

Urban Design Comments

F/25/100445 – 29 HOCOMBE ROAD, CHANDLER'S FORD

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

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Proposal: Demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling

These comments are made in relation to the plans dated 13 November 2025 and should be read in conjunction with comments from the Tree and Ecology Officers.

1. Site Context

Hocombe Road forms the northern edge of the residential area of Chandler's Ford and is made up of generally sizable, detached dwellings on large well treed plots which are set back from the road. The road also lies within the 'Hiltingbury and Hocombe Park Special Policy Area' which sets out a number of criteria to which new development must adhere. Part of this is to ensure that new development is comparable to good quality neighbouring development and that it must complement the attractive arcadian character of the area.

2. Assessment of the Existing Dwelling

The existing dwelling is a modest, well-maintained bungalow that makes a neutral contribution to the street scene. It is of a relatively standard suburban design, typical of its period. While visually pleasant, it does not display any particular architectural distinction or historic significance.

The building is not listed, locally listed, or otherwise identified as a non-designated heritage asset, nor does it contribute to the character of the area in a way that would warrant specific protection. Accordingly, its demolition does not raise heritage concerns in planning terms.

Although the existing bungalow sits comfortably within its plot, its overall design, layout, and performance reflect dated standards and offer limited scope for adaptation to meet contemporary living, accessibility, and sustainability requirements. In this context, demolition can be justified in principle, provided that the replacement dwelling represents a clear improvement in design quality, environmental performance, and relationship with the site and surroundings.

Environmental and Resource Considerations

However, it is also important to consider whether demolition and replacement represent the best use of resources. In some instances, alterations and improvements to the existing dwelling may offer a more sustainable solution, reducing material waste and environmental impact. This option, which was originally considered suitable, should therefore be evaluated alongside the proposed replacement to ensure the most environmentally responsible approach is pursued.

3. Pre-Application Engagement

Given the sensitivity of the site, including its prominent corner plot location, relationship with mature boundary trees, proximity to neighbouring boundaries, and the scale and complexity of the proposed replacement dwelling, it is considered that pre-application engagement with the Council would have been beneficial.

A pre-application submission would have provided an opportunity to:

- Explore the most appropriate siting, scale, and massing of a replacement dwelling
- Test design principles and materials in relation to the site's Special Character Area designation
- Address early concerns regarding tree retention, daylight impacts, visibility, and the use of the annexe
- Reduce the risk of conflict at the full application stage

Proceeding directly to a full planning application has limited the opportunity for early negotiation and design evolution, resulting in a scheme that raises a number of unresolved urban design and amenity concerns.

While the absence of pre-application discussions is not, in itself, a reason for refusal, the lack of early engagement appears to have contributed to a proposal that has not fully addressed site-specific constraints or optimised the development potential in a balanced and contextually responsive manner. A more collaborative, pre-application approach may have resulted in a more appropriate and acceptable design solution for this sensitive site.

4. Scale, Massing and Sitting

The proposed dwelling represents a significant increase in scale, bulk, and floor area compared to the existing building. While larger dwellings are present within the locality, careful consideration must be given to whether the increased massing remains proportionate to the plot size and respects the prevailing pattern of development.

The increase in height, width, and overall bulk represents a significant escalation when compared to the existing single-storey dwelling. The resulting built form appears visually dominant, particularly when viewed from the public realm.

While the roof is pitched, it sits relatively high and further contributes to the perceived scale of the building. The combined impact of the two-storey height, deep plan, and attached garage results in a bulky form that does not sufficiently reflect the prevailing rhythm or proportions of neighbouring dwellings.

The rotation of the dwelling to limit overlooking demonstrates a positive response to neighbouring amenity and reflects good urban design practice.

The retention of existing access points and the provision of on-plot parking avoids undue visual clutter or highway dominance within the street scene.

5. Appearance and Materials

The proposed architectural approach is contemporary while drawing on a material palette that reflects local character, including brick, render, and pitched roofs. The use of higher-quality materials such as charred timber and zinc detailing adds visual interest and helps articulate the building's form.

Provided that materials are carefully detailed and conditioned through planning control, the proposal is capable of achieving a high-quality appearance that enhances the site without appearing incongruous within the wider area.

6. Seasonal Visibility and Winter-Time Impact

Although views of the proposed dwelling from the public realm are described as largely “glimpsed” during the summer months, this assessment does not adequately account for seasonal variation. During winter, the loss of foliage due to leaf fall will significantly reduce the effectiveness of existing tree and hedge screening, resulting in more open and sustained views of the building from surrounding roads and public viewpoints.

In these conditions, the increased scale, height, and massing of the proposed replacement dwelling—particularly when compared to the existing single-storey building—will be far more apparent. This seasonal visibility amplifies concerns regarding the building's prominence on the corner plot and reinforces the importance of ensuring that the design, siting, and materials respond appropriately to the character of the area without reliance on vegetation as the primary means of mitigation.

The proposal's acceptability should therefore be assessed on the basis of worst-case visibility scenarios, including winter conditions, rather than assuming year-round screening. Failure to do so risks underestimating the development's impact on the street scene and the wider public realm.

Verified Context and Streetscape Analysis

To properly assess visual impact and character:

- Streetscape elevations showing the proposed dwelling in context with neighbouring properties
- Cross-sections through the site, including boundary relationships and changes in ground levels
- Winter scenario visuals demonstrating visibility with reduced tree cover

These should clearly illustrate how the scale and massing compare with both the existing dwelling and surrounding development.

7. Proximity to the Southern Boundary, Trees, and Daylight Implications

The proposed replacement dwelling is positioned significantly closer to the southern boundary when compared with the existing building. This change in siting represents a notable departure from the established relationship between built form, boundaries, and vegetation on the site.

The reduced separation distance has the potential to place increased pressure on existing trees located along and adjacent to the southern boundary. The proximity of the proposed building may constrain root protection areas and could lead to future pressure for pruning or removal due to shading, leaf fall, or perceived nuisance, contrary to the long-term retention of mature trees that currently contribute positively to the character of the area.

In addition, the closer siting of the building risks restricting the penetration of natural daylight into habitable rooms, both within the proposed dwelling and potentially to neighbouring properties. The southern aspect is particularly important for daylight and solar gain, and the encroachment of a taller, two-storey built form along this boundary could result in increased overshadowing and a reduced level of internal amenity.

While arboricultural information has been submitted, the siting of the dwelling raises concerns as to whether sufficient space has been left to allow both healthy tree growth and adequate levels of natural light, without creating future conflicts between the built form and the landscape setting.

The repositioning of the dwelling closer to the southern boundary appears to prioritise internal floor area over an appropriate relationship with existing trees and site conditions. In urban design and environmental terms, this approach risks undermining both residential amenity and the long-term retention of established landscaping, which is a defining characteristic of the site.

Given the siting and increased height:

A daylight and sunlight assessment (e.g. BRE-style or equivalent) for:

- Proposed habitable rooms
- Affected neighbouring properties, where relevant

Shadow path diagrams demonstrating seasonal impacts, particularly winter overshadowing along the southern boundary

8. Annexe Above the Garage – Use and Planning Implications

The proposed accommodation above the garage includes a bedroom and bathroom, which gives it the clear potential to function as independent living accommodation. While it is described as an annexe, the presence of primary habitable facilities raises concerns regarding its future use.

Without clear and enforceable restrictions, such an arrangement could:

- Operate as a self-contained unit, either informally or formally
- Result in a form of subdivision or intensification not assessed as part of the application
- Give rise to additional impacts, including increased comings and goings, parking demand, and pressure on local infrastructure

In urban design and planning terms, allowing accommodation capable of independent occupation without appropriate controls risks undermining the basis on which the development is being assessed.

If the annexe is to be considered acceptable in principle, it would be recommended to:

- Restrict its use to purposes ancillary to the main dwelling (e.g. family accommodation, home office, guest use)
- Prevent separate occupation, sale, or letting of the annexe
- Secure these limitations through a planning condition or legal agreement, ensuring the development does not evolve into an unapproved additional dwelling

Alternatively, if such restrictions cannot be adequately enforced, the acceptability of the annexe in its current form should be reconsidered.