

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261444
Site Address:	5 Matthews Close, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 7EQ
Expiry Date:	19 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	10 August 2026
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed conversion of the existing integral garage into habitable accommodation to be used as a study, with replacement of the existing garage door with matching fenestration and associated alterations to the front elevation.	

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 CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS4 – Development within or adjacent to minor settlements FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
RM/2008/0224	Reserved Matters application on Outline consent O/2006/ 7341 for the erection of 9 dwellings with associated car parking and landscaping.	Approved 7 th March 2008
260699	Pre-application for the proposed conversion of existing integrated garage into office space along with changes to fenestration.	Replied 21/04/26

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Digital Solutions Scanning- No comments received
WBC CIL- No comments received
Highways- Objection

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council raise no objection
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	1 representation received - The property forms part of a private development subject to management company controls and restrictive covenants. It is contended that alterations to the front of the property may conflict with covenant restrictions intended to maintain the appearance and symmetry of the development. - Concerns are also raised regarding the proposed conversion of the garage to a study, with potential for increased noise transmission through the shared wall. The representation further expresses concern that any structural works could affect the adjoining property due to the shared wall arrangement and suggests that a structural survey should be undertaken. Reference is also made to the need for management company and developer approval, together with the implications of the proposal for parking provision.

APPRAISAL

Site Description: This application site relates to a two-storey detached dwelling with associated parking and landscaping in the residential area of Earley, Wokingham. The site is surrounded by dwellings that follow the same consistent design, materials and appearance.

Proposal: This application seeks permission for the proposed garage conversion. The existing garage will be converted into a study.

Planning History: The site forms part of a residential development approved under reserved matters application RM/2008/0224, which was granted permission on 7 March 2008 pursuant to outline planning permission O/2006/7341. The reserved matters approval related to the erection of nine dwellings together with associated car parking and landscaping. More recently, a pre-application enquiry (260699) was submitted in respect of the proposed conversion of the integrated garage into office space, together with associated changes to the fenestration. A written response was issued on 21 April 2026.

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: Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that developments are of 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 other adjoining land users. R1 of the Borough Design Guide SPD requires that development contribute positively towards and be compatible with the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area.

5 Matthews Close and the surrounding area comprise of dwellings of similar design and character. The proposal involves the conversion of the existing garage to provide a study.

Whilst the proposed works are predominantly internal, there are changes to the principal elevation which include removal of the garage door, to be replaced with one additional window.

The subsequent removal of the garage door somewhat disrupts the established street scene and consistency between the houses. However, the proposed window to the front elevation will utilise the same materials as the host dwelling which would maintain the consistent character and appearance between the houses.

Neighbouring Amenity: The proposed development is mainly internal works. Whilst there has been a comment from a neighbour regarding concerns about the potential noise increase into their property, the changes to the front elevation, and structural changes, the proposed development itself are contained within the existing built form and do not increase the overall mass, depth and width of the dwelling. Therefore, the proposed development does not impact loss of light, overbearing or overlooking on neighbouring amenity.

Whilst the neighbour also refers to issues concerning a management agent, the agent has been informed and it has been stated that the applicant may need to obtain any necessary permissions or consent from the relevant management company before undertaking the proposed works and this is a separate matter from the planning process.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: Policy CC07 of the MDD Local Plan requires development proposals to demonstrate that parking provision meets the Council's adopted parking standards and that an appropriate level of off-street parking

is retained. This approach is reinforced by Policies TR2 and TR4 of the NPPF, which give weight to locally adopted parking standards and require development to provide suitable parking provision reflecting the nature and scale of the development.

The application site forms part of a development approved under reserved matters application RM/2008/0224, following the earlier appeal decision under reference O/2006/7341. Condition 4 of RM/2008/0224 specifically requires the garage accommodation to be retained for vehicle parking and prevents its use as habitable accommodation. The condition was therefore considered necessary and has not been removed or varied through any subsequent application.

The property currently benefits from one driveway parking space and one garage parking space. Whilst the garage does not meet current WBC parking standards in terms of its dimensions, it nevertheless forms part of the existing lawful parking provision relied upon when the development was approved and continues to provide parking and vehicle storage capacity.

The proposal would convert the garage to habitable accommodation, increasing the dwelling from six to seven habitable rooms and resulting in the loss of one of the two approved parking spaces serving the property. This would leave only a single off-street parking space for the dwelling. Consequently, the proposal would fail to meet the Council's adopted parking standards, which require a minimum of two on-plot parking spaces for a dwelling of this size in an urban location where no allocated communal parking provision exists. The loss of an approved parking space would therefore increase reliance on off-site parking.

Although the applicant states that the property is occupied by a single-car household, planning permissions run with the land rather than the current occupiers. The proposed is a family size dwelling and, as stated, the parking standards require at least two spaces for a property of this size. The applicant's point also fails to address space for visitors to the property.

Whilst the applicant contends that the site's sustainable location reduces dependence on the private car, this is a matter that has already been reflected in the Council's parking standards. The standards expressly differentiate between rural, town/fringe and urban locations and accordingly take account of the varying availability of public transport and opportunities for travel by non-car modes. Notwithstanding these locational factors, the adopted standards still require two parking spaces in this instance. The proposal would therefore result in a level of parking provision that falls below the Council's assessed requirement for a dwelling of this size and location, increasing the likelihood of parking displacement onto the close and surrounding roads.

The Council's Highway Officer has objected stating:

'the proposal will therefore result in additional parking demand and loss of the parking provision with one remaining car parking space, which is unacceptable for a dwelling of this size.'

Alternatively, the applicant will have to justify additional alternative parking can be provided without obstructing the free flow of traffic and the access of shared drive.

However, the approved private driveway and turning head in Drawing no. 5144/01A has been secured as turning area in Conditions 2 and 5 in RM/2008/0224. On-street parking on classified A-road shall be avoided. Off-site parking opportunity without obstructing the free flow of traffic can unlikely be identified given the existing site constraints.'

The shortfall in on-plot parking would result in additional on-street parking demand. Matthews Close is a small cul-de-sac, with properties arranged around the turning head. This area is essential so that vehicles can manoeuvre safely and leave the close in a forward gear onto the busy classified A-road, Wokingham Road. This requirement applies not only to private cars, but also to larger delivery vehicles, fire appliances and refuse trucks, which require much greater space to manoeuvre. The small size of the close and the turning head means that even a limited increase in on-street parking would have a knock-on impact. As advised by the Council's Highway Officer, it has not been demonstrated that additional on-street parking could be accommodated without obstructing the free movement of all vehicles. Reliance on on-street parking on the adjacent classified A-road would be inappropriate due to cycles lanes and the high levels of traffic along the road.

Site visit photos and photographs from the applicant show existing street parking in the close, which reduces manoeuvrability and site lines, particularly for a larger vehicle. The proposed loss of on-plot parking would exacerbate this issue, creating additional parking demand on the carriageway of the close.

Whilst the proposed cycle storage within the rear garden is considered acceptable, the Highway Officer maintains the objection on parking grounds due to the loss of the garage parking space and the resulting under-provision of parking.

The proposed conversion of the existing garage to habitable accommodation would result in the loss of an off-street parking space that forms part of the approved parking provision for the dwelling and would fail to comply with the council's adopted parking standards. The proposal would reduce the available off-street parking provision to a single space, and no suitable replacement parking provision has been demonstrated. As such, the development would result in inadequate off-street parking provision, increasing on-street parking pressure to a small cul-de-sac to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP3 and CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, Policy CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and TR4 of the NPPF (2006).

Flooding and Drainage: The application site is situated in an area susceptible for fluvial flooding. However, the proposed development does not increase the impermeable area therefore no impact on flooding or drainage is expected.

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 reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. 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.

Conclusion: The proposed development is unacceptable, will result in material harm and is contrary to National and Development Plan policies for the following reasons;

1. The proposed conversion of the existing garage to habitable accommodation would result in the loss of an off-street parking space that forms part of the approved parking provision for the dwelling and would fail to comply with the council's adopted parking standards. The proposal would reduce the available off-street parking provision to a single space, and no suitable replacement parking provision has been demonstrated. As such, the development would result in inadequate off-street parking provision, increasing on-street parking pressure to a small cul-de-sac to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CP3 and CP6 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy, Policy CC07 of the Managing Development Delivery Local Plan and TR4 of the NPPF (2026).

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refuse
Date:	12 August 2026
Earliest date for decision:	16 July 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	<i>MC</i>
Date:	09.09.2026