

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250716
Site Address:	1 Agate Close, Wokingham, Wokingham, RG41 3UH
Expiry Date:	5 June 2025
Site Visit Date:	23 April 2025
Proposal: Householder application for erection of 1.8m high boundary fence, with 2 pedestrian access gates, following partial demolition of the existing boundary wall. (Retrospective)	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Major Development Location - Wokingham

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 CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC07 – Parking
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY

Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
No relevant planning history.		

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal
WBC Enforcement – No comments recieved WBC Highways – Objection
External
None Consulted

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	14 neighbour comments were received, their comments are summarised below: 10 neighbours commented in support of this application. <i>Officer comments: These comments have been noted.</i> <i>4 objections were received highlighting the following concerns:</i> • Issues regarding highway and pedestrian safety, as the view from cars coming out from the driveway is blocked by the height of the fence. Also, concerns that the fence has created a 'blind corner' for Agate Close and Northway. <i>Officer comments: The Council's Highways Officer has commented on and assessed this application, their comments and assessment are included in the Highways section of this report below.</i> • Comments were made stating that the fence is out of character for the area, hasn't been well constructed or designed and negatively impacts the street scene. <i>Officer comments: This will be assessed in the report below.</i>

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The site relates to a two-storey semi-detached dwelling in Woosehill, Wokingham. The surrounding area is characterised by other semi-detached and detached properties with similar architectural design and external materials. Many properties in the immediate vicinity have open-planned front gardens delineated only by low brick walls (as previously seen at the application site) that provide a pleasant sense of spaciousness alongside the adjacent highway and footpaths. Other taller brick-built boundary walls are in evidence on the side boundaries of properties where they were originally planned to protect the privacy of private rear garden areas, e.g. 10 Emerald Close, 1 Beryl Close and 1 and 4 Sapphire Close.

The host property's façade consists of traditional facing brickwork on and dark brown hanging tiles. The site has a small timber front awning and small front garden at the front and side of the property, as it is a corner plot, with a variety of small plants and shrubs. The site also benefits from a detached garage with a driveway and private rear garden, which can be accessed from the side of the property via a metal gate.

Proposal:

This application seeks retrospective permission for the erection of a 1.8m close boarded timber fence behind the existing low brick-built front boundary wall (0.3m in height) to the site. The proposed fence includes 2 pedestrian access gates and requires the partial demolition (a length of 1m) of the existing brick-built boundary wall. The fence

was installed in March 2025 (according to the submitted application form) without planning permission and is therefore currently unauthorised in planning terms. The fence has recently been stained a dark brown colour.

The submitted proposed elevations do not correctly indicate the unauthorised fencing on site. The proposed elevations show vertical slatted close boarded fencing, whereas the unauthorised fence has horizontal timber panels. An informative is recommended to draw the applicant's attention to this.

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 development should be of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design.

The application site reflects the local character 'Informal Suburban' as outlined within the Council's Borough Design Guide (Section 3B.2.6 refers). Common characteristics of such areas include *"...building lines are varied and front gardens are often open, with no boundary treatment"*.

R12 of the Council's Borough Design Guide (BDG) states that *"...boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm"*. In this respect, the BDG goes on to say that... *"boundaries to the public realm should relate to the character of the area. They should be clearly delineated, robust and high quality, so that they last over time. A full height close boarded fence is unlikely to meet these criteria."*

Different boundary treatments have different characteristics and are suitable in different locations. Generally, low boundary walls or hedges provide separation between public and private spaces and ensure an appropriate level of privacy for residents at the front of properties... In Wokingham Borough many existing residential areas are characterised by open front gardens. In these areas boundary fences or walls would normally be inappropriate."

The proposed fence is a 1.8m (6ft) horizontal close boarded timber fence with two pedestrian access gates. The fence extends across the side boundary and back

joining onto the external, detached garage. The close boarded fence would sit behind the existing low brick wall (0.3m high), 1m of which has been demolished to allow for a limited visibility splay (refer to Fig. 3 below). The photos below show the original low brick wall and with the addition of the current unauthorised development.



Figure 1: Previous Low Brick Wall



Figure 2: Close Boarded Timber Fence

The proposed close-boarded fencing is made from timber and timber upright posts. As mentioned in the Council's BDG, typically, close boarded fencing is used in urban and suburban areas to separate back gardens and protect privacy. It is not used for key street frontages.

Although there are other boundary treatments along Northway, including a variety of brick walls, these serve private rear gardens and have been built with the estate, e.g. 1 Emerald Close, 1 and 4 Beryl Close and 1 and 4 Sapphire Close. Timber fencing is not a prominent material within the area, there are very few timber fences along Northway. The ones which exist are well screened from the street scene by vegetation or are partially built with brickwork and timber to match the character of the surrounding area, which is dominated by high quality brickwork rather than timber fencing.

As well as this, Agate Close is an open-planned cul-de-sac with few boundary treatments, each dwelling has an open front garden with small vegetation and shrubs. The development is not visually permeable, creating a 'dead frontage', detached from the wider public realm and making the street feel uninviting. The fence does not

positively contribute to the open-planned character and appearance of the surrounding area.

As a result, the fence would be contrary to Core Strategy Policies CP1 and CP3, in that the development would not maintain the high quality of the environment and would not be *'of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height and materials'*. It would also be contrary to R12 of the Borough Design Guide which states that boundary treatments should be designed to contribute positively to the character of the areas and to the quality of the public realm.

Taking all the above into account, Officers conclude that by virtue of its inappropriate materials, close proximity to the adjacent highway and excessive height, the development would have an intrusive visual impact on the open-planned nature of the street scene and harmful impact to the character of the surrounding area. This is contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Core Strategy (2010) policies CP1 and CP3 and the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD (2012).

Neighbouring Amenity:

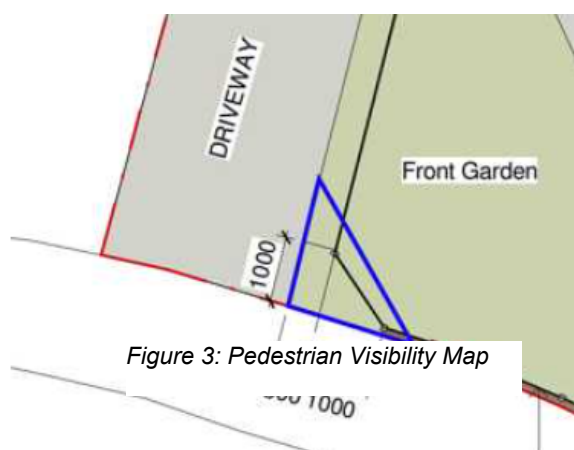
Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy states that development should not result in detriment to adjoining land users.

Due to the nature of the development and separation from neighbouring habitable room windows, there are no overlooking, loss of light or overbearing impacts to any neighbour.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

Policy CP6 of the Core Strategy states that development should not cause highway problems and requires developments to provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership. P3 of the Borough Design Guide SPD notes that parking spaces should be safe and convenient, close to the dwelling and sited to minimise impact upon safety. Visibility splays and swept path analysis are also required to be specified on the plans.

The applicant proposes a boundary fence of 1.8m high that wraps around the front and side of the existing front garden area and erection of new pedestrian side gates. The Council's Highways Officer was consulted on this application and has stated that a 2m x 2m pedestrian visibility on individual driveways is required (the approximate measurement is indicated in blue in Fig. 3 below). As indicated, this will be obstructed by the proposed boundary fence:



The required level of visibility is not achievable with the current proposal, therefore the Council's Highways Officer has raised an objection in pedestrian safety terms.

Highway safety is the upmost importance, as it can pose significant risk to both vehicle drivers and pedestrians. Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. This would be the case here. Accordingly, the objection from the Highways Officers holds substantial weight in the determination of this application and constitutes a reason for refusal.

Conclusion:

On the basis of the above assessment, there is a substantial level of harm to the character and appearance of the host property and immediate surrounding area due to the proposed development. The materials used fail to be in keeping with the surrounding area and the development significantly detracts from the open-panned character and appearance of the estate. As a result, the development does not comply with the overall aim of policy CP3 in terms of appropriate scale of layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design. Furthermore, the development raises a significant highways safety concern as it does not meet the guidelines for pedestrian visibility at an individual driveway. The recommendation is therefore to refuse planning permission and enforce, given the development is retrospective.

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, 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	
Conditions agreed:	Not required
Recommendation:	Refuse and enforce for the following reasons: 1. By virtue of its inappropriate materials, close proximity to the adjacent highway and excessive height, the development would have an intrusive visual impact on the open-planned nature of the street scene and

	harmful impact to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The development is therefore contrary to National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Core Strategy (2010) policies CP1 and CP3 and with guidance contained within the Wokingham Borough Design Guide SPD (2012). 2. The development poses a significant highway safety concern due to inadequate pedestrian visibility splays being provided. As such, the proposal is contrary to guidance within the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and policy CP6 of the Core Strategy (2010).
Date:	30 May 2025
Earliest date for decision:	3 May 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	30/05/25