

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250719
Site Address:	12 Farmers End, Charvil, Wokingham, RG10 9RZ
Expiry Date:	11 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	09/05/2025
Proposal: Full application for proposed loft conversion with front and rear dormers, internal alterations and all associated works.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Bat Roost Habitat Suitability
- Scale and Location of Development Proposals
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Nuclear Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area
- Flood Zones 2 and 3

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC05 – Renewable Energy and Decentralised Energy Networks CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB10 – Traveller Sites TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation DM3 - Protection of Habitats and Species
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant Planning Application or Planning Appeal History to the current application (i.e. being substantially the same development).

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Drainage – Further information requested.
WBC Highways – No objections raised.

External

None consulted.

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site relates to a two storey, semi-detached coach house style dwelling located in an established residential area. The surrounding area is characterised by detached, semi-detached and terrace properties that are set in discernible groupings which are distinguished by repeated house type. The grain of development in the immediate is relatively tight and the property has a shallow rear garden.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The site is located within settlement limits and as such the development should be acceptable providing that it complies with the principles stated in the Core Strategy. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Character of the Area:

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework states 'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

National Design Guide

Section I1, paragraph 68 of the National Design Guide

states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

Paragraph 69 expands on this, highlighting that houses and streets should establish an appropriate relationship with the pattern, sizes and proportions of existing houses in the local area.

Wokingham Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that maintain and enhance the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy emphasises that development must be appropriate in terms of its scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area in which it is located and must be of high-quality design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.

Borough Design Guide SPD

Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide states that any alteration and extension to an existing building should be well-designed, respond positively to the original building, contribute positively to the local character and street scene, and relate well to the neighbouring properties.

Relating to proposals for dormer windows specifically, Section 4 advises that Dormers should relate to the design of the existing building in terms of roof form, materials, positioning and window proportions.

Assessment

Although the proposed central dormer is modest in scale, its design does not match with the two existing gable-fronted projections, resulting in a visually discordant addition to the roofscape. The roof pitch of the front dormer window is noticeably shallower than the pitch of the existing gable features which makes it appear out of keeping with the design of the existing dwelling. The dormer's wider proportions and compressed vertical emphasis contrast awkwardly with the narrower, vertically

aligned two existing gables features, undermining the consistency of the building's façade.

The trim detailing and profile of the central dormer does not correspond with existing gable-fronted elements, and this also compounds the out of keeping appearance of the dormer window. The fascia board on the dormer window is thicker and would cover the edge of the roof tiles, unlike the existing gable features. The existing gables also have an eaves detailing that would be absent from the proposed window. The ridge tile detailing on the existing dormer is also absent from the proposal. In contrast, the central dormer employs simplified, flat-edged trim with shallow returns, lacking the depth and articulation characteristic of the existing architectural details.

The proposed rear-facing dormer is of a significantly larger scale, spanning approximately 11 metres in width and incorporating a flat roof design that does not relate well to the existing pitch roof of the dwelling. While it is set down from the ridge and setback from the eaves, its overall mass and design fails to integrate sensitively with the existing building.

The irregular window placement in the dormer extension fails to result in unified designed and results incongruous appearing upward extension. This is exacerbated by the fact the upper floor windows are misaligned with the first-floor windows, failing to respect the design and proportions of the existing dwelling. The high number of windows (six) in the rear dormer extension also results in a top-heavy appearance as the level of glazing is notably greater than the first floor. Traditional window proportions/glazing generally diminishes in upper storeys, and the appreciably increase in glazing from the first floor creates a discordant and incongruous appearance when viewed with the existing property.

Whilst the rear dormer is at the back of the dwelling, it would be glimpsed from East Park Farm Drive and neighbouring houses and gardens – It would not go unseen. Therefore, whilst the visual impact would be somewhat limited, it's harmful impact would still be noticeable. This impact when combined with the incongruous design and appearance of the front dormer window results in an overall detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the dwelling and area. Considering local and national policy, as well as the design guidance referred to above, the proposal cannot be considered to maintain the quality of the environment or be of an appropriate scale, mass and design.

The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area by reason of the front dormer window failing to match the design, proportions and roof pitch of the existing gable roof features; and the size, scale, massing and window placement of the rear dormer window. The development is therefore contrary to policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide, Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, and Section B1 of the National Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Policy CP1 of the council's Core Strategy supports development proposals Maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment

Policy CP3 (a) of the council's Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

Paragraph 135 (f) of the National Planning Policy Framework seeks to ensure that planning decisions create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Overlooking:

Figure 4.25 within Section 4 of the council's Borough Design Guide SPD provides a summary of the Council's minimum separation distances to maintain privacy and limit sense of enclosure. For developments over two storeys in height, the Borough Design Guide SPD recommends a minimum back-to-flank separation distance of 15 metres and a back-to-back separation distance of 26 metres.

The existing first-floor rear windows at the application site, including one serving a dining/living area are positioned approximately 8.8 metres from the southern boundary of No. 32 East Park Farm Drive, creating a close and direct relationship between the two properties. The proposed development would detrimentally intensify this relationship and heighten the perception of overlooking from the application site. All six of the proposed rear-facing dormer windows would fall significantly short of the Council's recommended 15-metre separation distance to the side boundary of this neighbouring property.

While an existing hedgerow provides a degree of screening, there would be still intervisibility between the proposed dormer windows and the neighbouring dwelling. In addition, it is well established that soft landscaping cannot be relied upon to mitigate overlooking concerns. This is because vegetation is transient in nature and cannot be depended on in perpetuity. Some of the landscaping is also deciduous and would be out of leaf in winter months. Furthermore, much of the hedgerow is outside the applicant's control, so there is no guarantee of its retention, even in the short term. It is also important to note that the shortfall in separation distances is not slight or minor – the proposed dormer window, with its elevated outlook, would be very close to this neighbouring side boundary.

Whilst not directly aligned with 32 East Park Farm Drive, there is a back-to-back relationship and the proposed windows in the rear dormer extension would have an arc of outlook to the rear elevation of this property. The dormer windows would be 16 to 19 metres from the rear elevation of this dwelling, significantly short of the minimum requirement of 26m. Given the tight relationship this would also detrimentally impact privacy and result in a perception of overlooking.

The rear gardens of the neighbouring dwellings to each side wraparound the rear garden of the application site – this can be seen from the submitted block plan and was a noticeable feature on site. This layout means that the windows in the rear

dormer extension would significantly increase the level of overlooking and perception of overlooking to these neighbouring private amenity areas. The areas overlooked would not be insignificant, especially considering the garden layout of no.14 Farmers End.

Whilst rear facing dormer windows do not usually have detrimental impacts to neighbouring houses on either side, this application must be assessed on merits, and the unique configuration of private gardens and boundaries in this case would result in a harmful impact regarding overlooking and a perception of overlooking.

The proposed development does not achieve a high standard of amenity as outlined in paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF. The separation distances between the proposed windows and neighbouring properties /gardens fall substantially short of the Council's guidance, resulting in an increased overlooking; loss of privacy and a perception of overlooking. This is compounded by the boundary configuration and layout with the neighbouring houses. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024, policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and Principle R16 of the Borough Design Guide SPD.

Loss of light and Overbearing:

The proposed dormer extensions would be suitably located and of modest proportions not to pose any unreasonable concerns of overbearing or loss of light impacts.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and notes that the proposal will increase the numbers of habitable rooms from two to five. Two existing driveway parking are proposed to be retained within the red line.

According to the WBC Car Parking Standards, the development of such scale in Town and Fringe location will require two parking within the red line boundary. Each parking space shall have minimum dimensions of 5.0m x 2.5m.

Despite the proposed designated parking spaces do not fully meet the council's requirement for car parking, the proposed driveway will have ample spaces to accommodate more than three spaces by utilising the existing dropped crossing, which will meet the council's parking requirements. As such, no objections are raised on highway grounds.

Flooding and Drainage:

According to Environment Agency mapping, the site lies within Flood Zone 2, the Council's Drainage Officer has reviewed this application and notes that given that the site is located in Flood Zone 2, it is crucial to assess the surface water drainage for the proposed loft conversion with front and rear dormers, internal alterations, and associated works through the submission of a drainage strategy. Flood Zone 2 is typically defined as an area at medium risk of flooding, which means there is a higher likelihood of surface water flooding due to the proximity to floodplains or

watercourses.

The Drainage Officer considers that for the proposed works, it is important to ensure that the existing drainage system can accommodate any potential increase in surface water runoff from the development. Since loft conversions generally involve additional roof space, the runoff generated by this new impermeable area needs to be properly managed. If the development results in an increase in the impermeable surface (for example, from the dormers or other alterations), this could potentially exacerbate surface water flooding unless mitigated through appropriate drainage measures.

However, while the site's location in Flood Zone 2 understandably warrants a degree of caution regarding flood risk and surface water management, the proposed loft conversion — including the addition of front and rear dormers — is unlikely to result in a material increase in surface water run-off.

The proposed dormer extensions would extend the overall footprint of the building, nor does it introduce new ground-level impermeable surfaces that would more directly affect surface water drainage patterns. The proposed dormers would redirect rainwater to the existing drainage system, which would be appropriately extended or modified as required by Building Control Building Regulations (Approved Document H: Drainage and Waste Disposal) in the event of any approval.

Therefore, in this instance, the proposed loft conversion is not expected to generate a significant additional surface water burden, and it would not materially increase flood risk either on-site or elsewhere.

Ecology:

Paragraph 185 of the NPPF 2024 seeks to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity.

Core Strategy Policy CP7, carried forward by MDD LP Policy TB23, requires appropriate protection of species and habitats of conservation value.

The site is located in habitat which matches where bat roosts have previously been found in the borough and the proposed development involves modifications to the roof space where bat roosts could be present.

The supporting Bat Survey Report (Indigo Surveys, April 2025, Ref: 251273) comprised a daytime inspection to assess the building for evidence of bat occupation. The survey included a thorough examination of both external and internal structures, with particular attention to the roof and walls. Potential roost features such as cracks in walls, gaps in soffit boards, and lifted roof tiles were carefully inspected. The report concluded that, due to the presence of multiple potential roost features, the building is of moderate suitability for roosting bats. As such, two dusk emergence surveys have been recommended to determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats.

No further survey has been submitted by the applicant, and it would not be reasonable to request additional surveys given the overarching reason for refusal outlined above.

Consequently, insufficient information has been provided for the council to determine the likely impact of the proposals upon bats, which are a protected species and material consideration in the planning process. This is contrary to Section 15 of the NPPF 2024, Policies CP3 and CP7 of the Core Strategy 2010, and Policy TB23 of the Adopted Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refusal
Date:	4 June 2025
Earliest date for decision:	10 May 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	20.06.2025