

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Site Address: Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning, Reading RG4 6UR

Date: October 2025



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1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in support of a householder planning application for a loft conversion including the introduction of dormer windows at Sonning Court, Thames Street, Sonning.

The application site lies within the Sonning Conservation Area, as designated by Wokingham Borough Council. The property is not statutorily listed. This statement assesses the significance of the heritage asset and considers whether the proposed development preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, in accordance with Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

2. Site and Conservation Area Context

Sonning Court is a substantial detached dwelling set within a large landscaped plot on the western side of Thames Street. The property is set well back from the public highway and is screened by mature planting, limiting views from the public realm.

The **Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal (2017)** identifies the special interest of the area as deriving from:

- Its village and riverside setting
- A loose pattern of development comprising large detached dwellings set within generous plots
- A strong landscaped character, with mature trees and gardens contributing significantly to the townscape.

The Appraisal notes that in parts of the Conservation Area, including along Thames Street, buildings are often experienced indirectly, with their contribution to character arising from scale, spacing, roofscape and landscaped setting, rather than from close-range or continuous views of elevations.

3. Significance of the Heritage Asset

The heritage significance of Sonning Court lies in:

- Its contribution to the established pattern of large detached dwellings within spacious, landscaped plots, identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a defining characteristic of this part of Sonning
- Its set-back position and mature landscaped setting, which reinforce the green and open character of the area
- The overall scale and form of the principal building and roofscape when read within its wider setting.

While the roof form contributes to the appearance of the dwelling, the property's distance from the public realm and screening by vegetation mean that detailed roof alterations are not prominent in public views. The rear and upper parts of the building do not form part of any key views, vistas or townscape sequences identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

4. Description of the Proposals

The proposals comprise:

- Conversion of the existing roof space to provide additional habitable accommodation
- Formation of two front dormer windows and three rear dormer windows to serve the new accommodation; and
- Associated internal alterations.

The front dormers are designed to sit comfortably within the main roof slope. They are set down from the ridge, set back from the eaves line, and set in from the sides of the roof, ensuring that the principal roof form remains visually dominant and legible. The dormers are proportionate to the scale of the dwelling and detailed to integrate with the existing roofscape rather than compete with it.

5. Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

In assessing the proposals, regard has been had to the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal (2017), particularly its emphasis on scale, spacing, landscaped setting and the treatment of roofscape.

Front dormers and roofscape

The assessment of dormer windows within the Sonning Conservation Area has had regard to the Borough Design Guide and the approach taken in recent Wokingham decisions, which emphasise that dormers should be modest in scale and positioned within the main roof by being set back from the eaves line and roof edges, and set down from the ridge, so that the roof does not appear top-heavy or visually dominant within the street scene.

The proposed front dormers follow this established approach. Their scale, proportions and positioning ensure that the original roof form remains the primary element, with the dormers reading as clearly subordinate additions.

Due to the dwelling's set-back position from Thames Street, its orientation, and the presence of mature landscaping within the site, views of the roof are limited and filtered, meaning the dormers would not be visually prominent within the public realm or within any key views identified in the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal.

Overall impact

The introduction of the dormers does not alter the overall scale, massing or landscaped setting of the dwelling, which are identified in the Appraisal as fundamental to the character of this part of the Conservation Area. The proposals therefore do not affect the attributes of the site that contribute to the Conservation Area's special interest.

As such, the proposals would result in no harm to the character or appearance of the Sonning Conservation Area.

6. Policy Context

The proposals have been assessed against:

- Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires great weight to be given to the conservation of heritage assets
- Policy TB24 (Designated Heritage Assets) of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan, which seeks to ensure that development preserves the significance of heritage assets and their settings.

In NPPF terms (paragraphs 212–215), the proposals would result in no harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and therefore no heritage planning balance is required.

7. Conclusion

The proposed loft conversion and dormer windows at Sonning Court have been designed with careful regard to the site's heritage context and the guidance set out in the Sonning Conservation Area Appraisal.

The dormers are modest, proportionate and subordinate to the main roof form. Given the site's set-back position, landscaped setting and limited visibility from the public realm, the proposals do not affect the characteristics that contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area.

The proposals therefore preserve the character and appearance of the Sonning Conservation Area, in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the National Planning Policy Framework and local planning policy.