

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261683
Site Address:	24 Barkham Road, Wokingham, RG41 2XP
Expiry Date:	22 September 2026
Site Visit Date:	26 August 2026
Proposal: Full application for proposed alterations to the existing shopfront and installation of front decking and wooden railings to form a seating area (part-retrospective).	

PLANNING POLICY	
National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals CP13 – Town Centres and Shopping CP15 – Employment Development
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk TB16 – Development for Town Centre Uses TB17 – Local Centres and Neighbourhood and Village Shops
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER5 – The hierarchy of centres ER6 – Town, district and local centres and shopping parades H2 – Presumption against residential losses DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH3 – Shopfronts
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
18775	Change of use from garage to shop unit at 24 Barkham Road, Wokingham.	Approved 25/02/1983

CONSULTATION RESPONSES**Internal**

WBC CIL – No comments received.

External

None.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

APPRAISAL**Site Description:**

The application site consists of an existing ground floor commercial unit within a two and a half storey mixed-use building located on the southern side of Barkham Road, Wokingham. The site is sustainably located approximately 0.06 miles from Wokingham Train Station and 0.5 miles from Wokingham Town Centre.

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 application site is located within defined settlement limits where development is generally acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with relevant development plan policies. Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy requires development to be appropriate in terms of its scale, layout, built form, design and character, whilst safeguarding the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. In addition, Policy CP13 seeks to protect the vitality and viability of retail centres and local shopping parades which serve the day-to-day needs of the local community.

The proposal is part retrospective and involves alterations to the shopfront and the provision of a small outdoor seating area. The development would bring a long-vacant premises back into active use, contributing positively to the vitality and attractiveness of the small parade and supporting the continued viability of the local centre.

Whilst the former use operated as a cycle sales and repair business, the café would remain within Use Class E with outdoor seating and would continue to provide a service accessible to the local community. The proposal would therefore deliver economic and social benefits, increased footfall within the parade and the provision of an additional local amenity for residents. Subject to satisfactory consideration of all other material planning matters, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

Emerging Local Plan Update

The Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023–2040 (“LPU”) is at an advanced stage of preparation, having been submitted for examination on 28 February 2025, with the examination hearing sessions now concluded. The Inspectors’ post-hearings letter dated 4 August 2026 states that the LPU is likely to be capable of being found sound and legally compliant, subject to main modifications. That view is nevertheless expressly provisional and remains subject to Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment, consultation on the proposed main modifications, consideration of representations and the Inspectors’ final report.

The LPU does not therefore form part of the statutory Development Plan, but it is a material consideration. Having regard to its advanced stage, the extent to which the examination has clarified outstanding soundness issues, and the remaining consultation and examination steps, the LPU and those policies not identified for deletion or substantive modification are afforded moderate weight in the determination of this application.

Policy ER2: ‘Employment uses outside Core Employment Areas’ of the LPU states that employment development of less than 1,000m² within a defined settlement will be supported provided:

- a) It is appropriate to the character of the area; and
- b) It does not have an unacceptable impact on nearby residential uses, other employment uses and other uses, including impacts caused by traffic movements, noise, emissions, hours of operation, odour and lighting.

The impact of the proposal on local character and residential amenity (requirements of LPU Policy ER2) are considered within the main body of this report.

Character of the Area:

The application site forms part of a small parade of commercial units, with a convenience store located to the north and a barber shop to the south. The unit had been vacant for some time, and the frontage had presented a tired appearance, detracting from the visual quality of the parade. The alterations, including the replacement shopfront, significantly improve the appearance of the application property and make a positive contribution to the overall character of the parade.

The proposed shopfront adopts a contemporary design whilst retaining traditional features, including the box bay display window and moulded stall risers, which complement the traditional red brick façade of the building above. The development would therefore enhance the visual appearance of the host building and its immediate surroundings, resulting in a positive impact on local character and appearance.

The proposal also includes the provision of a modest, decked seating area to the front of the café, accommodating a small number of tables and chairs. The decking would be enclosed by a simple timber post-and-rail fence. The outdoor seating area would create an active and attractive street frontage, contributing to the vitality and vibrancy of the parade, whilst retaining sufficient pedestrian space along the footway and not impeding pedestrian movement.

Furthermore, SH5 of the Borough Design Guide (BDG) encourages the design of shopfronts and associated public realm improvements that enhance the pedestrian environment. In particular, the guidance recognises that cafés and restaurants can successfully utilise portions of the public realm to create activity and animation, helping to "bring life and activity" to an area. In this regard, the proposal is considered consistent with the aims of the BDG, with Policy CP3 and CP13 of the Core Strategy, and LPU Policy ER2, and would contribute positively to the character, appearance and vitality of the local centre. In addition, the changes would include an access ramp incorporated into the external decking to provide a step-free access for pushchairs, wheelchair users and those with reduced mobility, compliant with Core Strategy Policy CP2 – Inclusive Communities.

The changes to the signage are to be assessed under a separate advertisement application.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

Given that no additional fenestration is proposed, the only potential for increased overlooking would be from users of the outdoor seating area. However, the seating area would be situated over 26m from the front elevations of nos. 23, 25 and 27. This significantly exceeds the 10m minimum separation distance recommended by the BDG for front-to-front relationships. Accordingly, the proposal would not give rise to any unacceptable overlooking or loss of privacy for neighbouring occupiers.

Loss of Light & Overbearing:

As no extensions are proposed, there would be no adverse impacts of this nature that would arise from the development.

External Lighting:

The proposal includes the installation of a new fascia sign incorporating external illumination. The signage would be illuminated by discreet downlighters positioned above the fascia and fitted with low-level warm LED lighting. The submitted details indicate that the lighting has been designed to focus illumination onto the fascia sign itself, thereby minimising light spill and avoiding undue impact on the flats located above the commercial units.

The use of externally illuminated signage is not uncommon within the immediate area, with the adjoining convenience store also benefiting from illuminated signage. As such, the proposed lighting would be consistent with the established commercial character of the parade and would not appear incongruous within the street scene. In addition, SH8 of the BDG states that externally illuminated signs are appropriate for all shopfront

and that the illuminated signs should be low energy, using the minimum number of light fittings, and of the simplest possible design.

Given the modest scale and design of the proposed illumination, together with its directional downward lighting, it is not considered that the proposal would result in unacceptable light pollution or harm to the amenities of neighbouring residential occupiers. Consequently, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of residential amenity.

Noise and Disturbance:

The proposed development would result in a café (Class E), with no extensions proposed to the building. The works are limited to alterations to the shopfront, internal refurbishment and the provision of a modest outdoor seating area. The application site forms part of a terrace containing a mix of commercial and residential uses, with a convenience store and flat above adjoining to the north and a barber shop with flat above adjoining to the south. Accordingly, the commercial use of the unit is well established within the parade.

The café would operate during daytime hours; in an email dated 14/09/2026, the agent has confirmed the opening times as:

- Monday – Friday: 07:00-17:00
- Saturday: 09:00-16:00
- Sunday: 10:00-14:00

Given the relatively small scale of the premises, comprising approximately 28sqm of customer seating space, it is not anticipated that customer numbers would exceed those typically associated with the existing neighbouring commercial units or the previous cycle sales and repair business. Whilst the proposal includes a small outdoor seating area, its limited size and intended daytime use are not considered likely to generate significant levels of noise and disturbance. Taking these factors into account, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable noise, disturbance or general loss of amenity to the occupiers of surrounding residential properties and would therefore accord with the amenity objectives of the development plan.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The café would not benefit from dedicated customer parking; however, on-street parking is available immediately outside the site and serves the existing parade of commercial premises. The application site is also located in a highly sustainable location, approximately 0.06 miles from Wokingham Railway Station, 0.02 miles from the 'Wokingham Rail Station' bus stop and 0.03 miles from the 'Wokingham Hospital' bus stop. Furthermore, Wokingham Town Centre is located approximately 0.5 miles from the site, providing access to a wider range of public transport services, facilities and amenities.

Given the site's accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, together with the modest scale of the development, it is not considered that it would generate a level of vehicle trips that would result in a detrimental impact on the operation of the local highway network or highway safety. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in highways and transport terms.

Conclusion:

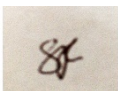
For the reasons set out above and subject to conditions, the proposal is acceptable as it accords with local plan policy and guidance.

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.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	11 September 2026
Earliest date for decision:	18 August 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	21.9.26

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location
Green Route Enhancement Area
Emmbrook Ward
Wokingham Parish