

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	261484
Site Address:	1 University Farm Cottages, Charvil Lane, Sonning, Wokingham, RG4 6TJ
Expiry Date:	28 August 2026
Site Visit Date:	17 August 2026
Proposal: Householder application for proposed erection of a part single, part two storey extension with roof solar panels, a single storey front extension with porch along with changes to fenestration plus a pergola at rear following demolition of existing rear extension.	

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 CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB06 – Development of Private Residential Gardens TB25 – Archaeology
Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy SS4 – Development within or adjacent to minor settlements H12 – Residential development of existing private gardens FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE3 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE6 – Valued landscapes
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
N/A	N/A	N/A

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health- No objection
WBC Digital Solutions Scanning- No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees- No objection subject to condition(s)
WBC Built Heritage Officer- No objection
WBC CIL- No comments received
WBC Ecology- No comments received

External

None consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	Sonning Parish Council raises no objection to the proposed development apart from the installation of solar panels on the front facing roof which in an important location at the entrance to the Conservation Area.
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	No comments received

APPRAISAL

Site Description: The application site relates to a semi-detached two-storey dwellinghouse located on the edge of Sonning, within the Sonning Conservation Area. The dwelling occupies a generous plot and is set back from the public highway behind a large hard-surfaced driveway providing off-street parking. The surrounding area is characterised by detached and semi-detached dwellings of varying designs and ages, all set within spacious plots. The site includes an enclosed rear garden comprising a patio and lawn area bounded by fencing, hedging and mature vegetation.

Proposal: This application seeks permission for the proposed erection of a part single, part two storey extension with roof solar panels, a single storey front extension with porch along with changes to fenestration plus a pergola at rear following demolition of existing rear extension.

The proposed single storey front extension will be approximately 2 meters in depth, 5 meters in width and 3.5 meters in maximum height. This part of the proposal will accommodate a front porch and snug area.

The proposed part single-storey, part two-storey rear extension would project approximately 4 metres beyond the existing rear elevation and span approximately 8 metres in width. The single-storey element would have a maximum height of approximately 3 metres and would provide an enlarged kitchen and dining area, enhancing the internal living accommodation of the dwelling.

The two-storey element would measure approximately 4 metres in depth, 4 metres in width, and 7 metres in maximum height. This element of the proposal will accommodate one additional bedroom.

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 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.

The site is located within an established residential area characterised by a varied pattern of development comprising detached and semi-detached dwellings set within relatively spacious plots.

The proposed dwelling is set well back from the highway, with the principal elevation located approximately 14 metres from the highway edge. The frontage is characterised by a substantial area of open amenity space. Whilst the proposed porch would project approximately 2 meters forward of the existing front elevation and exceed the established building line, it would remain subordinate in scale to the host dwelling and would not appear unduly prominent within the street scene. Furthermore, the development would retain approximately 12 metres of front amenity space between the porch and the highway boundary, ensuring that the dwelling is set back from the road. The proposed porch is set down from the eaves of the host dwelling and incorporates a pitched roof design along with solar panels. Whilst the solar panels integrate with the host dwelling ensuring a cohesive relationship. As such, the proposal would preserve the spacious character of the plot and would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the surrounding area. Moreover, the proposed front porch complies with paragraph 4.11 of the Borough Design Guide SPD regarding front extensions.

The main consideration for rear extensions is the impact upon neighbours. As No.1 University Farm Cottage is a semi-detached property, this is increasingly important to consider when assessing this proposal.

The two-storey element would utilise a pitched roof form that reflects the design and proportions of the existing dwelling. The single-storey element would incorporate a flat roof design with one roof light and bi-fold doors to the rear. Whilst the proposal would increase the overall built form of the dwelling, the extension would remain contained within the rear elevation and would not project above the existing ridge line. The proposed materials are indicated to match the existing dwelling, thereby ensuring a cohesive appearance and reinforcing the extension's integration with the host property.

The Borough Design Guide (BDG) emphasises on rear extensions should not project more

than 4 meters from the main rear wall when they are close to a side boundary. In this case, whilst the single storey rear element will project approximately 4 meters from the rear wall, it maintains approximately half a meter of amenity space between the neighbouring boundary. Whilst this does not fully accord with the Borough Design Guide in terms of amenity space, the proposed single storey rear element does not contain any windows on the side elevation and does not overlook any primary amenity areas such as gardens or patios.

Given its location to the rear of the property, the development would have very limited visibility from the public realm and would not materially alter the character or appearance of the surrounding street scene. Furthermore, the scale, design and massing of the extension are considered proportionate to the size of the host dwelling and would not appear as an incongruous or overly dominant addition. Given the modest size of the site, the proposed development would appear as a sympathetic and subservient addition to the host dwelling.

Lastly, the proposed pergola located to the rear of the garden is not considered to result in harm to the character or appearance of the area. Owing to its modest scale, lightweight open structure, and ancillary nature, it would appear as a subordinate feature within the garden setting. Furthermore, the pergola is not intended for permanent occupation and would have only a limited visual presence. As such, the proposal would not result in any adverse impact on the character of the area and is considered acceptable in design terms.

Therefore, the proposed development is considered acceptable and will have an acceptable impact on the character of the street scene. The proposal is therefore in accordance with policies CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy and the advice and guidance contained in the Borough Design Guide.

Neighbouring Amenity: Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy, which requires development to be of an appropriate scale, mass, layout and height, and to achieve a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities or quality of life of adjoining occupiers.

The proposed single-storey rear extension would be positioned approximately 0.5m from the shared boundary with the neighbouring property to the east. Whilst this does not accord with the separation guidance contained within the Borough Design Guide it is considered to be an adequate separation distance in this instance.

In assessing the impact upon the neighbouring property, consideration has been given to the 45-degree guideline contained within the Borough Design Guide. The proposal would not comply with 45-degree test in plan form at ground floor level, as advocated within the Council's Borough Design Guide. However, it would comply with a 45-degree test in elevation form (as advocated by the British Research Establishment (BRE) publication 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice') the proposal would not result in any significant overshadowing or loss of daylight to its immediate neighbour (no.2 University Farm Cottages) such that it would warrant refusal of this application. The single storey rear extension is in a similar position to the extension to be demolished therefore is likely to have a similar impact to the existing

situation. Furthermore, no windows are proposed within the eastern side elevation at ground floor level and therefore the proposal would not result in overlooking or a loss of privacy to the neighbouring occupiers. Whilst the extension would be visible from the adjoining property, given its modest single-storey scale and siting to the rear, it is not considered that it would appear unduly overbearing or result in a harmful impact on residential amenity.

The proposed first-floor element is set away from the eastern boundary and would be read in the context of the existing dwelling. Furthermore, the proposed first-floor window to the west elevation will be obscure glazed ensuring that there is no outlook onto the road. Given its scale, design and relationship with neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any unacceptable impact on neighbouring residential amenity.

Highway Access and Parking Provision: As stated on the parking statement, there is no change in level of driveway parking available, and no off-street parking is proposed. As a result, the proposal does not impact parking or access provisions, therefore no comments from the Council's Highways team have been received.

Landscape and Trees: The Site is located within the Sonning Conservation Area at the edge of the settlement. The Site contains some trees but none that are protected under a TPO but would require a section 211 notification for works as they are located within a Conservation Area. The Officer has reviewed the submitted supporting documentation, including the Arboricultural Report and accepts the Tree Protection Plan (TPP). (Ref: Trevor Heaps Arboricultural Consultancy, TH 6193 and TH/A3/6193/TPP, 10 June 2026).

The Officer notes the proposed pergola in the rear garden has not been included within the Tree Protection Plan. Measurements by the Officer suggest the pergola and its likely foundations in pits are located within the RPA of the Monterey Cypress in the northwest corner of the rear garden. Nevertheless, the pergola is an acceptable element within the garden space and as an informative, the foundation pits should be dug by hand to avoid damage to substantial roots of the nearby tree.

As such the Council's Tree and Landscape Officer has no objection to the proposed development.

Environmental Health: Due to the modest domestic scale of the development, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated in respect of noise, dust, air quality or residential amenity once the development is complete. The proposal does not introduce any commercial use, additional residential units or plant equipment likely to give rise to environmental nuisance. Temporary disturbance associated with demolition and construction activities may occur but is expected to be short-term and typical of householder development. In relation to the proposed solar panels, these would be positioned on the front roof slope of the dwelling. The property directly opposite forms part of the University of Reading's Sonning Farm, rather than another residential property. As such, the panels would not face any neighbouring dwelling or principal private amenity area and are therefore not considered likely to give rise to adverse impacts in terms of outlook, or glare. Given their siting and orientation, the proposal is considered acceptable and would not result in harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

Environmental Health therefore raises no objection and recommends no planning conditions.

Heritage: The proposed rear two-storey extension is considered to have a neutral impact on the Conservation Area due to its limited public visibility. The proposed front single-storey extension would disrupt the existing mirrored form of the semi-detached pair; however, given the limited heritage significance of the buildings, the resulting impact on the Conservation Area is also considered to be predominantly neutral.

Whilst concern is raised regarding the installation of solar photovoltaic panels on the street-facing roof slope due to their visual prominence and somewhat incongruous appearance, the Officer confirms that any resulting harm would not be sufficient to warrant an objection. As such, the proposal is considered to accord with the heritage objectives of HE9 of the NPPF, which requires development within conservation areas to retain and conserve features that make a positive contribution to their character or appearance and to have regard to the area's special architectural and historic interest. The development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area overall and would not result in harm to its significance.

The proposed solar photovoltaic panels on the front roof slope would be visible within the street scene and introduce a contemporary feature into the historic environment. Whilst their appearance would not be entirely characteristic of the traditional roofscape, would not materially detract from the significance, character or appearance of the Conservation Area. In reaching this conclusion, significant weight is given to the climate change benefits arising from the generation of renewable energy and improved building sustainability. In particular, Policy CC2 of the NPPF states that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of existing buildings and utilising renewable and low-carbon energy sources, including solar panels, where delivered through development proposals. The proposal would also assist in improving the resilience and environmental performance of the dwelling, objectives which are supported by Policy CC3 of the NPPF. The proposal would therefore contribute positively towards climate change mitigation objectives whilst preserving the significance of the designated heritage asset.

When the limited visual impact of the solar panels is weighed against the substantial weight that national policy requires to be given to climate change mitigation and adaptation benefits, the proposal is considered acceptable. Overall, the development would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and accords with the heritage objectives of the NPPF.

Ecology: The site is situated in an area suitable for bat roosts. The Preliminary Roost Assessment undertaken by John Wenman Ecology on 9th June 2026, concludes that the external features within the roof such as the gaps under tiles, opened directly into the roof void on account of the lack of roof lining, and therefore did not lead to suitable crevice roost-sites for crevice-dwelling bats. While the roof void was of a suitable size and condition for void dwelling bats, such as the locally recorded brown long-eared (Plecotus auritus), there was no evidence of this species, or other bat evidence in the open, unlined roof void, and so the presence of void-dwelling bats is considered to be highly unlikely. Given the above, the house is considered to be of negligible potential suitability for bats.

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: For all the above, the proposal is acceptable, and the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	19 August 2026
Earliest date for decision:	31 July 2026

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	26 August 2026