

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	250666
Site Address:	20 Culver Lane, Earley, Wokingham, RG6 1DT
Expiry Date:	16 May 2025
Site Visit Date:	08/04/2025
Proposal: Householder application for the proposed erection of 2 no detached outbuilding's (part - retrospective).	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

- Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Major Development Location (Earley)
- Great Crested Newt Consultation Zone
- Landscape Character Assessment Area

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 CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	DM1 - Sustainable Development DM2 - Climate Change – Mitigation and Adaptation
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
243174	Householder application for proposed erection of an outbuilding.	Approved, 14/01/2025
243086	Application for non-material amendment to planning consent 232494 to change of the internal layout of the outbuilding including addition of a staircase to serve loft storage space, plus insertion of rooflights and changes to fenestration.	Approved 13/12/24
241035	Application for submission of details to comply with the following condition of planning consent 240123 dated 27/03/2024. Condition 5, Landscaping.	Approved 13/06/2024
240123	Householder application for proposed raised roof with part single part two storey front extension, single storey side/rear extension, front driveway and boundary alterations along with demolition of chimney.	Approved 27/03/2024
232494	Householder application for the proposed alterations to the front garden to create a driveway and new vehicular access, erection of single storey rear outbuilding following the demolition of the existing detached garage plus the erection of new boundary fencing and associated landscaping (part-retrospective).	Approved 08/12/2023

CONSULTATION RESPONSES
Internal
WBC Enforcement – No comments received. WBC Highways – No objections, subject to a condition. WBC CIL – The proposed development will be CIL liable.
External
None consulted.

REPRESENTATIONS	
Parish/Town Council	Earley Town Council - objects to the application, citing the outbuilding's size and location as out of character with the area, conflicting with Policies CP1 and CP3. The carport's placement on the boundary and its small 4.1m length are also considered harmful to the area and violate parking guidelines. If approved, the council requests the outbuilding be used only for incidental purposes, the carport be open-sided with a 5m length, and the garage remain part of the main dwelling to ensure adequate parking and protect

	neighbouring amenities.
Ward Member(s)	Councillor Stephen Newton - raises concerns about multiple applications for the property over the last 16 months, including retrospective approvals for various changes such as removing the front garden, building an outbuilding, and converting a bungalow to a two-story house. The current application (250666) seeks retrospective approval for two detached outbuildings, including a gym, home office, and car port. The height of the larger building has increased by 1.2 meters compared to the original approval. The councillor believes this gradual, staged approach to submitting applications is an attempt to bypass proper planning procedures and that the final design would not have been approved if submitted initially. If the application is approved, they request it be reviewed by the Planning Committee. <i>Officer comment: Individuals have the right to submit multiple planning applications at any one time or over a period. Each application must be considered on its merits, against relevant planning policy and guidance and any other material considerations.</i>
Neighbours	14 Culver Lane RG6 1DS - The objector strongly opposes any development that proceeds without prior planning permission. They argue that this development, which lacks permission, should be demolished until proper approval is granted. The objector emphasizes the unfairness of some people disregarding planning rules while others follow them, asserting that they do care about the rules being respected. <i>Officer comment: The local planning authority has a duty to consider and determine retrospective planning applications.</i> 32 Easby Way RG6 3XA - The objector points out that the car port in the larger building is only 4.1 meters long, which is insufficient to accommodate the length of a car, particularly outside the swing of the gates. They ask whether the applicant plans to remove the doors to address this issue. <i>Officer comment: Highway's matters are addressed in the report below.</i> 103a Hamilton Rd RG1 5RB - The objector raises concerns that the windows on the "left elevation" of the proposed two-story dwelling, including the bathroom window, directly overlook the neighbouring property. <i>Officer comment: Residential amenity matters are addressed in the report below.</i> The ACER, The Whitegates Residents Association, objects to the application, stating the outbuilding is too large and out of character with the area. They note the building's

	size and height (5.5 meters) are excessive, and the first-floor accommodation and carport are inappropriate for a residential property. While the fencing and hedging improvements are welcomed, the landscaping does not meet previous approved plans. The association argues the development's mass and visual impact are unacceptable and should be refused under local policies (CP3 and TB06). <i>Officer comment: Impact on character issues are addressed in the report below.</i> 20 Culver Lane RG6 1DT – The applicant expresses surprise at some of the comments on his application, criticizing those who offer biased opinions without proper research. He questions the age and ethnicity of Acer members and suggests they focus on maintaining the greenery in the area. He also implies that the councillor's views align too closely with Acer's stance, which he sees as biased. The applicant also explains that his applications have been submitted due to changing personal needs, with an architect advising him throughout the process. He appreciates Earley Town Council's comments, despite their objection, and values their balanced approach. He clarifies that the gates will accommodate vehicles under 4m, and if necessary, he is open to installing folding or sliding gates for the proposed carport.
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APPRAISAL

Site Description and Planning History:

The application site falls within the Major Development Location of Earley and relates to a one-and-a-half-storey detached dwelling located at a corner plot at the junction of Culver Lane to the north and Eastcourt Avenue to the west.

This retrospective planning application has been submitted in response to an enforcement investigation (ref: RFS/2025/090145) concerning the construction of outbuildings on the site that were not carried out in accordance with previously approved permissions. These include a single-storey rear outbuilding approved under application ref: 232494 (December 2023) for use as a gym/playroom, study, and bathroom, and a separate storage outbuilding approved under ref: 243174 (December 2024). As these elements have not been built in accordance with the approved plans, they are presently unauthorised in planning terms.

Subsequently, several amendments have been made to the proposals under the previous applications (232494 & 243174) in an effort to regularise the unauthorised

works on site, as identified during the enforcement investigation. These include the following:

Gym/Playroom Outbuilding:

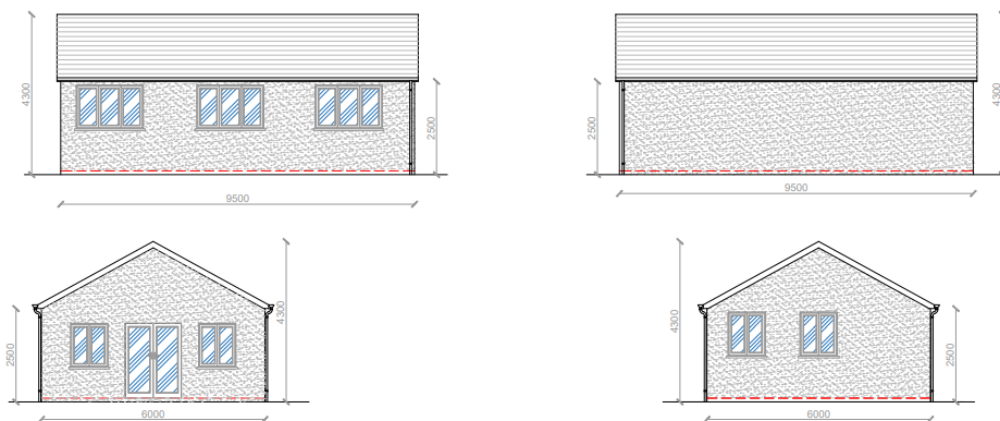
- The ridge height has been increased by approximately 1.2 metres, with three rooflights added to the front elevation to facilitate the use of the roof space as a home office.
- The addition of a side carport.
- The introduction of a front veranda.
- Alterations to existing window and door openings.

Storage Outbuilding:

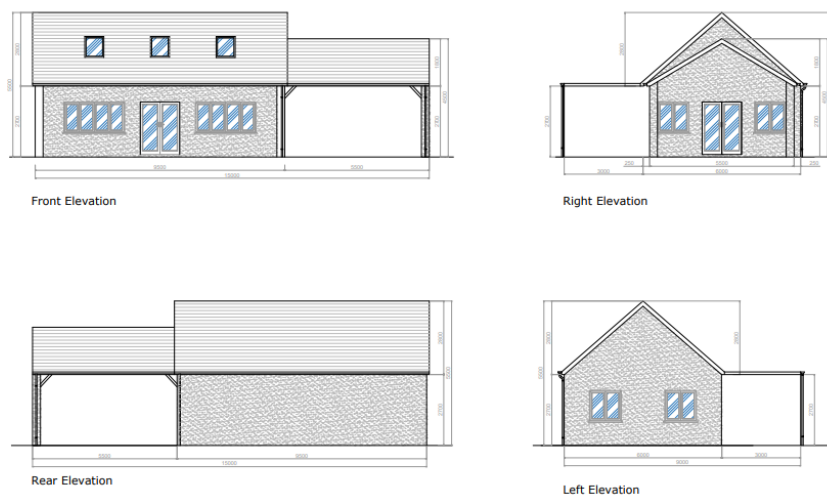
- Conversion from a storage building to a garage.
- Increases in the width, depth, and height by approximately 0.3 metres.
- Installation of two windows and the repositioning of the door.

A comparison of the elevational drawings and site layout between the originally approved scheme and the current proposal is provided below.

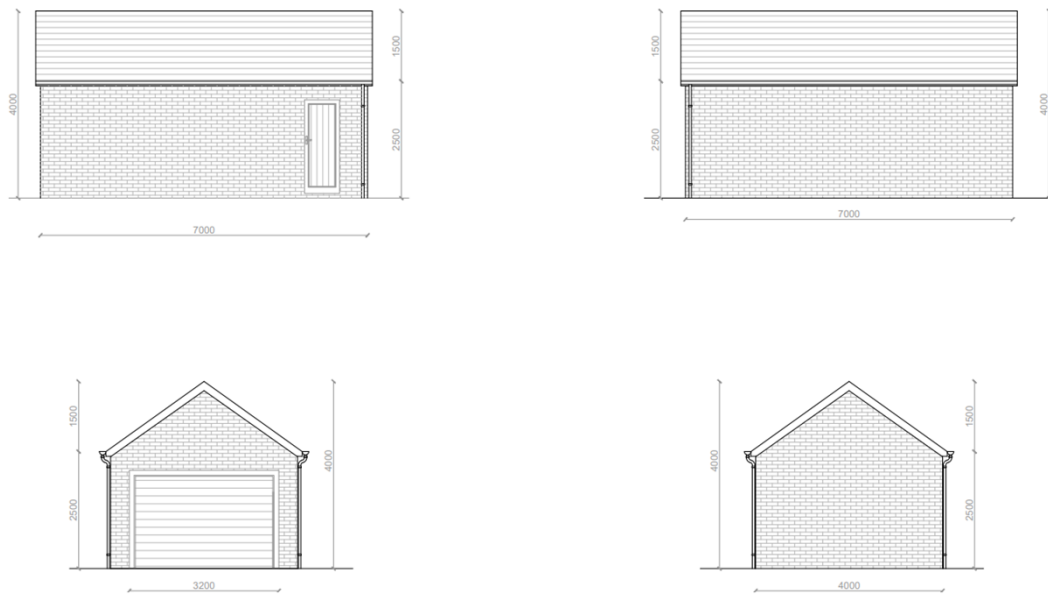
Gym/Playroom Outbuilding as approved under 232494



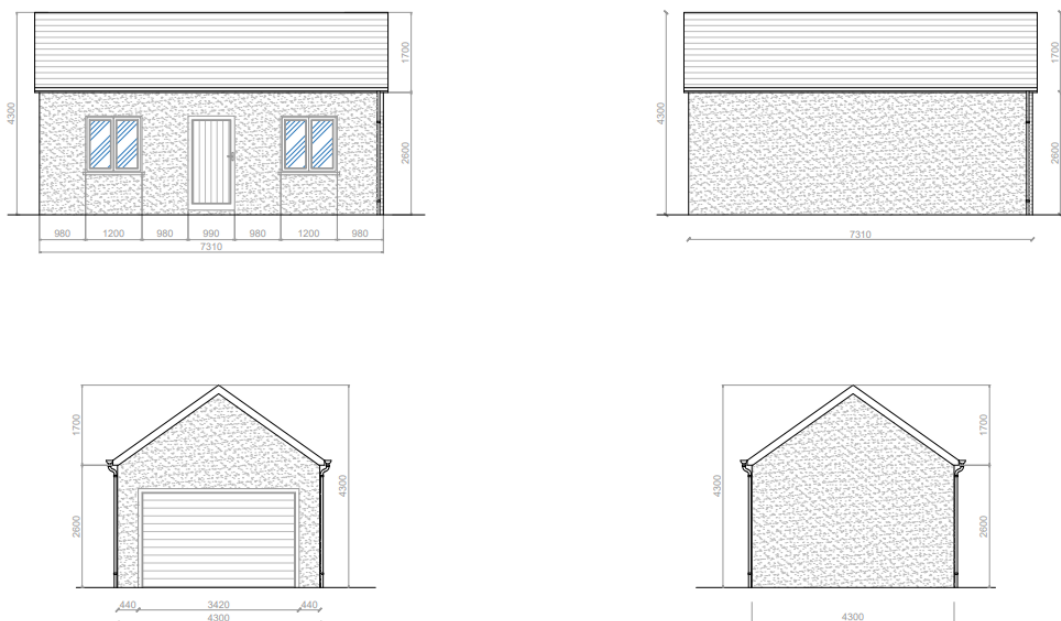
Proposed Outbuilding



Storage outbuilding



Proposed garage outbuilding



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:

Wokingham Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy

Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that maintain and enhance the high quality of the environment.

Policy CP3 of the Core Strategy emphasises 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

Borough Design Guide SPD

Principle R1 of the BDG SPD states that residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing.

Principle R7 of the BDG SPD states that for each street, building frontages must define the street space with a coherent building line that relates to existing building lines where they form a positive characteristic of the area.

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework states 'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

National Design Guide

Section B1, Paragraph 68 of the National Design Guide states that the built form of well-designed places should relate well to:

- the site, its context and the opportunities they present;
- the proposed identity and character for the development in the wider place;

The application site comprises a one-and-a-half-storey detached dwelling located at a corner plot at the junction of Culver Lane to the north and Eastcourt Avenue to the

west. The character of the surrounding area distinctly varied when viewed as a whole, primarily consisting of two storey dwellings set in discernible groupings which are distinguished by repeated house type.

The proposal includes substantial modifications to what was approved under the previous applications (232494 and 243174). As mentioned above, these changes involve raising the height of the gym/playroom structure by approximately 1.2 metres, adding a veranda, and constructing a carport roof that extends to within 0.5 metres of the south-western boundary, compared to those elements under the previously approved schemes. The garage would also be enlarged, with an increase of around 0.3 metres in its width, length, and height. Collectively, these alterations would create an L-shaped layout extending approximately 14.6 metres along the site's south-western boundary.

Although elements such as the veranda and carport are open-sided structures, their proximity to each other and the adjoining boundary introduces a sense of continuous built form. As demonstrated by figures 1 and 3 below, when viewed from Eastcourt Avenue, the cumulative massing would read as a single, consolidated structure, visually prominent and extending across a significant portion of the south-western boundary. Furthermore, the outbuilding's extension across the entire length of the rear garden area leaves the impression of the building being cramped and restricted on its plot.

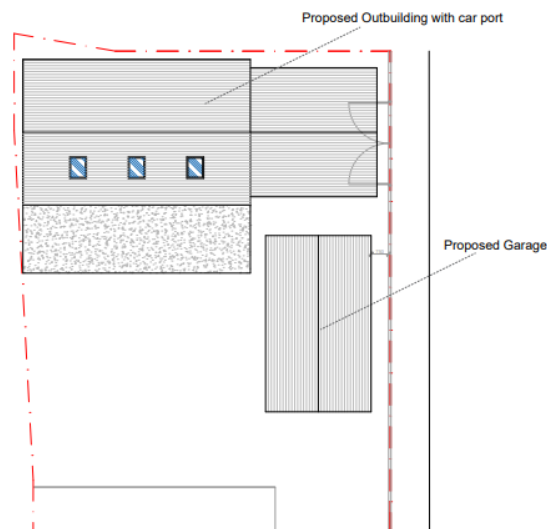


Figure 1 - Extract from the proposed block plan illustrating the extent of the proposed works within the rear garden of the application site.

The excessive height and scale of the proposed built form, particularly where it exceeds the south-western boundary fencing and extends towards the footway, introduces an imposing presence that undermines the sense of openness typically associated with corner plot dwellings, such as no.16 Culver Lane in this locality. This effect is compounded by the limited separation from the highway and the absence of substantial screening along the boundary in question.

In this context, the proposed development would appear overly dominant and visually intrusive, failing to respect the established character of the area. It would conflict with principles of good design, particularly in relation to scale, massing, and the relationship of built form to its surroundings.



Figure 2 – Google Street view imagery taken in November 2022 showing the rear and south-western side boundary of the application site, prior to the proposed works.



Figure 3 – Photograph taken in April 2025 showing the rear and south-western side boundary of the application site.

The recent photograph above (see Figure 3), taken on 08/04/2025 from Eastcourt Avenue, shows the existing unauthorised built form, which already makes a prominent impact on the street scene. The proposed veranda and carport, not yet shown, would further enhance this presence.

The cumulative scale, form, and proximity of the proposed outbuilding and garage to both the side south-western boundary and to the rear boundary adjacent to of the neighbouring bungalow at No. 1 Eastcourt Avenue, further undermine any sense of subservience to the host dwelling. This visual impact is accentuated by the elevated ground levels along Eastcourt Avenue, which cause the outbuilding and garage to sit noticeably higher than the existing host dwelling. When viewed from Eastcourt Avenue, the combined scale, elevated siting, and the inclusion of a carport—an atypical feature for an ancillary outbuilding—give the structure the appearance of a separate backland dwelling. If it were to be interpreted as such, its orientation, depth, and positioning within the plot would be at odds with the established layout along Eastcourt Avenue.

Principle R7 of the BDG SPD states that building frontages should define the street space with a coherent building line that reflects existing lines where these contribute positively to local character. Along the north-eastern side of Eastcourt Avenue, properties - though slightly angled - generally maintain a relatively consistent building line, particularly the row of bungalows to the immediate rear of the application site at Nos. 1, 3, and 5. The proposed carport would project approximately 5 metres beyond this established line and would disrupt the prevailing rhythm and frontage orientation that characterise this part of the street, contrary to the guidance set out in the BDG SPD.

In this way, the proposals result in a development that sits uncomfortably between the appearance of a residential outbuilding and a standalone dwelling, without clearly representing either. As such, the scheme would appear incongruous within its context and would fail to respect the spatial character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Fallback position

It is acknowledged that the applicant benefits from extant planning permissions for both outbuildings, which represent a legitimate fallback position. However, the current retrospective proposal introduces substantial changes in terms of height, volume, and siting that, when assessed cumulatively, are considered to go beyond what was previously deemed acceptable. These alterations are such that they materially alter the scale and impact of the development, ultimately tipping the balance against its acceptability.

Under permission ref. 232494, the main outbuilding (intended as a gym/playroom) was approved with a setback of approximately 6 metres from the south-western boundary. This siting helped maintain visual separation between buildings on the plot and preserved a degree of openness along the street frontage, particularly when viewed in relation to the storage building approved under ref. 243174. As a result, the previously approved scheme was not considered to result in overdevelopment or an unduly prominent presence within the street scene.

In contrast, the current proposal introduces a carport that would extend to within just 0.5 metres of the south-western boundary, significantly increasing the extent of built form closer to the public realm. Coupled with the introduction of a veranda and an increase in the main outbuilding's height by approximately 1.2 metres, the cumulative effect would be to visually close the gap between the outbuildings. This would create the appearance of a continuous built form along a substantial length of the western boundary, resulting in a development that appears overly dominant and visually intrusive when viewed from Eastcourt Avenue.

Regarding the storage building approved under ref. 243174, although it is positioned close to the south-western boundary, street edge and ahead of the prevailing building line along north-eastern side of Eastcourt Avenue, its acceptability was supported by its location approximately 7.8 metres from the rear boundary with No. 1 Eastcourt Avenue. This retained a meaningful gap between built forms and helped preserve the openness of the rear garden area.

However, the current proposal seeks to increase the height, width, and length of this building by approximately 0.3 metres in each dimension, while also positioning it closer to the main outbuilding. This would not only increase its visual prominence above the boundary fencing adjacent to the street but also contribute further to the perception of an unbroken mass of development across the rear of the site.

While the fallback permissions are a material consideration, their acceptability relied on limited scale, modest height, and clear separation between buildings and site boundaries, which helped preserve the openness and character of the plot.

The current proposal significantly exceeds those parameters, introducing greater height, massing, and a near-continuous built form that erodes spatial relief and increases visual dominance within the street scene. As such, the fallback does not justify the intensified form now proposed, which is considered harmful to the character of the area and contrary to Policy CP1 and CP3 of the Core Strategy, Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Design Guide, and Section 4 of the Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Overlooking:

Figure 4.25 of the Borough Design Guide sets out the Council's minimum privacy and amenity distance standards to safeguard privacy and limit any perceived sense of enclosure. For developments of between one and two storeys, a minimum back-to-back separation distance of 22 metres is advised between opposing elevations of neighbouring dwellings.

Due to its orientation, the main outbuilding effectively shares a back-to-back relationship with the neighbouring property at No. 22 Culver Lane. In this context, the 22-metre separation guideline is considered appropriate. The nearest of the proposed front-facing rooflights would be sited approximately 19.3 metres from the main rear elevation of No. 22, which falls slightly short of the recommended distance. However, this shortfall is not considered significant enough to result in an unacceptable level of overlooking or a harmful sense of enclosure, particularly given the scale and position

of the rooflights. No overlooking or loss of privacy objections are therefore raised. With regards to the new ground floor windows, the existing boundary fencing would be high enough to sufficiently mitigate any overlooking concerns.

Loss of Light and Overbearing:

The main building is situated toward the rear of the garden, adjacent to the boundary with No. 1 Eastcourt Avenue, which contains several side-facing windows. While a slight reduction in sunlight to these windows may occur as a result of the proposed height increase, the impact is considered negligible. This is due to the single-storey nature of the outbuilding and the fact that the affected windows either serve non-habitable rooms or act as secondary openings to habitable spaces. As such, any loss of daylight/sunlight to these rooms would not substantiate a reason to refuse this application under such grounds.

The remaining proposals would be suitable located within the plot not to pose any unreasonable concerns of overbearing or loss of light to any neighbouring properties.

Highway Access and Parking Provision:

The Council's Highways Officer has reviewed this application and notes that the proposed garage meets the councils' standards for parking a vehicle however this is not a requirement as there is existing driveway parking to the front of the dwelling. The proposed car port allows the gates to open and also maintains a clear access to the garage. The Highways Officer has no objection to the proposed outbuildings on the basis that they remain ancillary to the main dwelling to ensure adequate on-site parking provision in the interests of highway safety, convenience and amenity. A suitable condition will be attached to any approval.

Amenity Space:

The remaining rear amenity space would exceed the minimum depth requirement of 11 metres. The proposal is therefore acceptable in this regard.

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.
Date:	15 May 2025
Earliest date for decision:	11 April 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	16/05/25