

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	252002
Site Address:	22 Herald Way, Woodley, Wokingham, RG5 4PB
Expiry Date:	15 October 2025
Site Visit Date:	8 October 2025
Proposal: Application for a certificate of existing lawful development for erection of a single storey rear extension.	

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
051316	Proposed two storey side and rear extensions to dwelling.	Approved 08/04/2005

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a detached two storey property located within a predominantly residential area of Woodley.

There are no listed buildings at the site and the property is not within a Conservation Area or other 'Article 2(3) land' (Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015).

The site is not subject to any wildlife or habitat designations.

LEGISLATION

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (TCPA)

Section 55(1) of the TCPA defines development as "the carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land."

Section 57 of the TCPA requires that planning permission is required for the carrying out of any development of land.

Section 171B (1) of the TCPA states that where there has been a breach of planning control consisting in the carrying out without planning permission of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, no enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of in the case of a breach of planning control in England, ten years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed. It is important to note that on the 24th of April 2024, the TCPA referred to 4 years and not 10, and the legislation was updated to 10 years on the 25th of April 2024.

Section 171B (2) states that where there has been a breach of planning control consisting in the change of use of any building to use as a single dwellinghouse, no enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of, in the case of a breach of planning control in England, ten years beginning with the date of the breach. The applicant is required to demonstrate on the balance of probabilities that the use commenced and has been continuous for 10 years prior to the date of application in order for the change to have become lawful. It is important to note that on the 24th of April 2024, the TCPA referred to 4 years and not 10, and the legislation was updated to 10 years on the 25th of April 2024.

Section 191 deals with applications for Certificates of Lawfulness of existing development, and the authority's duty to determine them.

Section 191(1)(a) provides that if any person wishes to ascertain whether any existing use of a building or other land is lawful they may make an application for that purpose to the local planning authority specifying the land and describing the use, operations or other matter. As Section 191(1) (a) is written in the present tense, it is plain that the use must exist at the time of the application.

For the purpose of the 1990 Act s.191(2) defines operations as 'lawful' if:

- (a) no enforcement action may be taken in respect of them (whether because they did not involve development or require planning permission or because the time for enforcement action has expired or for any other reason); and
- (b) they do not constitute a contravention of any of the requirements of any enforcement notice then in force.

Case Law

The courts have held in *Gabbitts v Secretary of State for the Environment* [1985] JPL 630 that the relevant test of evidence on such matters is 'the balance of probability'. The Courts have also held that the applicant's own evidence does not need to be corroborated by 'independent' evidence in order to be accepted. If the Local Planning Authority has no evidence of their own, or from others, to contradict or otherwise make the applicant's version of events less probable, there is no good reason to refuse that application, provided the applicant's evidence alone is sufficiently precise and unambiguous to justify the grant of a certificate on the balance of probability.

In considering applications for a Certificate the guidance given by the High Court in *Panton and Farmer v Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions* and *Vale of White Horse D.C.* [1999] JPL 461 is of value.

Three questions need to be answered. Firstly, "When did the material change of use specified in the application occur?" To be lawful, this would need to be before 1 July 1948, by 31 December 1963, or at a date at least 10 years prior to the current application, or 4 years for operational development or use of a building as a single dwelling.

Secondly, if the material change took place prior to those dates, has the use specified in the application been lost by operation of law in one of three possible ways, namely by abandonment, the formation of a new planning unit, or by way of a material change of use, be it by way of implementation of a further planning permission or otherwise.

Finally, if the decision maker is not satisfied that the description of the use as specified in the application properly describes the nature of the use, the decision maker must modify/substitute each description so as to properly describe the nature of the material change of use which occurred.

INFORMATION PROVIDED

By the applicant:

- Lawful Development Certificate Application Form:
 - States that the building works were substantially completed on 27/06/2025.
- Submitted Floor Plans and Elevations
 - Existing plans showing the dwelling prior to the erection of a single storey rear extension (received by LPA on 20/08/2025).
 - Proposed plans showing the dwelling and the erected single storey rear extension (received by LPA on 20/08/2025).

By the Council:

- Planning History Records (see above).
- Enforcement History Records – confirms no extant Enforcement Notices on the application site.
- A site visit was carried out on 08/10/2025 and this confirmed the presence of the operational development on the location as shown in the submitted details.
- Site visit photographs (08/10/2025).
- Aerial images from the Council's mapping system taken from 2022 confirming the lack of the development on the location as shown in the submitted details.
- Google Earth aerial images dated July 2022 and May 2025.

By third parties:

- No third parties have comments on this application.

APPRAISAL

The application is for a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use to regularise the existing single storey rear extension to the dwellinghouse.

In determining a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use a Local Planning Authority needs to consider whether, on the facts of the case and relevant planning law, the specific matter is lawful. Lawful development is development against which no enforcement action may be taken and where no enforcement notice is in force, or, for which planning permission is not required. In the case of this Certificate, it must be demonstrated that the use has been on-going continuously for at least four years prior to the change in legislation of s171B of the TCPA on 25/04/2024.

Alternatively, if the 4-year immunity rule is not satisfied, it must be demonstrated that the single storey rear extension benefits from permitted development rights under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order.

Planning merits are not relevant at any stage in the process however evidence from third parties, including neighbours, can be obtained should the Local Planning Authority consider it necessary to do so. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) sets out that the onus of proof is on the applicant, not the Local Planning Authority in submitting a Certificate of Lawfulness. However, the NPPG also states that “if Local Planning Authorities have no evidence of their own to contradict or undermine the applicant’s version of events, there is no good reason to refuse the application provided that the applicant’s evidence is clear and unambiguous to justify the grant of a certificate”.

Evidence Submitted by the Applicant:

The submitted application form states that the single storey rear extension was substantially completed on 27/06/2025. It is therefore apparent that the 4-year immunity rule cannot be satisfied in this instance, and therefore it must be demonstrated that the single storey rear extension benefits from permitted development rights under Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order.

Therefore, the evidence submitted by the applicant is based heavily on the submitted floor plans and elevations so that the assessment can be made against Class A.

Evidence Submitted by the Council:

Google Earth aerial images dated July 2022 (left) and May 2025 (right).



In the images above, the rear extension can be seen to be mostly completed by May 2025, but it is not present on site in July of 2022. This demonstrates that the construction works started after July 2022.

Assessment:

4 Year Immunity Rule:

From the Google Earth aerial images above, it is clear that works had not started by July 2022. Thus, demonstrating that the 4-year immunity rule cannot be satisfied.

Notwithstanding failure to meet the 4-year immunity rule, the proposal is assessed below in respect of Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order:

The table below contains an assessment of the proposal against Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order.

			Yes	No
s.55	1	Does it constitute development?	✓	
s.191	2	Would it be contrary to an enforcement notice?		✓
s.187a Art.3 (4)	3	Would it be contrary to any condition imposed by any planning permission granted or deemed to be granted?		✓
Art.3 (5)	4	Are the building operations involved in the construction of the original building lawful?	✓	
Art.3 (6)	5	Does it involve the formation, laying out or material widening of a means of access to an existing highway which is a trunk or classified road, or creates an obstruction to the view of persons using any highway used by vehicular traffic, so as to be likely to cause danger to such persons?		✓
Art.4	6	Is there an 'Article 4 Direction' in effect for the site?		✓
Sch.2 Pt. 1 A	7	Does it consist of enlargement, improvement or other alteration of a dwellinghouse?	✓	
A.1(a)	8	Has permission to use the dwellinghouse as a dwellinghouse been granted only by virtue of Class M, N, P or Q of Part 3 of this Schedule (changes of use)?		✓
A.1(b)	9	Would the total area of ground covered by buildings (other than the original dwelling) exceed 50% of the total area of the curtilage?		✓
A.1(c)	10	Would the height of the part of the dwellinghouse enlarged, improved or altered exceed the height of the highest part of the roof of the existing dwellinghouse?		✓
A.1(d)	11	Would the height of the eaves of the part of the dwellinghouse enlarged, improved or altered would exceed the height of the eaves of the existing dwellinghouse?		✓
A.1(e)	12	Would the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse extend beyond a wall which - (i) fronts the principal elevation of the original house; or (ii) fronts a highway and forms a side elevation of the original dwellinghouse?		✓
A.1(f)	13	If the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse is single storey, would it either: (i) extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse by more than: 4 metres in the case of a detached dwellinghouse 3 metres in the case of any other dwellinghouse; or (ii) exceed 4 metres in height		✓
A.1(g)	14	For a dwellinghouse not in article 2 (3) land (incl conservation area) if the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse is single-storey, would it either (i) extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse by more than: 8 metres in the case of a detached dwellinghouse 6 metres in the case of any other dwellinghouse; or (ii) exceed 4 metres in height		✓

		NB: As per Para A.4 of Part 1 of for development that exceeds the limits in para A.1 (f) (question 13) but is allowed by para A.1 (g) (question 14) <u>Prior Approval via the 'Neighbours Notification Scheme' is required</u>		
A.1(h)	15	If the extension would be more than a single storey would it: (i) extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse by more than 3 metres, or (ii) be within 7 metres of the rear boundary of the curtilage.		✓
A.1(i)	16	Would the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse would be within 2 metres of the boundary with an eaves height in excess of 3 metres?		✓
A.1(j)	17	Would the enlarged part of the dwellinghouse extend beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwellinghouse and: (i) exceed 4 metres in height, (ii) have more than a single storey, or (ii) have a width greater than half the width of the original dwellinghouse		✓
A.1(k)	18	Would the development consist of or include: (i) the construction or provision of a verandah, balcony or raised platform, (ii) the installation, alteration or replacement of a microwave antenna, (iii) the installation, alteration or replacement of a chimney, flue or soil and vent pipe, or (iv) an alteration to any part of the roof of the dwellinghouse.		✓
A.2(a)	19	Article 2(3) land (inc. conservation areas): a. Would the development consist of or include the cladding of any part of the exterior of the dwellinghouse with stone, artificial stone, pebble dash, render, timber, plastic or tiles?		✓
A.2(b)	20	b. Would the extension extend beyond a wall forming a side elevation of the original dwellinghouse?		✓
A.2(c)	21	c. Would the extension have more than a single storey and extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse?		✓
	22	Would it affect or be within the Root Protection Area of a TPO'd tree? <i>* Does not affect Article 3 permission but separate TPO approval will likely be needed.</i>		✓

The above table demonstrates that the proposal fully complies with the requirements of Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order and therefore would have been permitted at the time of construction.

Conclusion:

Based on the evidence above, whilst the proposal does not satisfy the 4-year immunity rule, the single storey rear extension fully complies with the requirements of Schedule

2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order. Therefore, the operation development is lawful, and a plan is attached to the draft decision notice demonstrating the operation development this certificate applies to.

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

Based on the evidence provided in the form of the submitted plans and elevations, the single storey rear extension fully complies with the requirements of Schedule 2, Part 1, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order. It is therefore considered that the application for a certificate of existing lawful use should be approved.

Date:	14 October 2025
Earliest date for decision:	13 September 2025
Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	14/10/25