:	10
Existing density:	3.2 dph (dwellings per hectare)
Proposed density:	32 dph

PLANNING STATUS

- Urban Area
- Urban Open Space
- Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area
- Surface Water Flood Risk Area
- Thames Basin Heaths SPA ZoneB (400m-5km)

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposal relates to a detached single storey dwelling with accommodation in the roof space dating from the 1950s. The proposal site forms a large, prominent corner plot and is accessed via Woodlands Avenue and is bounded by Sheerwater Road to the west. The existing dwelling is orientated at an angle in its plot. The proposal site features a large rear garden and includes an area of mature tree cover to the rear. The rear portion of the site forms part of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area which lies to the north and the rear portion of the site is also formally designated as Urban Open Space. Woodlands Avenue is a tree-lined residential road characterised predominately by two storey and chalet-style detached dwellings of similar ages. Sheerwater Road is characterised by larger detached dwellings in a lower density layout and dwellings to the south form part of the Old Avenue Conservation Area. There is a change in levels across the site with the site sloping down towards the canal to the rear; Sheerwater Road is positioned at a higher level than the majority of the site and an embankment borders the site to the west.

PLANNING HISTORY

None of relevance.

CONSULTATIONS

- **Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer:** *"Following a review of the application and the supporting Drainage and Flood Risk information (dated June 2018), the application is not compliant with NPPF or Woking Core Strategy CS9 'Flooding and Water Management'. Therefore In accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 163 and paragraph 165 in the absence of an acceptable Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Surface Water Drainage Scheme we object to the application and recommend refusal of planning permission"*
- **Housing Strategy and Enabling Officer:** Provision of 2x on-site affordable units would be required or equivalent financial contribution of £186,533.
- **County Highway Authority:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Arboricultural Officer:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **Surrey Wildlife Trust:** No objection subject to conditions/recommendations.
- **Scientific Officer:** No objection subject to conditions.
- **County Archaeological Officer:** No objection.
- **Natural England:** No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

A total of 45x objections have been received, including one from The Byfleet, West Byfleet and Pyrford Residents' Association, raising the following summarised concerns:

Highways and Parking:

- Proposal would provide insufficient parking
- Woodlands Avenue is already heavily parked and the proposal would exacerbate this

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- The proposed access is close to the junction with Sheerwater Road which is already dangerous and congested
- Parking on verges is a problem on Woodlands Avenue
- Proposal would impact on highway safety
- Proposal would increase congestion in the area

Impact on Character:

- Proposal is out of character and out of scale with the area
- The proposed building is too tall
- The local area is characterised by two storey development whereas the proposal would be three storeys
- Proposal would result in an overdevelopment of the site
- Proposal should not be compared to blocks of flats to the north; these are a considerable distance away, are not close to the Conservation Area and are set-back from the road
- Proposed building would be uninspiring with poor quality finishes
- Proposal does not comply with The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan which seeks to maintain a strong green character and to maintain the character of Housing Character Zones
- Proposal would encroach into the Conservation Area and area of Urban Open Space
- Flats are out of character with the area; the proposal site would be better developed with houses
- Proposed building would be sited too close to boundaries and would breach the building line
- The proposal site is garden land and not brownfield land
- Other applications have been refused along Woodlands Avenue in the past (PLAN/2008/1092, PLAN/2010/0477 & PLAN/2010/1205)

Impact on Ecology and Trees:

- The current garden acts as a buffer to the Basingstoke Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which would be lost
- Proposal site is currently undeveloped land and the proposed development would impact on wildlife, including bats
- The applicant has removed a significant number of trees

Other concerns:

- There is more of a need for family houses, there is no shortage of flats
- Most of the letters of support are from people outside the Borough
- There is not sufficient infrastructure in the area to cope with 10x additional flats
- The Rive Ditch is prone to flooding and the proposal could increase risk of flooding

In addition to the above, a total of 40x representations have been received expressing support for the proposal, however it should be noted that 17x of these representations are from addresses outside the borough. These representations make the following summarised comments:

- More homes are needed in the area
- Proposal addressed the corner
- Proposal would provide an economic boost
- Proposal would be in-keeping with other developments on Sheerwater Road

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2018):

Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 - Making effective use of land
Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Section 16 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Development Management Policies DPD (2016):

DM2 - Trees and Landscaping
DM10 - Development on Garden Land
DM20 - Heritage Assets and their Settings

Woking Core Strategy (2012):

CS1 - A Spatial strategy for Woking Borough
CS7 - Biodiversity and nature conservation
CS8 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas
CS9 - Flooding and water management
CS10 - Housing provision and distribution
CS11 - Housing Mix
CS12 - Affordable housing
CS17 - Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation
CS18 - Transport and accessibility
CS20 - Heritage and Conservation
CS21 - Design
CS24 - Woking's landscape and townscape
CS25 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development

The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (WBNDP) (2017)

Core Objectives

BE1 - Development character
BE2 - New housing quality
BE6 - Residential parking provision

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

Parking Standards (2018)
Woking Design (2015)
Affordable Housing Delivery (2014)
Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2008)

Other Material Considerations:

Heritage of Woking (2000)
South East Plan (2009) (Saved policy) NRM6 - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2015)
Waste and recycling provisions for new residential developments
House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS161) - Sustainable drainage systems

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In addition to the above, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have 'special regard' to preserving or enhancing the character of conservation areas and states that: *'with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in sub section (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'*.

PLANNING ISSUES

Impact on Character:

1. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS21 'Design' requires development proposals to *"respect and make a positive contribution to the street scene and the character of the area in which they are situated, paying due regard to the scale, height, proportions, building lines, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land"*; furthermore Section 12 of the NPPF (2018) states that *"Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions"* and requires proposals to *"respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials..."*.
2. One of the Core Objectives of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (WBNDP) (2017) is *"To ensure that changes to the built environment in West Byfleet complement the strong green character and 'village feel' of The Area, sustain the distinctiveness of the different housing character zones (see Section 2.3.1) and conserve local heritage assets"* and *"To maintain, enhance and protect the distinctive and special character of West Byfleet by ensuring high quality design and construction in both residential and commercial development"*. Policy BE2 'New Housing Quality' of the WBNDP (2017) states that *"Proposals for new residential development should demonstrate good design and should contribute positively to creating a sense of place"* whilst policy BE1 'Development Character' states that *"Residential development should complement the character of the Housing Character Zone in which it is located"*. The proposal site falls within Housing Character Zone B 'Hollies and Woodlands Avenue' which is defined as comprising 1930s development of bungalows and two storey houses.
3. Woodlands Avenue is consistently characterised by detached two storey and chalet style dwellings. To the south on Sheerwater Road are large detached dwellings in a low density layout which form part of the Old Avenue Conservation Area. To the west are detached and semi-detached dwellings on Albert Drive which are separated from Sheerwater Road by large areas of grassed amenity land. A predominance of tree cover, grass verges and relatively low densities results in a verdant and spacious character to the area. The surrounding area is therefore consistently characterised predominately by two storey dwellings which are predominately detached and the area has a spacious appeal; the existing proposal site contributes towards this with the large garden area, tree cover and existing detached dwelling. The existing site is relatively large and predominately undeveloped in nature with a large and mature garden area with the rear portion of the plot being heavily treed. The rear portion of the site forms part of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area.
4. It is acknowledged that the proposal site is relatively large in comparison to neighbouring plots and has the potential to be appropriately sub-divided to provide two detached dwellings for example, which would have the potential to respect the prevailing pattern and grain of development in the area. The proposal however is for the demolition of the existing bungalow and the erection of a three storey block of flats

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as well as a detached two storey building to the rear providing a total of 10x flats. The proposal includes a surface car park and car ports and a detached cycle store building.

5. The proposed three storey block of flats is considered entirely out of scale and out of character with the surrounding area which is consistently characterised by dwellings of no more than two storeys. The proposed building would have a width of 15.7m at the site frontage and a total depth of 23.8m on the Sheerwater Road frontage which results in a particularly large and imposing building. The building would be three storeys and adjacent to No.132 Woodlands Avenue which is two storeys; there would be a pronounced uplift in height, bulk and massing in the street scene which highlights the scale of the proposed building. Blocks of flats are not common in the surrounding area and the scale and nature of the proposed development is therefore considered at-odds with the prevailing character, grain and pattern of development in the area. There is a small collection of maisonettes opposite the proposal site however these are contained within a two storey building with the outward appearance of two storey dwellings and in any case, flats are anomalous in the area. There are examples of blocks of flats to the north at the junction of Woodham Lane and Sheerwater Road however these are some 250m to the north of the proposal site and are separated from the proposal site by the Basingstoke Canal and Conservation Area which is a significant intervening feature. The proposal is therefore considered to relate to an entirely different street scene which has its own distinct character and where blocks of flats are not a characteristic. It is also borne in mind that the existing blocks of flats to the north are set-back considerably from the highway (21-26m) whereas the proposed building would be positioned within 2.5m of the front boundary of the site.
6. Woodlands Avenue is predominately characterised by detached chalet bungalows and two storey dwellings with plot widths which are consistently sized and consistently long rear gardens which are devoid of development and are characterised by mature trees and vegetation. The rear gardens of properties on the northern side of Woodlands Avenue blend with the more informal, undeveloped green space to the north which borders the Basingstoke Canal and includes parts of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area. This prevalence of tree cover and vegetation and the general absence of development creates a strong and consistent green character to the area. One of the Core Objectives of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (WBNDP) (2017) is for built development to compliment the 'strong green character' of the area.
7. The proposed development would result in a significant uplift in bulk and built development on the site and the development would encroach significantly into the existing undeveloped garden area. The proposal would also introduce a detached two storey structure to the rear which is entirely out of character with the prevailing pattern and grain of development in the area where 'backland' development is not common. The proposal would involve the car park and structures to the rear extending right up to the boundary of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area and part of the cycle store structure would encroach into the Conservation Area. This is considered at-odds with the green, spacious character of the area discussed above where areas to the rear of dwellings on Woodlands Avenue are devoid of development and the absence of development contributes to the strong character of the area. Overall the proposal would introduce development across approximately half of the plot, which equates to the full depth of the neighbouring plot at No.132 Woodlands Avenue.
8. The building itself adopts a generally traditional design approach and would be finished in a mixture of brick, tile hanging and render. There would however be relatively large areas of crown roof. The eastern elevation of the proposed building

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includes an unusual section of roof which results in a 9m high section of flank wall and a contrived roof form, to the detriment of the visual amenities of the street scene. Furthermore, the east-facing flank elevation facing No.132 Woodlands Avenue would be clearly visible and prominent in the street scene when viewed from Woodlands Avenue on the east. This flank elevation would be three storeys with an eaves height of 7.2m and a width of 10.5m and would result in a large and relatively blank façade which would be prominent in the street scene and at-odds with the prevailing character and scale of built development in the area.

9. As discussed above the surrounding area is spacious in character. The existing plot is relatively large and open with a modestly proportioned dwelling with a set-back of at least 9m from the Sheerwater Road Frontage. The existing site therefore contributes to the aforementioned spacious and open character to the immediate area. The proposal by contrast would introduce a three storey building in place of the existing dwelling, which would be significantly greater in height and scale and closer to boundaries. The proposal would result a three storey building and the highest part of the proposed development positioned only 2.5m from the most prominent south-west corner of the site. Coupled with the significant spread and quantum of development across the site, the proposal is considered to result in an undue overdevelopment of the plot and is considered to erode the spacious and open character of the area and would be significantly urbanising in effect.
10. There is a change in ground levels on the site which means the existing rear garden slopes downwards to the rear; the ground level to the rear is approximately 3m below the level of Woodlands Avenue to the front of the site and 2.2-2.4m below the level of Sheerwater Road which bounds the site to the west. The rear portion of the proposed building would therefore be set-down from the main body of the building due to the change in levels. There would therefore be requirements for retaining walls within the site of approximately 2.8m in height. No details have been submitted of any retaining walls but the height and extent of the retaining walls required as part of the proposal, and the inevitable balustrades required atop them, is considered to result in an overly engineered, contrived and urbanising appearance which is at odds with the spacious, open suburban character of the surrounding area. This is considered indicative of a contrived overdevelopment of the site, to the detriment of the character of the area.
11. The proposed development, by reason of the height, bulk, siting and design of the development and the extent of development across the site, would result in an unduly prominent, dominating and incongruous development which fails to respect the prevailing character, height, scale, pattern and grain of development in the area and would result in a cramped and contrived overdevelopment of the site. The proposal would consequently result in a significantly harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policies CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', the Core Objectives and policies BE1 'Development Character' and BE2 'New Housing Quality' of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017), Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and Section 12 of the NPPF (2018).

Impact on the special character, appearance and setting of Conservation Areas:

12. Part of the proposal site forms part of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area and opposite the site to the south is the Old Avenue Conservation Area. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS20 'Heritage and Conservation' and Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 'Heritage Assets and their Settings' establish a presumption in favour of preserving or enhancing the character of Heritage Assets. Furthermore, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as

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amended) places a statutory duty on decision makers to have 'special regard' to preserving or enhancing the character of conservation areas. The NPPF (2018) attaches great weight to the desirability of preserving and enhancing Heritage Assets, including Conservation Areas and states that:

"When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation... Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification... Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal..."

13. The special character of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area is considered to be derived from the green and open character along the length of the canal, the absence of development and the predominance of tree cover and vegetation which creates a green 'oasis' running through the Borough. Similarly, the Old Avenue Conservation is characterised by low density development and a spacious, green and sylvan character. The characteristics of the Conservation Areas can be found in the immediate area outside the boundaries of the Conservation Areas. The rear portion of the site forms part of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area however the developed area would extend right up to the boundary of the Conservation Area. The detached two storey structure to the rear, as discussed above, is considered an entirely incongruous form of development and the proposal would result in the two storey rear elevation of this building being positioned directly on the boundary with the Conservation Area. The proposed detached cycle store would encroach into the Conservation Area and the proposed surface car park would extend considerably into the plot to within 5m of the Conservation Area.
14. In addition, the proposal site is directly opposite the Old Avenue Conservation Area which is located on the opposite side of Sheerwater Road. Although the separation distance is approximately 25m, the proposed development would still be clearly visible and readily apparent in views from and to the Conservation Area
15. As discussed above, the proposal would introduce development across approximately half of the plot, which equates to the full depth of the neighbouring plot at No.132 Woodlands Avenue. The scale and nature of the proposed development and the extent of development across the site is considered to result in an urbanising, cramped and contrived form of development and an undue overdevelopment of the plot. This is considered entirely at-odds with the character of the area and the special character of the nearby Conservation Areas. The proposed development would be very prominent in views from the Conservation Areas and parts of the development would be directly adjacent to the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area; overall the proposal is not considered to preserve or enhance the special character or setting of the Basingstoke Canal and Old Avenue Conservation Areas. The proposal is therefore considered contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS20 'Heritage and Conservation', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 'Heritage Assets and their Settings' and the NPPF (2018).

Impact on Neighbours:

16. The nearest neighbours to the proposal site potentially most affected by the proposed development are neighbours on Woodlands Avenue to the east and south-east and neighbours on Sheerwater Road to the west.

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17. No.132 Woodlands Avenue is a detached two storey dwelling which adjoins the site to the east. The proposed building would be sited 5.2m from the side boundary with this neighbour at its nearest point. The shape of the building means the building steps-in from the boundary with the rear projecting element set-in 12.4m from the boundary with this neighbour. The main body of the proposed building nearest this neighbour would be approximately aligned with the front and rear elevations and the proposed building passes the '45° test' in plan and elevation form with this neighbour. No.132 features a side-facing window in a single storey rear extension however this is a high-level window serving as a secondary window to a habitable room; given the secondary nature of this window, the proposal is not considered to result in an undue impact on this window. Overall the proposal is therefore considered to result in an acceptable loss of light impact on this neighbour. The separation distance to the boundary is considered sufficient to avoid an undue overbearing impact on this neighbour and its rear garden area.
18. In terms of potential overlooking, all the side-facing windows in the east flank elevation looking towards No.132 and neighbours beyond serve as secondary windows or serve bathrooms. These windows could all therefore be required to be obscurely glazed with restricted opening if the proposal were considered otherwise acceptable.
19. The Council's 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' SPD (2008) recommends minimum separation distances for different forms of development including a recommended minimum of 15m for front-to-front relationships at three storey level and above. The nearest neighbour opposite the site on Woodlands Avenue is at No.131; the proposed building would be located a minimum of 31m from the front elevation of this neighbour. The proposed building would be sited a minimum of 27.5m from Norfolk Farm Cottage on the opposite side of Sheerwater Road. Other neighbours in the surrounding area have a greater separation distance. These separation distances are considered sufficient to avoid an undue loss of light, overbearing and overlooking impact and are considered acceptable for front-to-front relationships. To the rear of the site is undeveloped land bordering the Basingstoke Canal.
20. Overall the proposed development is therefore considered to have an acceptable impact on the amenities of neighbours in term of loss of light, overbearing and overlooking impacts.

Drainage and Flood Risk:

21. The proposal site is not within a designated Flood Zone however parts of the proposal site and the carriageway on Woodlands Avenue and Sheerwater Road are at risk of surface water flooding. The NPPF (2018) and Core Strategy (2012) policy CS9 state that Local Planning Authorities should seek opportunities to reduce flood risk through the appropriate application of sustainable drainage systems (SUDS).
22. As per the guidance issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) all 'major' planning applications being determined from 6 April 2015 must consider sustainable drainage systems (House of Commons: Written Statement HCWS161 - Sustainable drainage systems. Woking Core Strategy (2012) policy CS9 states that *"the Council will require all significant forms of development to incorporate appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) as part of any development proposals. If this is not feasible the Council will require evidence illustrating this"*. Furthermore, paragraph 165 of the NPPF (2018) states that:

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“Major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate. The systems used should:

- a) take account of advice from the lead local flood authority;*
- b) have appropriate proposed minimum operational standards;*
- c) have maintenance arrangements in place to ensure an acceptable standard of operation for the lifetime of the development; and*
- d) where possible, provide multifunctional benefits”*

23. The current proposal is ‘major’ development as the proposal is for 10x dwellings; an appropriate sustainable drainage scheme would therefore be required to accompany the application and cannot be secured by conditions. The applicant has provided drainage information to accompany the application. The Council’s Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer has reviewed the submission and does not find it acceptable for a number of reasons. The submitted information does take account of all the impermeable areas on the development, including hardstanding and buildings and is proposing an underground tank without any justification. The Council’s Drainage and Flood Risk Engineer therefore raises an objection to the proposal.
24. In the absence of appropriate surface water drainage information, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would incorporate an adequate sustainable surface water drainage system. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012), policy CS9 ‘Flooding and water management’, House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS161) ‘Sustainable drainage systems’ and the NPPF (2018).

Impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA):

25. The SPAs in this area are internationally-important and designated for their interest as habitats for ground-nesting and other birds. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8 requires new residential development beyond a 400m threshold, but within 5km of the SPA boundary, to make an appropriate contribution towards the provisions of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).
26. The SANG and Landowner Payment elements of the SPA tariff are encompassed within the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) however the SAMM element of the SPA tariff is required to be addressed outside of CIL. The required SAMM contribution in this case would be £5,959 in line with the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area Avoidance Strategy 2010-2015 as a result of the net gain of 8x two bedroom and 1x one bedroom dwellings which would arise from the proposal.
27. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards avoidance measures, it cannot be determined that the proposed additional dwellings would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8, the Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy (2010 - 2015), saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI No. 490 - the “Habitats Regulations”).

Affordable Housing:

28. The NPPF (2018) establishes that affordable housing should not be sought for developments which are not ‘major’ developments. The NPPF definition of ‘major’ development is the same as that in the Development Management Procedure Order

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(2015) which is defined as 10x units or more. The proposed development is for a total of 10x units and is therefore a major development and so is liable to make affordable housing contributions. The Council's Affordable Housing Delivery SPD (2014) makes clear that affordable housing contributions should be sought on the net increase in units on a site; in this case the net increase of units is 9x however this does not change the definition of the development as a major development. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing' requires developments providing between 5x and 9x units to provide 20% of the dwellings to be affordable. This equates to 2x units or an equivalent financial contribution of £186,533.

29. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed dwelling would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12, Supplementary Planning Document 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014) and the NPPF (2018).

Transportation Impact:

30. The proposed plans show a total of 15x parking spaces, including 3x carport spaces in the detached building to the rear. The proposed plans also show an integral bin store and a separate building with secure cycle storage to the rear. The Council's Parking Standards (2018) set minimum parking standards of 1x space per two bedroom flat and 0.5x spaces for one bedroom flats; this equates to a minimum overall requirement of 9.5x spaces. Policy BE6 of the WBN DP (2017) also sets minimum parking standards however these set higher minimum standards and require a minimum of 2x spaces to be provided for two and three bedroom dwellings which equates to a minimum requirement of 19x spaces. Policy BE6 states that the minimum parking standard should be provided "*unless it can be clearly demonstrated that alternative requirements are necessary due to the nature and accessibility of residential development or the availability of public transport*".
31. Whilst the proposed 15x spaces would exceed the requirements of the Council's Parking Standards (2018), this would fall short of the requirements of the WBN DP (2017) by 4x spaces. No Transport Statement has been submitted to provide justification for the under-provision of off-street parking and there are limited opportunities for on-street parking on local roads. On-street parking is not possible on Sheerwater Road and there are a limited number of parking bays on Woodlands Avenue and it should be borne in mind that there is concern locally that Woodlands Avenue is heavily parked as evidenced by the representations. This is again considered indicative of an overdevelopment of the site. The County Highway Authority raises no objection subject to conditions however the remit of the County Highway Authority is limited to highway safety and operation rather than local parking pressure and amenity.
32. Overall the proposal would therefore fail to meet the minimum parking standards set out by policy BE6 of the WBN DP (2017) and it has not been demonstrated that the under-provision would not lead to undue pressure on local on-street parking. Consequently the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that there would be no adverse effect upon the free flow of traffic or car parking provision within the locality; the proposal is therefore contrary to policy BE6 of the WBN DP (2017).

Impact on Trees:

33. The proposal site features various mature trees on the site which are concentrated towards the rear of the proposal site within the boundary of the Conservation Area and

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along the Sheerwater Road frontage. Arboricultural information has been provided detailing how trees would be retained and protected during construction. The majority of the trees would be retained apart from three trees which would be removed for arboricultural reasons. Two of the trees are 'U' category trees (a Sweet Chestnut and an Alder), which is the lowest quality category for trees, and these would be removed due to their poor health/condition. The third tree is a 'C' category Oak tree which is identified as being in declining health. The Council's Arboricultural Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection subject to conditions. Overall the proposal is therefore considered to have an acceptable impact on trees and the removal of the three trees identified above is considered acceptable.

Standard of Accommodation:

34. The proposal includes 9x two bedroom flats and 1x one bedroom flat. The one bedroom unit would be 54.5m² and the two bedroom units range from 63m² to 71.5m² which meet the National Technical Housing Standards (2015) and are considered acceptable in terms of size. Habitable room windows would have generally open outlooks. The Council's 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' SPD (2008) states that family accommodation (which is defined as including flats of two bedrooms or more exceeding 65m²), should provide a suitable area of predominately soft landscaped private amenity space. In the most dense urban locations, alternative forms of on-site amenity provision may be permitted. Eight of the nine 2x bedroom flats exceed 65m² however no areas of private amenity space are proposed.
35. Whilst the development would not deliver areas of private amenity space, there would be landscaped areas within the development which would have amenity value for future residents and the treed area to the rear of the plot would also be accessible. It is borne in mind that it would be difficult to achieve an area of private amenity space for every flat and this could result in a proliferation of enclosures on the site which would further harm the character of the development and surrounding area. The absence of dedicated private amenity space can therefore be considered acceptable in this instance.
36. Overall the proposed development is considered to achieve an acceptable standard of amenity for future residents.

Housing Mix:

37. Core Strategy (2012) policy CS11 requires proposals to address local needs as evidenced in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which identifies a need for family accommodation of two bedrooms or more. The most recent published SHMA (September 2015) is broadly similar to the mix identified in policy CS11. The proposal would provide 9x two bedroom dwellings and 1x one bedroom dwelling which is considered an appropriate and acceptable housing mix for a development of this nature.

Urban Open Space:

38. The rear portion of the site is designated as Urban Open Space by the Core Strategy (2012). There is a policy presumption against the loss of open space as set out by the NPPF (2018) and Core Strategy (2012) policy CS17 'Open space, green infrastructure, sport and recreation'. The portion of the site designated as Urban Open Space would largely remain open and undeveloped; the two storey structure to the rear would be positioned directly on the boundary with this area and approximately 3m² of the proposed detached cycle store building would encroach into this space.

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However, there are various existing outbuildings in the rear garden, some of which are positioned within the designated Urban Open Space which would be demolished and removed as part of the proposed development. Considering this, the proposal would therefore not result in a material loss of designated open space.

Impact on Ecology:

39. The site is largely undeveloped and characterised by garden land and more informal scrubland with mature trees towards the rear; there is therefore potential for the proposal to impact on ecology. The applicant has provided an Ecological Appraisal which concludes that the existing house and outbuildings and the trees to be removed have a negligible or low bat roosting potential and the rest of the site has a low potential for other protected species to be present. The report makes a series of recommendations in the event that development goes ahead in order to protect existing ecology and enhance the biodiversity of the site. Surrey Wildlife Trust has reviewed the submission and raises no objection subject to these recommendations. The proposal is therefore considered to have an acceptable impact on ecology.

Contamination:

40. There is the potential for ground contamination due to historic nearby farm uses; the Council's Scientific Officer has reviewed the proposal and raises no objection subject to conditions securing the investigation and remediation of potential contamination. Such conditions could be applied if the proposal were considered otherwise acceptable.

Community Infrastructure Levy:

41. The proposal would be liable to make a CIL contribution of £101,624.28 based on a net increase in floor area of 658.5m².

CONCLUSION

42. Considering the points discussed above, the proposed development, by reason of the height, bulk, siting and design of the development and the extent of development across the site, would result in an unduly prominent, dominating and incongruous development which fails to respect the prevailing character, height, scale, pattern and grain of development in the area and would result in a cramped and contrived overdevelopment of the site. The proposal would consequently result in a significantly harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area and would consequently fail to preserve or enhance the special character or setting of the Basingstoke Canal and Old Avenue Conservation Areas. The proposed development would also fail to meet the minimum parking standards set out by The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017) and it has not been demonstrated that the under-provision would not lead to undue pressure on local on-street parking.
43. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards avoidance measures, it cannot be determined that the proposed additional dwellings would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. Furthermore, in the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed dwelling would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing.

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44. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policies CS8 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas', CS9 'Flooding and water management', CS12 'Affordable Housing', CS20 'Heritage and Conservation', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 'Heritage Assets and their Settings', the Core Objectives and policies BE1 'Development Character' and BE2 'New Housing Quality' of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017), Supplementary Planning Documents 'Woking Design' (2015) and 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014), the Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy (2010 - 2015), saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI No. 490 - the "Habitats Regulations") and the NPPF (2018).
45. The proposal is therefore recommended for refusal for the reasons set out in the 'Recommendation' section below.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Site visit photographs
2. Consultation responses
3. Representations
4. Conservation Area Site Notice
5. 'Major development' Site Notice

RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE planning permission for the following reasons:

01. The proposed development, by reason of the height, bulk, siting and design of the development and the extent of development across the site, would result in an unduly prominent, dominating and incongruous development which fails to respect the prevailing character, height, scale, pattern and grain of development in the area and would result in a cramped and contrived overdevelopment of the site. The proposal would consequently result in a significantly harmful impact on the character of the surrounding area, and would consequently fail to preserve or enhance the special character or setting of the Basingstoke Canal and Old Avenue Conservation Areas, contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policies CS20 'Heritage and Conservation', CS21 'Design' and CS24 'Woking's Landscape and Townscape', Woking DMP DPD (2016) policy DM20 'Heritage Assets and their Settings', the Core Objectives and policies BE1 'Development Character' and BE2 'New Housing Quality' of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017), Supplementary Planning Document 'Woking Design' (2015) and the NPPF (2018).
02. In the absence of appropriate surface water drainage information, it has not been demonstrated that the proposed development would incorporate an adequate sustainable surface water drainage system. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS9 'Flooding and water management', House of Commons: Written Statement (HCWS161) 'Sustainable drainage systems' and the NPPF (2018).
03. The proposed development would fail to meet the minimum parking standards set out by The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017) and it has not been demonstrated that the under-provision would not lead to undue pressure on local on-street parking. Consequently the Local Planning Authority cannot be satisfied that there would be no adverse effect upon the free flow of traffic or car parking provision within the locality; the proposal is therefore contrary to policy BE6

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'Residential parking provision' of The West Byfleet Neighbourhood Development Plan (2017).

04. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards avoidance measures, it cannot be determined that the proposed additional dwellings would not have a significant impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area, contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS8 'Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas', the Thames Basin Heaths Avoidance Strategy (2010 - 2015), saved policy NRM6 of the South East Plan (2009) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (SI No. 490 - the "Habitats Regulations").
05. In the absence of a Legal Agreement or other appropriate mechanism to secure contributions towards affordable housing, it cannot be determined that the proposed dwelling would make sufficient contribution towards affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Core Strategy (2012) policy CS12 'Affordable Housing', Supplementary Planning Document 'Affordable Housing Delivery' (2014) and the NPPF (2018).

Informatives

1. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.
2. The plans relating to the development hereby refused are listed below:

P1475.SUR.01 (Survey of Existing Dwelling, Floor and Roof Plans) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.SUR.02 (Survey of Existing Dwelling, Elevations) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.01 (Planning Layout & Location Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.02 (Proposed Flats, Lower Ground Floor Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.03 (Proposed Flats, Ground Floor Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.04 (Proposed Flats, First Floor Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.05 (Proposed Flats, Second Floor Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.06 (Proposed Flats, Roof Plan) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.07 (Proposed Flats, Front Elevation) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.08 (Proposed Flats, Side Elevations) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.09 (Proposed Flats, Rear Elevation) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.10 (Proposed FOG, Floor Plans) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.11 (Proposed FOG, Elevations) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.12 (Cycle Store, Plans & Elevations) received by the LPA on 04/04/2018

P1475.PL.13 (Block Plan) received by the LPA on 19/04/2018

P1475.PL.14 (Block Plan) received by the LPA on 19/04/2018