

# MEMORANDUM

|                  |   |         |        |
|------------------|---|---------|--------|
| From:            | Built Heritage Officer  |         |        |
| Service          | Green Infrastructure  | App No: | 250289 |
| Address:         | Saxon House, Pearson Road, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6UH  |         |        |
| Proposal:        | Householder application for proposed alterations to existing front boundary wall, to include new gate and brickwork. Followed by alterations to the North wall to include new flintwork panels and metal grilles to existing false windows.   |         |        |
| Heritage Asset:  | <p>Sonning Conservation Area</p> <p>Setting of Grade II listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Robert Palmer Almshouse Cottages</li><li>• Hammering House</li><li>• Old Forge Cottage</li><li>• The Dower House</li></ul> <p>Listed building along with Conservation areas are classed as designated heritage assets under the NPPF (2024) and in the Council’s Local Plan policies.</p> |         |        |
| Site Visit Made: | No  |         |        |

## Summary Of Recommendations

Not supported – amendments required.

## Comments On Proposal

The application proposes the insertion of a pedestrian gate to the front boundary wall of Saxon House, along with the installation of metal grilles and flintwork panels to the roadside elevation of the extant garage.

Located within the heart of the Sonning Conservation Area, and within the immediate setting of a number of listed buildings included the Robert Palmer Almshouse Cottages, Hammering House, Old Forge Cottage and the Dower House, Saxon House is a modern dwellinghouse set back from the road with the garage in question directly abutting the pavement. The garage takes inspiration from a broad 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century style barn form, with a low ridge under a wide hipped roof. Interest to the roadside elevation was purposely added through the insertion of faux blocked windows and a raised and extruded plinth. Whilst the bricks used could have been better chosen and more interesting bond utilized, the

overall effect is not unsuccessful and has blended relatively successfully to the historic environmental context.

Whilst the intention of adding further interest to the elevation is admirable, the proposed flintwork and metal grilles are, regrettably, not suitable for the context. Being a riverside settlement, and thus primarily alluvial, Sonning has very little flint. There are a couple of boundary walls within the village which use flint on the lower parts (being a stronger material than brick), part of Lutyens' garden walling for the Deanery, walling for Holme Park (and the mansion itself) but in terms of actual buildings there is, from memory (but happy to be corrected) only two flint buildings within the village core, the church and the 19<sup>th</sup> century barn at Sonning Farm, which of course is right on the edge of the village. And thus, whilst the material is not completely alien, it does not form part of the prevailing material character of the Conservation Area. Further to this, where flintwork does occur it is either on high status buildings, i.e. St. Andrews and Holme Park, or in a very rudimentary coursed manner, contrary to the proposed decorative panels. Given this, flint panels would appear unusual in this location and in this form. In addition, it is very difficult to achieve a good finish on modern flintwork. Most contractors lack the skill and experience as the work is time consuming, with most contemporary field flints supplied from Norfolk and tend to be larger than Berkshire vernacular.

Similarly, whilst perhaps well intended as to add interest, the metal grilles would add an unnecessary twee detail to the elevation. Protective grilles are very unusual in this part of the world, and to be placed upon faux blind windows (which of course don't require security protection) would be even more peculiar. As such, whilst the intention may be positive, the extant elevation has sufficient interest (through the blind windows and raised plinth) as to not require further adornment.

No concern is raised over the proposed pedestrian gate and additional brick pier, but please confirm the colour and finish of the gate.

Given the above, the application is not currently acceptable in heritage terms. Amendment as to omit the changes to the garage are advised, if not forthcoming refusal of the application is recommended.

| Conditions   |            |                |   |
|--------------|------------|----------------|---|
| N/A          |            |                |   |
| <b>Date:</b> | 19/03/2025 | <b>Signed:</b> | Roderick McDonald<br>Built Heritage Officer |