

PLANNING REF : 261696
PROPERTY ADDRESS : School Green Centre
: School Green, Shinfield
: RG2 9EH
SUBMITTED BY : Bruce Winton
DATE SUBMITTED : 19/08/2026

COMMENTS:

Shinfield Parish Council objects to Planning Application 261696 at 29 The Square, Spencers Wood, Wokingham, RG7 1BS.

Area of Special Character and Policy TB26

The application site lies within The Square, Spencers Wood Area of Special Character, to which Wokingham Borough Council Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Policy TB26 applies. The Council's Historic Environment evidence identifies No. 29 The Square as a property which makes a positive contribution to the character of the Area of Special Character.

The Parish Council recognises that the property has an established history of extensions and that planning permission was recently granted under application 250853 for the erection of part single-storey and part two-storey side and rear extensions following demolition of the existing single-storey rear extension. Application 253042 subsequently permitted that approved development to extend a further two metres into the rear garden.

The Parish Council therefore does not object simply because further development is proposed. However, application 261696 introduces a number of changes which differ materially from the recently approved scheme and which require careful consideration against the requirements of Policy TB26.

Policy TB26 requires development proposals affecting an Area of Special Character to retain and enhance the traditional, historical, local and special character of the area and its setting. This is particularly relevant in this case because No. 29 has specifically been identified by the Local Planning Authority as making a positive contribution to that character.

The key issue is therefore not whether the individual elements of the proposal may be acceptable when considered in isolation, but whether the cumulative effect of the proposed alterations preserves and enhances the contribution made by the property to the character and appearance of The Square.

The current application proposes:

- a single-storey rear and side extension;
- demolition of the existing lean-to extension;
- replacement of the existing rear first-floor pitched roof with a flat roof;
- alterations to fenestration; and
- the erection of a new front boundary enclosure comprising brick piers with black metal paling panels between them.

These elements should be considered collectively as a single design proposal rather than as a series of unrelated changes.

Front Boundary Wall and Loss of Vegetation

The Parish Council's principal concern relates to the proposed front boundary enclosure comprising brick piers with black metal palling panels between them and an overall height of approximately 2.1 metres, together with the associated loss of existing vegetation.

The proposed wall appears likely to require the removal of established trees, hedging and other frontage planting which currently contribute positively to the appearance of the property and to the character of The Square.

The Parish Council considers that the scale and prominence of the proposed boundary treatment are significant. At approximately 2.1 metres in height, the structure would create a substantial visual presence within the street scene and would fundamentally alter the appearance of the property's frontage.

While brick piers and metal railings may be appropriate in certain locations, the issue in this case is whether a boundary treatment of this height and prominence preserves and enhances the established character of The Square. The Parish Council considers that it does not.

The prevailing character of The Square is one of generally open and landscaped frontages. Boundaries are typically defined by hedges, planting, low walls or relatively unobtrusive means of enclosure. High, formal frontage structures are not a dominant or characteristic feature of the street scene.

In this context, the introduction of a boundary enclosure approximately 2.1 metres high, incorporating brick piers and black metal palling, would represent a significant departure from the established character of the area. The proposal would replace an existing soft landscaped frontage with a substantially harder and more enclosed form of development that would be highly visible from the public highway.

The Parish Council considers that this change would erode the openness and landscaped quality that contribute to the special character of The Square. The proposed enclosure would create a more formal, enclosed and urban appearance which is not reflective of the existing pattern of development within the Area of Special Character.

The loss of existing trees and hedging further compounds this concern. Existing vegetation provides visual softening between the property and the highway and contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Area of Special Character.

Its removal would result in a noticeable reduction in the soft landscaped character of the frontage and its replacement with a largely engineered form of enclosure.

The Parish Council therefore considers that insufficient justification has been provided to explain how the proposed boundary treatment, together with the associated loss of vegetation, would preserve or enhance the character of The Square as required by Policy TB26.

Relationship to Recent Permissions

The Parish Council notes that application 250853 granted permission for substantial side and rear extensions and that application 253042 subsequently approved an additional two-metre rearward extension.

The Parish Council accepts that an applicant is entitled to seek an alternative design solution. However, the existence of these recent permissions provides important planning context.

In particular, application 253042 related principally to the depth of the approved rear extension and did not materially alter the appearance of the property within the street scene. The approval of that application should therefore not be regarded as establishing any precedent for the frontage alterations which are now proposed.

The current proposal introduces changes that extend beyond additional rear accommodation and instead affect those parts of the property that contribute directly to the public character and appearance of The Square.

Fenestration

The proposed changes to fenestration should also be carefully assessed.

Window design, proportions, positioning and detailing can make a significant contribution to the character of a building and to the wider streetscape. This is particularly important where a property has been identified as making a positive contribution to an Area of Special Character.

The Parish Council considers that the Local Planning Authority should be satisfied that the proposed fenestration remains sympathetic to the architectural character of the dwelling and does not introduce features that appear incongruous within the context of The Square.

Rear Roof Alteration

The Parish Council recognises that the existing pitched roof relates to an existing rear extension rather than the principal historic form of the dwelling.

Consequently, the Parish Council does not regard the replacement of this roof with a flat roof as, in itself, causing significant harm to the traditional character of the property.

Nevertheless, this element should still be considered as part of the overall design approach and assessed in conjunction with the other proposed alterations.

The Parish Council's more significant concerns arise from the combined effect of the frontage alterations, the proposed boundary treatment, the loss of vegetation and the changes to fenestration.

Cumulative Impact

The Parish Council considers that the cumulative impact of the proposal is a particularly important consideration under Policy TB26.

Whilst some individual elements of the proposal may be relatively modest when viewed in isolation, the application proposes a combination of alterations affecting the side, rear and publicly visible frontage of the property, together with changes to the roof form, fenestration and boundary treatment.

The proposed frontage enclosure is particularly significant because it would be one of the most visually prominent elements of the development. Unlike many of the other alterations, which are located to the side or rear of the dwelling, the wall would be continuously visible from the public highway and would therefore have a disproportionate influence on the character and appearance of the Area of Special Character.

The removal of frontage vegetation and its replacement with a 2.1 metre high brick-and-metal enclosure is especially significant because it alters the established relationship between the property and the street.

The Parish Council therefore considers that the Local Planning Authority should carefully assess whether the combined effect of the proposed works would result in an incremental erosion of the character of a property that has specifically been identified as making a positive contribution to the Area of Special Character.

The relevant test under Policy TB26 is not simply whether the proposal represents an acceptable modern extension. The test is whether the proposal retains and enhances the traditional, historical, local and special character of the area and its setting.

In the Parish Council's view, the application has not demonstrated compliance with that requirement, particularly in relation to the proposed front boundary enclosure, the apparent loss of existing vegetation and the resulting impact on the character of The Square.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, Shinfield Parish Council considers that the proposal conflicts with the objectives of MDD Policy TB26 and therefore recommends refusal of Planning Application 261696.

The Parish Council's concerns arise principally from the proposed front boundary treatment, which:

- introduces a visually prominent frontage enclosure approximately 2.1 metres in height comprising brick piers and black metal palling
- is inconsistent with the generally open and landscaped character of frontages within The Square
- would replace an established soft landscaped boundary with a prominent hard-built structure
- appears likely to result in the loss of existing trees, hedging and other vegetation that contribute positively to the character of the street

- would reduce the openness and landscaped quality of the frontage
- would create a more enclosed and urban form of development within the street scene
- fails to preserve or enhance the special character of the Area of Special Character as required by Policy TB26

Should the Local Planning Authority be minded to approve the application, the Parish Council requests that particular consideration be given to:

- the appropriateness of the proposed front boundary treatment within the context of The Square
- the retention of existing trees, hedging and other established planting wherever reasonably practicable
- the design and detailing of the proposed fenestration
- the cumulative impact of all proposed alterations on the property's identified positive contribution to the Area of Special Character

The Parish Council would strongly encourage a revised frontage design that retains the established landscaped character of the site through the retention of existing vegetation and the use of a lower and less visually dominant boundary treatment that better reflects the prevailing character of The Square and the objectives of Policy TB26.