

Planning ref: 261262

Property address: 9, Arthur Road, Wokingham, RG41 2SX

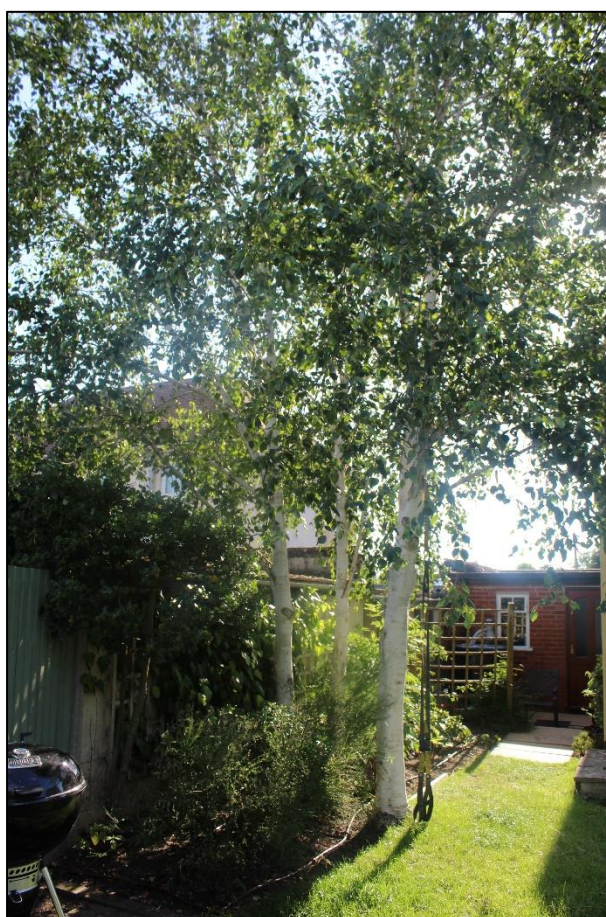
Submitted by: Mr and Mrs Liddle

I am writing as the owner of the adjacent property regarding the proposed development at 9, Arthur Road, Wokingham. While I fully support my neighbours' desire to extend and improve their home, I have a few specific concerns regarding the scale and proximity of the current design. I hope the council and the applicant can consider these points to find a mutually balanced solution.

1. Clarity on Boundary Demolition Works

The development description notes that the proposal is *"following demolition of existing front, side and rear extensions."* This confirms that the existing 2-metre-high structure sitting directly on our shared boundary is to be completely dismantled.

Because this structure is physically adjacent to the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of our mature trees, the demolition phase itself poses an immediate environmental risk. The application fails to provide any details showing how ground compaction from heavy demolition machinery or the aggressive removal of existing foundations will be managed to prevent fatal damage to the adjacent tree root systems. Our trees are shown in **Photograph 1**.



Photograph 1 – Trees adjacent to existing garage structure

2. Visual Impact and Sense of Enclosure

The proposed extension will lead to an unacceptable sense of enclosure in our garden, directly contradicting **Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP3** and the **Borough Design Guide (BDG)**.

The proposed new brickwork wall will extend approximately **nine metres** at a height of **three metres** directly along the boundary line. This represents a massive escalation from the existing baseline; the current 2-metre-high structure has a low profile that respects the residential character and does not dominate our garden. Elevating this by a full metre across a nine-metre run creates a monolithic, visually imposing structure that results in a severe "tunnel effect." It completely dominates the outlook from both our property and our primary garden amenity space, severely harming our visual amenity.

3. Proximity, Wall Maintenance, and Independent Structures

While it is understood that the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (BDG) relaxes mandatory 1-metre boundary gaps for single-storey elements compared to two-storey builds, Section 4 of the BDG explicitly states that all developments must *"respond to the characteristic spacing and gaps between buildings."* As our property is fully detached, the open separation between structures forms part of the established suburban character. Leaving an uncoordinated, arbitrary 50mm gap fails to respect this spacing layout.

Furthermore, the BDG requires all new development to demonstrate high-quality, practical design under **Core Strategy Policy CP3**. A 50mm gap introduces severe design and structural vulnerabilities:

- **Maintenance Failure:** A 50mm gap is physically impossible to access for routine maintenance, clearing debris, or painting, creating a permanent trap for dead leaves and moss.
- **Damp Penetration Risk:** This narrow, unventilated dead space prevents water from evaporating, creating a localized damp risk that threatens the external fabric of both properties.

To preserve our home's physical and legal status as a detached property, the design must be practical. The applicant should be required to introduce a meaningful step-back to ensure both structures remain entirely independent, self-supporting, and maintainable.

4. Garage Dimensions Causing the Boundary Proximity

The plans indicate that the proposed new garage has an internal footprint width of only **2.4 metres**. Wokingham Borough Council's recommended standard width for a functional car parking space is **2.5 metres**.

Because the internal clearance is narrower than the council's standard open parking bay, it will be exceptionally tight for a driver to park a modern vehicle and safely open the car doors to exit. Crucially, the attempt to squeeze this 2.4-metre internal width onto the plot is the direct cause of the unviable 50mm external gap highlighted in Point 3. Given that the internal dimensions do not comfortably align with the council's standard functional guidelines for vehicle parking, the 50mm gap so close to the shared boundary line cannot easily be justified by a practical parking necessity.

4. Protection of Adjacent Mature Trees (BS 5837)

Our property features three mature Silver Birch trees adjacent to the proposed development site. These are established, viable specimens that qualify as mature trees under **British Standard BS 5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition, and construction)**.

Excavating traditional trench foundations for a new 3-metre masonry wall right against the boundary line will inevitably sever the critical structural and feeding roots of these trees. Silver Birches have highly sensitive, wide-spreading, and shallow root networks; dividing these roots will either kill the trees or render them unstable, posing a severe safety hazard. The applicant has failed to provide a BS 5837 Tree Survey, an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), or a Tree Protection Plan (TPP). Because the proposal includes the active demolition of the existing structure right next to the trees, a TPP is strictly required to detail how these sensitive roots will be cordoned off and protected from heavy plant machinery *during both the demolition and construction phases*. This application should be deferred until Wokingham's Tree Officer conducts a site inspection.

Conclusion

While I want to emphasize that I do not object to the overall principle of my neighbours extending or improving their home, I must formally object to the specific design and layout of the proposal in its current form.

Due to the unneighbourly scale of the nine-metre wall, the unviable 50mm structural maintenance gap, the restricted internal parking dimensions and the immediate root protection risks to my mature Silver Birch trees, I kindly urge the council to request a design amendment. A mutually beneficial compromise—such as requiring the applicant to introduce a meaningful "step back" away from the boundary line—would successfully resolve the maintenance trap, dramatically soften the visual impact on our garden, and safely preserve the adjacent green infrastructure. I welcome the opportunity to see an amended plan that balances my neighbours' development goals with the long-term protection of my property.

Thank you for taking these comments into consideration.